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Teacher-initiated whole language reading instruction in a
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Mashek-Smith, Vicky, Ed.D.

University of Northern Iowa, 1989
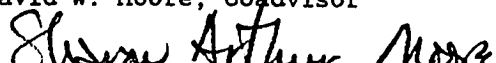
TEACHER-INITIATED WHOLE LANGUAGE READING INSTRUCTION

IN A SKILLS-BASED SCHOOL DISTDRICT: A SELF-REPORT CASE STUDY

A Dissertation

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Approved:

David W. Moore, Coadvisor

Sharon Arthur Moore, Coadvisor

John K. Smith, Committee Member

William B. Kline, Committee Member

Sally A. Hudson, Committee Member

Vicky Mashek-Smith

University of Northern Iowa

August 1989

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August 1989

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An Abstract of a Dissertation

Submitted

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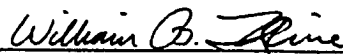of the Requirements for the Degree

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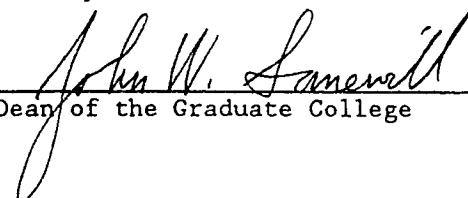
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August 1989

ABSTRACT

This study presents an insider's view of change as one teacher, the author of this report, attempted to implement reading instruction based on a whole language philosophy in a skills-based school district. Reform critics have made a substantial call for the improvement of students' literacy skills and for teachers to take charge of change efforts. This study is an attempt to describe what happened when one teacher attempted to implement these recommended reforms.

This investigation followed qualitative research guidelines for a self-report case study, similar to those used by McPherson (1972) in Small Town Teacher. The setting was a fourth-grade classroom in a midwestern school district. Field notes of observations were recorded throughout the school year, documents were collected, and key participants were interviewed. Outside observers also gathered information during this study.

Results revealed the development and consequences of being overly idealistic as a change agent. Idealism fueled a desire to change but, when the change effort led to utopian goals, errors in judgement were made. Consequently, what was to be changed was perpetuated or worsened. The primary conclusion was that whole language advocates would improve their effectiveness as change agents by applying their beliefs to change processes within a school district as well as to the teaching of reading.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank my committee members: Dr. Sally Hudson and Dr. William Kline for their long-distance involvement; Dr. Sharon Moore for her enthusiastic encouragements; Dr. David Moore for his patient guidance in the development of my writing; Dr. John Smith for his inspiration and expertise that supported the research paradigm used here and that helped me improve my view of public schooling. Special appreciation goes to Jill Nielsen for her continual moral support and to the students, teachers, and administrators of "Jefferson School." I am expecially grateful to my husband, Cam, and my daughter, Keoni, for their many sacrifices.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The process of change in educational settings has been addressed from a variety of perspectives. Much of the literature on change has been based from an outside-in model. Fullan (1982, p. 31) referred to this as a fidelity approach to organized change in which the focus is on what someone or some group can do to train, persuade, or coerce teachers into making planned, organized changes in their classrooms (Culver & Hoban, 1973; Hall, Loucks, Rutherford, & Newlove, 1975; Sarason, 1972; Sussman, 1977; Wolcott, 1977).

This study presents an alternative, insider's view of change. It describes what happened when one teacher, the author of this report who was committed to the need for instructional changes, attempted to persuade those around her to allow changes to be implemented. This is an autobiographical account of the attempt to develop and implement a whole language approach to teaching reading in a skill-based school district.

Many observers have attempted to describe the teacher's view of teaching (Gitlin, 1983; Jackson, 1968, 1986; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Lortie, 1975; Sarason, 1972). While most studies were done by outsiders, McPherson described teaching from her position as a teacher. Some have tried to capture the insider's view of change as outside observers (Elbaz, 1983; Wolcott, 1977). Rarely have teachers documented their own attempts at change (Webb, 1980).

This report contains four chapters. The first chapter presents the reform issues which provided the impetus for the attempted change reported in this study. These reforms focus on four areas: (a) a critique of traditional reading instruction, (b) an alternative to traditional reading instruction, (c) traditional teachers and teaching, and 4) an alternative for teachers.

The second chapter presents the researcher as instrument. The qualitative approach of a self-report case study is described. The background of the teacher/researcher is presented, as well as the background of the study itself.

In Chapter 3, the implementation of the planned changes is described. This is a monthly account of how the process of change evolved based on field notes and collected documents.

The fourth chapter describes the awakening that occurred from the experience of initiating the changes. The development of and consequences of being overly idealistic as a change agent are discussed. The chapter concludes with reflection on the insights gained from the experience. A broader view of whole language is presented, expanding its applicability to the process of change as well as the process of teaching.

Critique of Traditional Reading Instruction

Nationwide concern for literacy skills placed reading teachers in the reform spotlight during the 1980s (Anderson et al., 1985; Carroll, 1987; LaPointe, 1986). There was a rising public outcry in response to the "appallingly poor reading ability of many U.S. children and

adults" (Carbo, 1987, p. 4). Reading test scores obtained by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) improved steadily from the 1970s through the 1980s, but were still a long way from having all adults reach a 12th-grade literacy level (Carroll, 1987; LaPointe, 1986). Only 56.4% of young adults reached this level. Lowering the goal from a 12th-grade level to having all adults functionally literate, or reading at about a 3rd-grade level by NAEP definitions, left 3.9% of the U.S. young adult population (820,000 people) functionally illiterate.

If the U.S. economy were still based on mass-production, this lowering of expectations probably could be tolerated. However, the U.S. economy relies less and less on unskilled labor and demands more knowledge and skills as we move into a technological-information age (Anderson et al., 1985; Carnegie Forum, 1986). Current conceptions of functional literacy might not be enough for economic reasons; they surely are inadequate for personal and social reasons.

Concerned with these literacy problems, reformers have looked for possible causes and cures in the classrooms. Many authorities believe that the instructional approaches used in most schools contribute to, rather than solve, literacy problems (Anderson et al., 1985; Bennett, 1986; Carbo, 1987; Cuban, 1986; Goodman, 1986; Mason, 1982; Smith, 1986).

Basal-Driven Instruction

Basal reading series account for up to 94% of the reading programs in the U.S. (Austin & Morrison, 1963; Shannon, 1982). These

programs are systematically organized to provide students with serialized reading books and workbooks. "The [basal] systems are so detailed that the instructor need not know much about reading, because the system is so complete" (Spache & Spache, 1986, p. 69). Teachers are provided with scripted manuals or guides, assessment instruments, and various enrichment materials. Austin and Morrison (1963) observed that, "For many teachers it would be unthinkable and impossible to teach without them [basal reading programs]" (p. 54). However, these programs have been under attack as a source of reading failure for students and for obstructing teachers' abilities to alleviate reading problems.

Teachers have been criticized for their strict adherence to basal reader materials, modeling compliance and low-level thinking skills for their students (Anderson et al., 1985; Durkin, 1978-79; Goodman 1986; Shannon, 1983). This text-driven instruction has been criticized for becoming so teacher-centered that students have few learning choices or opportunities for personal involvement, thus alienating them from meaningful learning experiences (Gough, 1987). In addition, three specific components of basal reader series, hierarchy of skills, evaluation, and grouping students for instruction have been criticized substantially.

Hierarchy of skills. A hierarchy of behavioral objectives for separate reading skills provides the framework for basal programs even though there has been little research to support this dissection, and it appears inconsistent with many theories of learning (Bussis, 1982;

Goodman, 1986; Smith, 1986; Watson & Weaver, 1988). Johnson and Pearson (1975) viewed skill hierarchies as little more than a "pedogogical convenience" (p. 760) that "may appeal to our sense of logic" (p. 760) since the underlying assumption is that reading is composed of parts and by learning the parts, or skills, students will learn the whole.

Goodman (1986) and Smith (1986) asserted that the emphasis on skills learned by rote and the deemphasis on meaningful reading have convinced some students that they cannot learn to read and have shown others that reading and writing are unpleasant activities to be avoided. Classroom observations show that an emphasis on learning skills automatically and accurately leads students to associate skills with paper and pencil exercises rather than with reading discourse (Duffy, Roehler, & Mason, 1984). This skill emphasis "steals teachers' and learners' time away from productive reading and writing" (Goodman, 1986, p. 29). It frequently leads to "frustrated and confused teachers" (Spache & Spache, 1986, p. 166), and learning becomes "ritualistically dull" (Smith, 1986, p. 50).

Evaluation. Instructional skill emphasis is reinforced by the evaluation instruments accompanying basal programs which include an elaborate management system of pretests, posttests, and long-term achievement tests. Smith (1986) asserted that, "Because children are tested in this way [on component skills], they are taught this way" (p. 56). Instruction is influenced in other ways as well. When teachers are expected to teach to the test, they "become obsessed with

errors, which have to be eradicated" (Smith, 1986, p. 142). Students are often blamed for these errors, not the teacher or system. Skill coverage and mastery may become the ultimate goal for instruction rather than the development of skills as means for becoming an effective reader. Skill management systems may then become little more than a "system of surveillance" (Johnson & Pearson, 1975, p. 760), monitoring student failures and teacher coverage of basal objectives.

The tests are assumed to be valid and reliable samples of the subskills, and mastery of the sequenced, isolated objectives is assumed to indicate proficiency in reading. Many critics have questioned these assumptions (Duffy, 1978; Farr & Carey, 1986; Johnson & Pearson, 1975; Spache & Spache, 1986; Thompson & Dziuban, 1973). Moore (1983) claimed that "Students might have been able to pass mastery tests over every reading comprehension subskill that a system presented, yet those students were not necessarily able to fully comprehend what they read independently" (p. 964).

Grouping Students for Instruction

The serialized reading and accompanying evaluation instruments that monitor progress through basal reading programs have facilitated the common classroom practice of grouping students for reading instruction by ability. In the typical elementary classroom, the teacher divides students among high-, average-, and low-ability groups for reading instruction (Anderson et al., 1985; Mackler, 1969; Pursell, 1977; Smith, 1971) despite research and reasoned argument

denouncing its use (Allington, 1983; Anderson, 1984; Shannon, 1985). These groups are intended to facilitate classroom management, allowing the teacher to work with one group while the others work independently at their seats.

The basic premise for this practice is that teachers can adapt instruction so top students are not held back and slow students are not left behind. This appears, at least in theory, to benefit all students. In practice, however, evidence suggests that ability grouping may have several unintended negative consequences (Anderson et al., 1985; Rist, 1970). Three of these consequences involve group placement, group mobility, and differential instruction for each group.

Some teachers form expectations about student performance on the basis of students' characteristics unrelated to reading ability (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968). Evidence suggests that factors such as compatability with the teacher and students' test-taking abilities influence students' group placements. Mackler (1969) suggested that responsible and well-behaved students are rewarded with higher group placement. Rist (1970) confirmed this idea in a study revealing how a kindergarten teacher made selections for groups in the absence of test scores. The teacher developed an image of an ideal type of student expected to succeed and placed those students in the high group. Students who were not expected to succeed because they were unattractive, smelly, withdrawn, nonverbal, welfare recipients, and so on were placed in the low group at a table away from the teacher.

Four criteria eventually emerged that differentiated the three groups: (a) physical appearance, (b) interactional behavior among students as well as with the teacher, (c) the use of language within the classroom, and (d) social factors such as family income, education, and size.

Other teachers rely on test scores alone to form reading groups (Shannon, 1985) and may "trust the tests even more than their own knowledge of the children" (Smith, 1986, p. 142). The achievement scores are rank-ordered and divided into high-, middle-, and low-ability groups. Since many studies have shown that achievement test scores correlate with social class status (Pursell, 1977; Shannon, 1985), a caste-like system is maintained. The assessment practices teachers use for grouping students seem to produce a system in which educational experiences are distributed unequally (Mackler, 1969; Rist, 1979; Stein, 1971).

Once teachers assign students to reading groups, the teachers ideally are to monitor students' progress to make possible changes in the groupings, allowing for individual development. However, mobility among groups in reality seldom occurs (Anderson et al., 1985). Instead, there is a relative permanence of individual assignments to ability groups within and across grade levels. Assignment to an ability group typically occurs each year based on the previous year's grouping. In Rist's study (1970), groups were formed the 8th day of kindergarten and remained relatively intact through at least the third

grade. The high-ability Tigers group remained Tigers, and the low-ability Clowns remained Clowns.

One reason for the lack of mobility students demonstrate among groups seems due to the practice of assigning students according to the materials they complete. Anderson (1984) found that criteria for group mobility within the classroom was most often based on pacing and content coverage of the basal materials. Goodman (1986) believed this results in "progress-through-the-program, rather than progress in real learning" (p. 29). Some schools require completion of one book or mastery scores on the corresponding tests before a child moves on to the next book. Because the students work together as a group, they cover materials at the same rate regardless of individual abilities. Consequently, individuals seldom move from one group to another within a year. As Rist (1970) pointed out:

> No matter how well a child in the lower reading groups might have read, he's destined to remain in the same reading group. This is, in a sense, another manifestation of the self-fulfilling prophecy in that a "slow learner" had no option but to continue to be a slow learner, regardless of performance or potential. (p. 435)

Allington (1983) maintained that "Good and poor readers differ in their reading ability as much because of differences in instruction as variations in individual learning styles or aptitudes" (p. 548). These instructional differences included amount of reading instruction, instructional emphasis, and teacher-interruption behaviors.

Allington (1983) observed that students in both good and poor reading groups generally received equivalent allocated reading instruction. But even though the allocated time for reading is equivalent, the engaged time is virtually always greater for good readers (Allington, 1983; Anderson et al., 1985; Shannon, 1985). Those in the top group read about three times as many words a day as those in the low group. Seventy percent of this reading is done silently.

One reason for poor readers' limited engaged time with reading is that low groups typically have a greater incidence of off-task behavior. More questions asked by the teacher are for monitoring behavior and checking attention than for promoting comprehension. The teacher uses more language for control with the low group and tightly maintains control over most reading activities. The low group's off-task behavior is often attributed to perceived flaws in the student's character (e.g., unmotivated, immature, distractible, hyperactive). By labeling the student's behavior as deficient, deficiencies in the instructional environment are not identified and achievement gaps widen.

Allington (1983) also reported that teachers more frequently emphasize meaning and appreciation for what is read with the top reading group than with the low group. Reading ability is judged by comprehension of the story. Additionally, the low group is most often asked about words, sounds, or letter forms in what they've read. Reading is fractionated and drilled and frequently becomes tedious and

pointless to the students. Their competence is based upon their word-calling ability. For them, the stress is on reading-as-a-performing-art rather than reading as a means of developing understanding. Poor reading habits are developed when the emphasis is on reading orally to please others rather than on comprehension.

Because poor readers are reading aloud most of the time, the teacher has more opportunities to interrupt them in order to correct mistakes. These interruptions occur 2-5 times more frequently with the low reading group than the top reading group (Shannon, 1985). With frequent interruptions from the teacher and other students, poor readers lose track of meaning. Poor readers become dependent on an external monitor and rely less and less on their own self-monitoring strategies. In sum, Allington (1983) and Board (1982) assert that teachers inadvertently teach students in the low reading group how to be poor readers.

An Alternative to Traditional Reading Instruction

Criticisms of traditional reading instruction have paved the way for an alternative view. The whole language movement provides this alternative and may even mark the beginning of a paradigm shift (Rich, 1985).

Theory-Infused Instruction

Whole language is not a packaged program like the basal reading programs that direct traditional reading instruction (Altwerger, Edelsky, & Flores, 1987). "It can't be packaged in a kit or bound between the covers of textbooks or workbooks. It certainly can't be

scripted" (Goodman, 1986, p. 63). It is a philosophical stance, not a methodology. Newman (1985) described whole language as follows:

> For me, whole language is a shorthand way of referring to a set of beliefs about curriculum, not just language arts curriculum, but about everything that goes on in classrooms . . . it's a description of how some teachers and researchers have been exploring the practical applications of recent theoretical arguments which have arisen from research in linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, child development, curriculum, composition, literary theory, semiotics, and other fields of study. And, as with all theoretical arguments, each of us is obliged to explore the practical ramifications in our own way. (p. 1)

Whole language teachers are involved with continual theory building as they experiment with different methods and materials. This theory-infused instruction is student-centered, providing many choices and personal involvement for students so that learning is meaningful. Whole language instruction can be contrasted with traditional basal reader instruction by considering holistic skill development, evaluation, and grouping.

Holistic skill development. Whole language begins and ends with whole texts. It is based on the theory that learning occurs best moving from whole to parts and that the whole is much more than the sum of its parts. The primacy of meaning is upheld as learners explore the parts of language always in the context of unified complete passages. Whole language advocates assert that language is learned best when the focus is on the meaning of the message being communicated, not on the form of the message (Goodman, 1986).

The oral language development of children is often used as an example of how written language should be allowed to develop

(Forester & Mickelson, 1979). Children's first attempts to communicate are not just imitations or parrot-like responses, but attempts to express what they are thinking. Adults interacting with children do not usually isolate and drill the parts of the language, but interact in meaningful and purposeful ways. Children have a social need to communicate, so the norms of the language are soon learned. Children "learn language as they use language to learn, and meanwhile they learn about language" (Goodman, 1986, p. 16).

Evaluation. The whole language emphasis on meaning is reinforced by congruent approaches to evaluation. Whole language teachers collect information about students as an integral part of their teaching (Harp, 1988; Johnston, 1987). Teachers observe, record, and interpret information from a variety of sources such as classroom behaviors, work samples, tape recordings, and individual conferences. Children are assessed in the natural context of learning just as they are taught. Whole language teachers are continually involved in "kid-watching" (Goodman, 1986, p. 41), evaluating student strengths, and looking for student competencies. Since whole language teachers are not teaching to a test, they build on these strengths during instruction rather than pointing out deficiencies.

This evaluation approach is naturalistic. The procedures occur in the students' everyday learning environment rather than a contrived test situation (Mayher & Brause, 1986). Reading, considered too complex to be reduced to skill objectives, is kept whole--more than and different from its parts. Student competence in separate reading

skills, such as phonics, is assessed only as it is applied to the whole process of reading. A skill is considered mastered only if it is consistently used in independent reading (Goodman, 1986).

Grouping students for learning. Whole language classrooms include a variety of authentic reading materials that facilitate teachers' efforts to group students flexibly. When students are grouped, the groups change according to students' needs and interests. In contrast to the teacher-centered classrooms in traditional programs, whole-language classrooms are more democratic and student-centered. Teachers express their trust in students to learn by involving them in many levels of decision making, including how they will be grouped for learning.

Much of the instructional time encourages individual development. Students are encouraged to select their own books to read, select their own topics for writing, or plan other aspects of their own learning. Reading materials and the methods for presenting material are adapted to individual differences; students are not sorted and labeled to fit prescribed grouping criteria. Whole language teachers look for solutions to learning difficulties by altering their instruction; they don't assume something is wrong with the student.

Status of Whole Language Instruction

Whole language policies have been adopted by schools and sanctioned by local education authorities in New Zealand, Britain, Canada, and Australia. However, in the United States, whole language and holistic policies remain "overwhelmingly a teachers' movement; few

curriculum workers, administrators, and teacher educators actively support it" (Goodman, 1986, p. 62). Documented reasons for the limited status of whole language are rare. Some educators and politicians have questioned the ability of American teachers to be successful with this approach (Goodman, 1987). Anderson et al. (1985) recognized the effectiveness of whole language in New Zealand, the most literate country in the world, but suggested that only very skillful American teachers could have very good success with it. The study reported here suggests some reasons for this situation. However, understanding general features about teachers and teaching provides background for understanding why traditional basal reader instruction persists. The next section presents this background.

<div align="center">Traditional Teachers and Teaching</div>

Teachers in general have been depicted as programmed to perform on "automatic pilot" (Brophy, 1984, p. 82) with little or no rational thinking, following scripts of how instruction should proceed. Jackson (1968) observed teachers' acceptance of the status quo and pedagogical conservatism and described it as "part of a general myopia" (p. 148). From his interviews with teachers, Jackson noted that teachers accept things as they are. Their attitude seems to be, "It is best not to ask too many questions" (p. 145).

Heshusius (1982) observed that teachers do what they're told to do, surrendering autonomy and initiative for the sake of mindless routine. Teachers in McPherson's study (1972) valued conformity and obedience to command, accepting the principal as boss and interpreting

his suggestions as orders. Traditional basal reader instruction fits many of the descriptions critics have made of instruction in general. Explanations for traditional instruction, which are presented in the following section, could also be applied to reading instruction.

Limitations of the Teacher

Interaction with other teachers has been noted for its "conceptual simplicity" and avoidance of complicated thought (Jackson, 1968, p. 144). Fullan (1982) described how teacher decision making is based on a "practicality ethic" (p. 114) in which practical concerns have more influence on teaching than knowledge or understanding. "Lacking a technical vocabulary, skimming the intellectual surface of the problems they encounter, fenced in, as it were, by the walls of their concrete experience, these teachers hardly look like the type of people who should be allowed to supervise the intellectual development of young children" (Jackson, 1968, p. 148).

Cognitive. Brophy (1984) believes teachers do not have readily available alternatives so they continue with an activity even if it's not going well because "they have time to fill and are not prepared to fill it any other way" (p. 83). Brophy (1984) further suggested that this may be due to "cognitive limitations, at least in some teachers, in dealing with inherently complex tasks" (p. 84). Several investigators have suggested that the teachers they studied "lacked sufficiently specific and detailed knowledge of the subject matter (both the content itself and how to teach it) to enable them to diagnose learning problems on the spot and respond immediately with

prescriptive instruction" (Brophy, 1984, p. 83). This knowledge deficiency can result in "faulty judgements regarding pupil progress, appropriate teaching materials, and proper teaching methods" (Spache & Spache, 1986, p. 4).

Decisions made while teachers are teaching have been described as having more of a survival orientation than an orientation toward what is best for students (Blase, 1985). Some studies imply that teachers simplify instruction to reduce their own cognitive load. Critics suggest that teachers' decisions, based on this simplified model, are influenced more by a concern for control and a need to keep students busy than by the educational needs of students.

It has been observed that teachers, in order to adapt to the complexities of teaching, limit the degree of complexity they deal with. Teachers "construct a simplified model of the real situation . . . then, behave rationally with respect to the simplified model of reality constructed" (Shavelson & Stern, 1981, p. 456).

Teachers, Doyle and Ponder (1977-78) pointed out, do not consider statements of theory, philosophy, general principles, or even clearly specified student outcomes as practical because "they lack the necessary procedural referents" (p. 7). In other words, if teachers can not picture how something can be implemented in the classroom, they don't use it.

Conceptual simplicity as outlined by Jackson (1968) characterizes some of the other boundaries of teachers' thinking. Teachers were found to have an intuitive rather than rational approach to classroom

events. Teachers, he observed, were "more likely to defend themselves by pointing out that a particular course of action felt like the right thing to do, rather than by claiming that they knew it to be right" (Jackson, 1968, p. 145). Teachers displayed an opinionated, as opposed to an open-minded, stance when confronted with alternative teaching practices. Teachers rarely turned to evidence beyond their own personal experience to justify their professional preferences.

Jackson (1968) stated that teachers' oversimplifications are "understandable, perhaps even forgivable" (p. 145) because if teachers tried to understand the complexities inherent in teaching, they wouldn't have time for anything else. He further implied that tendermindedness (or "Boy Scout idealism", p. 152), conceptual simplicity, and sharp existential boundaries have an adaptive significance for teachers. According to Jackson, it might even be a waste of time for teachers to improve their thinking skills since it may not improve their classroom performance.

> If teachers sought a more thorough understanding of their world, insisted on greater rationality in their actions, were completely open-minded in their consideration of pedagogical choices, and profound in their view of the human condition, they might well receive greater applause from intellectuals, but it is doubtful that they would perform with greater efficiency in the classroom. Elementary school teachers, with all of their intellectual fuzziness and sticky sentimentality, may be doing the job better than would an army of human engineers. (Jackson, 1968, p. 149)

Control. Teachers have been portrayed as making decisions that reduce classroom stress but that have less than ideal effects on students' learning. This stress may stem from the teachers' fear of

losing control of the class and concern for keeping students busy or from insecurities about being an effective teacher.

Teachers, Blase (1985) observed, try to "keep the lid on" (p. 247) by creating practical methods that minimize classroom stress and preserve classroom stability. The practical methods described by Blase were especially useful in response to students who presented particular behavior problems and threatened the orderly flow of the classroom. Teachers in his study were:

> organizing, structuring, objectifying, routinizing, and simplifying instruction . . . They designed classroom experiences that emphasized well-defined objectives, clear evaluation criteria, easy questions, simple assignments, basic knowledge, and basic survival skills with practical relevance. This, more often than not, resulted in an emphasis on lower-order thinking skills and proper (student) social behavior. (p. 243)

McPherson (1972) worked with teachers who believed that preserving order was more important than teaching and learning. These teachers believed that discipline was more important than self-expression. The teachers' primary concern was producing behavioral conformity. Blase (1985) observed that the "requirements for the control of students promoted a traditional, conservative and--in the views of many teachers--a mediocre educational experience" (p. 244).

In response to fundamental students (i.e., slow, undermotivated, or low-achieving pupils), Blase (1985) noted that teachers:

> learned that these students responded better to and were more comfortable with simply designed, highly structured lessons and assignments that specified content, identified simple goals, focused on rote, and required teacher domination of classroom interaction. Activities were designed to keep students busy, especially when discipline existed and teachers felt forced to allocate a great deal of time to socialization. (p. 245)

Most of the teachers interviewed by Blase (1985) considered structures created for survival purposes to be "rigid, controlling, and debilitating" (p. 247). The effect on teachers was an observable decline in their creative, personal, emotional, and intellectual involvement in instruction.

Displacement. Perhaps as a self-protective device, teachers appear to develop defense mechanisms to remove some of the apparent blame for low-achieving students. McPherson (1972) observed teachers who engaged in buck-passing, or blaming others such as parents, administrators, the child, or last year's teacher when students were not doing well. This shifting of blame is termed displacement.

When students struggled, teachers could reassure themselves that materials were covered so it was not the teacher's fault if students didn't learn (McPherson, 1972). When teachers were dissatisfied with certain students, they tended to acquiesce to what they considered undeniable evidence that most students could not or would not perform to their standards (Brophy, 1984; McPherson, 1972; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Tests provided some evidence of student performance which teachers appear to use for different protective purposes. Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests were accepted as a reflection of students' native intelligence, not on teacher competence, even though IQ scores were inconsistent from year to year (McPherson, 1972). Jackson (1968) found that testing was given little emphasis and considered of little value to teachers in helping them understand how

well they had done. But there is some "survival value" (Blase, 1985, p. 246) in numerical displays of performance because others can see student progress which protects them from parental and administrative criticism and helps relieve the gnawing uncertainty of teachers' influence on students (Mayher & Brause, 1986).

However, McPherson (1972) observed teachers who devalued test results, denying responsibility for the poor results and belittling the validity of the tests. Even when strong criticisms of the tests were expressed, teachers had no strong faith in alternatives.

Conditions of Teaching

Teachers are expected to be giving constantly to many children and to keep all students interested in learning while addressing a variety of learning abilities. This aspect of teaching alone has been described as draining, taxing and not easily sustained (Blase, 1985; Sarason, 1972). Many critics who seem to blame teachers also point out constraints inherent in the nature of teaching as if to excuse or explain why teachers don't change ineffective practices. Duffy, Roehler, and Mason (1984) warned that,

> instruction is not a static commodity. It cannot be treated as a one-dimensional abstraction or an isolated concept. Instead, instruction occurs as a complex and fluid response to a situation. To understand it, one must understand the context within which it occurs and the forces with which it interacts. (p. 125)

Current conditions of teaching have been criticized for not leaving teachers with enough time, energy, or professional support to produce more effective thinking. Lieberman and Miller (1984) referred

to these conditions as a "three ring circus" (p. 17) of daily dilemmas teachers encounter which pressure them into falling back on survival tactics. Lortie (1975) referred to these pressures as "endemic uncertainties which complicate the teaching craft and hamper the earning of psychic rewards" (p. 159).

Some teachers unquestioningly defer to authority figures and to the accountability requirements imposed upon them (Heshusius, 1982; Jackson, 1968; McPherson, 1972). Other teachers discover that "the bureaucratic social organization of the school seems to rule out implementation of their [teachers'] individualistic philosophy and practice of education" (Gracey, 1972, p. 193). The conditions of teaching, which include aspects such as mandated commercial materials, time pressures, and working in isolation have been used to explain traditional instruction.

Commercial materials. Teachers, some critics believe, have been persuaded to accept unquestioningly materials they have for teaching (Brophy, 1984; Heshusius, 1982; McPherson, 1972; Shannon, 1983).

> Schools are being pressed to accept the idea that the curriculum should be a sequential series of predigested subject matter packaged by persons who do not know the teacher, the pupils, or their community. Confronted with such a curriculum package, the teachers' role becomes little more than that of a technician. Pushed up against such a curriculum, many children find nothing there relevant to them and do not learn. (Gracey, 1972, p. 19)

Teachers as technicians are less likely to create variations to stimulate improved learning or grapple with underlying beliefs and teaching styles (Fullan, 1982; Heshusius, 1982). Furthermore,

continued use may interfere with a teacher's ability to make autonomous decisions (Brophy, 1984; Shannon, 1983).

Insufficient knowledge of subject matter may be attributed to teachers' reliance on recycled materials and methods to the point where classes become "mechanical, flat, routinelike, dull, and uninspiring" (Blase, 1985, p. 251). Blase observed that as teachers' creative involvement decreased, so too did their personal and emotional involvement in work and their desire to enlarge their knowledge base. The tasks related to curriculum adherence and testing procedures tend to disconnect teachers from students and make it "difficult for them [teachers] to use their personal knowledge to relate to students, leaving them less opportunity to confront the priorities and values that filtered through the curriculum" (Gitlin, 1983, p. 211).

Lieberman and Miller (1984) and Blase (1985) observed that commercial tests tended to rob teachers of their creativity. Teachers were expected to follow a prescribed school-system curriculum and administer a general school-system testing program to provide "a quality control mechanism for assessing how well children have learned the required curriculum" (Gracey, 1972, p. 187). Teachers felt forced by these external instruments to place instructional concentration on lower forms of knowledge and skill acquisition and traditional methods of teaching. "Because of the required quantification and measurement, teaching and learning often do not operate at the levels of what is meaningful to the child . . . Teachers are expected to be followers

and appliers of rigid rules" (Heshusius, 1982, p. 7) and students are expected to be "docile learners" (Gracey, 1972, p. 101).

Time pressures. Time is an important resource needed to adequately address the complex problem-solving nature of teaching. However, time pressures imposed on teachers serve to preserve techniques designed to stabilize and routinize instruction. Pacing schedules, graded classrooms, and daily time blocks reinforce adherence to traditional instruction. Teachers feel pressured to bring all students to a certain academic level following a specified schedule and still find time to cover all the subjects. "Teachers do not have time (or their culture does not support) reflection or analysis either individually or collectively about what they are doing" (Fullan, 1982, p. 118).

Isolation. Ritual performance that dominates classrooms is partly attributed to the fact that teachers have "little or no interpersonal vehicles available for purposes of stimulation or change" (Sarason, 1972, p. 196). Teachers are left alone with their problems and concerns. They work predominantly in isolation from other teachers, and there is some evidence to indicate that many teachers prefer it that way. If they were given additional work time, most teachers would choose to spend it on individualistic tasks (Lortie, 1975, p. 79). Fullan (1982) observed that teachers seldom invited others into their classroom and that "being private has a long tradition" (p. 118).

McPherson's (1972) study demonstrated that it was not thought to be one teacher's job to tell another how to teach. Instead, certain teachers were molded by others to traditional methods. Teachers seemed concerned about their image with other teachers. They felt an obligation to make their hard work observable by keeping the door open, taking work home, or complaining of fatigue. But seldom did teachers talk seriously about instructional strategies to help students. "Each teacher inherits the riches or the rags from the previous teacher with little or no dialogue among colleagues about expectations" (Lieberman & Miller, 1984, p. 23).

Teachers tended to conceal their problems from other teachers through jocular griping and superficial talk that was rarely serious. Fullan (1982) described the nature of this teacher talk as "sharing recipes for busy kitchens . . . or exchanging tricks of the trade" (p. 111). Lortie (1975) found that colleagues did not see themselves as sharing a viable, generalized body of knowledge and practice. Teachers had a great deal of autonomy and freedom from external control, but it led to traditionalism. They considered themselves lucky to be left alone but were never helped or supervised.

An Alternative for Teachers

According to the Carnegie Forum (1986), those entrusted with educating the citizens of the 21st century need to rebuild, not merely repair, the U.S. education system. Teachers are essential in this rebuilding because "The most important educational decisions are moral, not technical. Any serious effort to improve schools and to

create a vision based on democratic principles would therefore require the informed participation of teachers at both the inquiry and change levels" (Blase, 1985, p. 254).

Much of the reform literature addresses educational system administrators who mandate or coax teachers to make planned systemwide organized changes (Baldridge & Deal, 1983; Daft & Becker, 1978; Fullan, 1982; Gross, Giacquinta, & Bernstein, 1971; Wise, 1983; Wolcott, 1977). The focus in this study was not on outside efforts to implement organized change, but on an individual teacher's efforts to respond to the reform movement's call to improve education. Three areas that substantially affect teacher-initiated reform are critical inquiry, collaboration, and organizational literacy.

Critical Inquiry

Most teachers choose to teach for primarily intrinsic, personal reasons. Bolin and Falk (1987) described how a teacher's personal and professional beliefs can become so entwined that teaching becomes a way of life. Teaching has even been referred to as "missionary work" (Jackson, 1968, p. 134). But under the constraints of traditional teaching, teachers can lose sight of why they became teachers, and become frustrated, bored, and alienated (Fullan, 1982). When this happens, teachers need help from within to restore motivation.

Berlak and Berlak (1981) stated that the essential process for restoring motivation is for teachers to engage in critical inquiry. Because schooling is a face-to-face encounter between teachers and their students, to change in any substantive way the nature of this

encounter requires that teachers behave differently. And because teachers' day-to-day schooling behavior cannot be entirely controlled from above, teachers themselves must engage in critical inquiry if we expect schooling to be conducted intelligently.

The critical inquiry process enables teachers to reskill themselves, developing decision-making skills and professional judgement (Apple, 1987; Carr & Kemmis, 1986). It is an intellectual journey, not a standardized course to follow. It requires teachers to act reflectively and criticize, not merely act automatically and accept (Schon, 1983). It involves the kind of criticism advocated by Freire and Macedo (1987), "Interpreting one's interpretations, reconsidering contexts, developing multiple definitions, tolerating ambiguities so that we can learn from the attempt to resolve them" (p. xviii).

Things that have been taken for granted in education are rendered problematic and examined from a wide range of perspectives, not just accepted as the way things have always been. This examination should disclose "present patterns of resolution, alternative possibilities, the consequences of present and alternative patterns, the origins of present patterns and of proposals for alternatives" (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 237).

The search for alternatives is unending and would require the development of skills and knowledge teachers would use to change ineffective practices. By engaging in reflexive and reflective action, teachers would become researchers. For example, a teacher

might decide to emphasize holistic modes in reading and language activities for a given period of time and look at changes in children's attitudes toward reading, perhaps focusing on differences among particular sorts of children. The most crucial skill for this phase of inquiry is the ability to make correct inferences about the meanings children are taking. This requires teachers to develop the art of conversation with children. To hypothesize about long-range consequences of shifts in emphasis, teachers must consider the relationship of macro to micro, of their daily behavior to social continuity and change (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 244).

Critical inquiry challenges the assumptions upon which traditional practices are based. It is based on the assumption that "persons are both products and creatures of their own history" (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 230); it is not based on the mechanistic assumption that people are merely reactive organisms or simple participants in an existing reality (Heshusius, 1982). Freire (1987) believed that education is a continual process of problem-posing and resolution rather than answer-giving. This challenges the traditional belief that universal truths can be discovered and that there is one best way to teach.

Critical inquiry is often resisted because it is transformational, leading gradually to a major reorientation of one's work. It requires people to disorient themselves from things taken as normal and natural and search out other viewpoints. Critical inquiry may become like therapy or self-analysis. One's knowledge of

self is clarified as influences, such as personal and professional history and changes in society and culture lived through, are examined and the reasons for discrepancies are considered. "Seeing one's present behavior, understanding rather than rationalizing its origins, examining its consequences, and developing the necessary knowledge and skills to change it are not at all easy . . . the process of self-study can evoke anxiety and defensiveness" (Berlak & Berlak, 1981, p. 230).

Critical inquiry is not compatible with traditional educational systems due to this transformational potential. Traditional teaching requires unquestioning acceptance of standardized curriculums as the source of knowledge for instruction. "Teachers who feel reassured when the program seemingly tells them exactly what to do may be victims of false clarity" (Fullan, 1982, p. 118) because "as long as knowledge is posited as eternal wisdom, educators will be discouraged from becoming self-reflective about the internal assumptions which legitimate such knowledge" (McLaren, 1988, p. 223). Some critics have seemingly rationalized teachers' acceptance of the status quo, further discouraging critical inquiry by teachers. "The culture of the school, the demands of the classroom, and the usual way in which change is introduced do not permit, point to, or facilitate teacher involvement in exploring or developing more significant changes in educational practice" (Fullan, 1982, p. 120). Since critical inquiry is difficult for individuals, discouraged in most educational settings

and rationalized away by critics, working in collaboration with others is essential for educational reform.

<u>Collaboration</u>

Lortie (1975) suggested that an analytic orientation and a serious collaboration among teachers is needed for change to occur. The traditional culture of schools, which encourages teachers to work in isolation and disregards the personal nature of teaching, must be altered for change to occur (Blase, 1985; Bolin & Falk, 1987; Fullan, 1982; Sarason, 1972). These modifications cannot be mandated. Teachers who recognize the benefits of collaboration willingly interact with others and begin the process of change.

Critical inquiry requires collaboration. Individuals need help seeing their own situation and alternatives for action from the perspectives of others. When alternatives are implemented, support and collaboration is especially critical since first attempts are frequently awkward and may not provide a fair test of the idea. Fullan (1982) stressed the "primacy of personal contact" (p. 121) where teachers reflect, share, and simply converse about the meaning of change. He believes this context of socialization is not only needed but required if educational change is to happen. Goodman (1986) described an example of a school where teachers were paid to be part of study groups in which they read articles, used journals to reflect on the readings, and asked questions.

Supportive cultures can be built from within to provide teachers with opportunities for renewal and the development of their

professional knowledge (Berlak & Berlak, 1981; Blase, 1985; Bolin & Falk, 1987; Goodman, 1986; Lieberman & Miller, 1984). Collaboration in the search for alternatives helps teachers develop their professional knowledge, providing sustained development that leads to student benefits. Student gains are a source of revitalization and satisfaction to most teachers, thus renewing teachers' original commitment to teaching.

Organizational Literacy

Teachers must go beyond the selected traditions, beyond subject matter preparation and teaching pedagogy. They must also develop "organizational literacy . . . the basic psychological, social, political, and technical competencies essential to participatory decision making and problem solving at the school level" (Blase, 1985, p. 254). Organizational literacy requires critical inquiry and collaboration as teachers educate themselves and others but also requires that teachers learn to overcome the silencing effect of institutional power structures (Apple, 1987; McLaren, 1988). Fullan (1982) believed that teachers can be empowered as forces of change. Empowerment requires that teachers focus their critical inquiry and collaboration on developing the theoretical ability and moral incentive to transform, rather than merely serve, the dominant social order (McLaren, 1988).

One aspect of organizational literacy involves moderating one's commitment to change. Havelock (1973) stressed the need for teachers to be experts with their intended innovation, but Fullan (1982) warned

that too much commitment to a particular change hampers implementation. Teachers need to balance knowledge of and commitment to the change with the amount of pressure they exert to bring it about. Teachers who make a personal investment in the development and implementation of a change benefit from the learning process, but may lose touch with how others are affected by the changes and may consider others as mad or bad if they disagree. "To honestly make an effort at seeing other people's point of view is the first step toward reducing the egocentrism which hinders so many efforts at change" (Clarke, 1987, p. 394).

Clarke (1987) recommended that teachers view others as cybernetic systems, realizing that everyone involved in education contributes to the success and problems with educational innovations. "We all contribute, directly or indirectly, to ALL of what is occurring. Educational reform does not occur immediately nor as the result of one individual or one initiative. Is is the confluence of factors which permits change to occur" (Clark, 1987, p. 388). A cybernetic perspective requires an assumption of good faith on the part of all people in the system, realizing that everyone in the system is struggling with the same constraints to do the best job they can. It requires us all to look at ourselves and the system for solutions to our difficulties. Every time we suggest an alternative way of doing something we must ask ourselves, "What will be the response of the rest of the system?" and "What changes will have to occur in the rest

of the system to protect innovation in a particular portion of the system?" (p. 394).

Systems such as education resist change. People within the system cannot be forced to conform to what one person mandates, but conditions which encourage certain behaviors can be developed.

As teachers increase the power they have over their lives, the power imposed by the system will be reduced. Teachers must build a popular mass movement based on a critique of the present, a vision of the future, and a strategic plan (Apple, 1982).

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGICAL AND PERSONAL BACKGROUND

The educational reform literature of the 1980s has been critical of teachers and their practices. However, criticisms address only part of the problem. As McPherson (1972) stated:

> It is not enough either to castigate the teachers for incompetence, stupidity, and even cruelty, or to absolve them of all responsiblity, blaming the administrators, the parents, or the system. We must try to understand what happens to teachers, what they are trying to do, what elements dominate their self-image, what pressures they respond to that drastically affect the ways in which they teach and work with children. (p. X)

The study reported here evolved from the desire to understand what would happen if I tried to implement a whole language approach in my classroom. I was curious about the pressures that would affect my teaching.

Qualitative Research

This chapter contains four sections. The first section explains why a qualitative research design was chosen for this study. The second section presents reasons for and examples of a self-report case study approach, which was the one used here. Third, personal background of the researcher is presented. The final section describes the specific procedures used in this study.

A qualitative research design was a logical choice for several reasons. One, it fit the goal of the study which was to describe the process of teacher-initiated implementation of a whole language

approach. I began the study with no set hypotheses, and the goal was to describe the process.

Second, qualitative research has traits that make it uniquely suitable to the study of language teaching and learning. Qualitative research has been described as "flexible, discovery-oriented, and concerned with the particulars of context, the dynamics of social interactions, and the construction of meanings" (Kantor, Kirby, & Goetz, 1981, p. 305). This description is similar to what Goodman (1986) and Smith (1978) have used to describe language processes. Meaning is not in the data for researchers, just as meaning is not in the text for readers.

Third, qualitative research parallels many recommendations for reading instruction and for teaching in general. Qualitative research involves the same continual theory building and problem solving required in whole language teaching (Pelto, 1970). Just as whole language teaching and a renewed vision of teaching challenge traditional assumptions, qualitative research challenges the assumptions of quantitative research:

> The quantitative effort to capture, and make static our world derives from an interest to control and predict. Such an effort will continue to fail as long as human beings resist control. Qualitative research is politically progressive, as it is epistemologically sophisticated, because it understands that a basic meaning of human life is movement, conflict, resolution, conflict, resolution, each thesis and anti-thesis opposing each other in ways which give birth to a new order of understanding and life. The task is not to control this movement, nor is it merely to portray it. It is to contribute to it, acting as midwives in the labor which is human history coming to form. (Pinar, 1988, p. 151)

Traditional models of naturalistic research have been criticized for ignoring the internal states of participants and for not recognizing the importance of the subjective view (Sevigny, 1981). Case studies attempt to address this concern by providing a detailed examination of one setting, subject, or event (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). A primary data-gathering technique in qualitative research is participant observation in which phenomena are examined from the participant's perspective. In this study, the participant was also the researcher. To reflect this dual role, the term self-report case study is used in this report.

This type of research is similar in intent to, but broader in focus than, what has been referred to as action-research, teacher-research, or case studies done by teachers (Bissex & Bullock, 1987; Goswami & Stillman, 1987; Hovda & Kyle, 1989). The intent of teacher-research is for teachers to investigate concerns about various aspects of teaching and learning. The intent of this study was to investigate concerns about teaching from a whole language perspective. However, the focus in teacher-research is on problems that arise from teaching; the focus in the self-report case study reported here is on large-scale changes infused into the classroom.

Only a few studies have been done in education where the researcher was the research subject. Sevigny (1981) employed a multiple case-study design in which one aspect was to become a complete participant as he assumed the role of various beginning students as well as a teacher for a semester at a time. He used

informal self-reflective analysis and historical reconstructions, similar to the methods used in this study; however, he was an outsider hoping to develop a sensitive awareness of student-teacher interactions.

McPherson (1972) was also a complete participant in her study of teachers in a small rural school. She provided an insider's perspective, but the focus of her study was different from this study. As a teacher in the same school, she recorded over the course of a year her observations of colleagues without their knowledge that they were being observed. Her study focused on the teacher and "what the system does to her, what the role-pressures are, and why she so often fails to fulfill the high goals we set for her and which she sets for herself" (p. X). Her observations were of colleagues and herself in the normal routines as teachers, not as innovators. The study reported here focuses on similar pressures, but the emphasis is on pressures involved with the process of change.

The case study done by Elbaz (1983) described one teacher's attempts at being innovative, but it was written by an outside observer and the scope of understanding was different from this study. Elbaz documented the thinking process of Sarah, the teacher, as she developed and implemented a new course. Data were collected from a series of open-ended discussions with Sara and two periods of observation. Sara discovered that "hostile pressures . . . made it difficult to do the real work of teaching" (p. IX). However, this study of Sara focused on understanding how teachers respond to their

work. The focus was not on describing these pressures or explaining how they could be dealt with more effectively, which the study reported here attempts to do.

Webb (1980) was a participant observer who recorded her innovation in teaching high school literature as a pilot study. The focus of her study was on later collaborations with and observations of other teachers as they implemented the same approach.

Dow (1979) provided an insiders' perspective on change as a member of an outside agency developing and introducing a new social studies program. Dow included a historical narrative describing the context in which the program evolved which is what the current study attempts to do. Dow's study is also similar to this one because he included personal reflections and assessments of what was happening, acknowledging that his participation directly influenced the results.

An important aspect of the study reported here is my personal history, which Carew and Lightfoot (1979) recognized as a way of increasing the number of windows to look at the teacher. Knowing some personal background of the participant/researcher is essential for interpreting self-report case studies. "To understand a teacher's behavior in more than a superficial sense, one needs to know something about his upbringing, cultural background, values, and ideology" (Carew & Lightfoot, 1979, p. 103). In this respect, the self-report case study is similar to autobiographical (Pinar, 1988) or personal history (Krall, 1988) research. "Our life-histories are not

liabilities to be exorcised but are the very precondition for knowing" (Pinar, 1988, p. 134). As Mills (1959) stated:

> We have come to know that every individual lives from one generation to the next, in some society; that he lives out a biography, and that he lives it out within some historical sequence. By the fact of his living he contributes, however minutely, to the shaping of this society and to the course of its history, even as he is made by society and by its historical push and shove. No social study that does not come back to the problem of biography, of history and of their intersections within a society has completed its intellectual journey. (p. 6)

Personal Background

As far back as I can remember, my career aspirations were to teach. Occasionally I considered becoming a foreign missionary or joining the Peace Corps; the commitment to helping others developed early.

The decision to teach could not have been for my love of school or for my dedication to learning. During my public school years, I had more than my share of disciplinary actions from teachers and administrators. Academic concerns extended only to the point that classes I needed to become a teacher were successfully completed. I was more concerned with my extracurricular activities than with any great academic achievements.

I regretted my inattention to learning when I struggled through the first 2 years of college, but it did not seem like a handicap once the education courses began. The classes for future teachers reinforced my belief that I already had learned everything I needed to know about teaching from my baby-sitting and Bible school teaching experiences. I just needed my diploma as a ticket into teaching.

First Teaching Positions

My first teaching job was in kindergarten in the same small, midwestern school system from which I had graduated 4 years before. Many of the 21 students in my high school graduating class stayed in the community to raise their own families. Several of my students' parents had once been my classmates. They were a reminder of a kind of constancy I feared.

I started my first year of teaching with an abundance of confidence, enthusiasm and creative ideas, but my spirits soon were dampened by the need for crowd control. My principal commented on the need for a more orderly environment but offered no suggestions. I called for assistance from our area specialist who helped me develop techniques to get the class to do what I wanted them to do.

After that first year of experimenting, I was on my way. I decided teaching kindergarten was my niche in life. There was no set curriculum. Workbooks were provided to develop readiness skills, but I was in complete control of what, when, and how things would be taught. I became totally caught up in the challenge of keeping 5-year-olds busy with academic tasks. I never questioned what I was teaching; my consuming concern was how to teach things in different ways. By the third and last year I taught there, I had developed a rotating, ticket-controlled system of over 25 different learning centers. Visitors to the classroom were in awe of all the activities. That was the last time I would enjoy so much autonomy.

Teaching Overseas

Wanting to break away from the small town and looking for a new challenge after 3 years of teaching, I decided to teach overseas. My husband and I packed up a truck and moved to San Salvador, El Salvador.

The school was called The American School, but American students were the minority. Most were children of wealthy Salvadorians who wanted their children to learn English. I was one of three kindergarten teachers. My morning class was Spanish speaking, but I spoke no Spanish; my job was to teach them English. The afternoon class, however, spoke English.

With the English-speaking class I was again in complete control of curriculum, with no teachers to compete or confer with and no administrative interference. I was the expert from the states in this class. However, in my non-English speaking classes the curriculum was mandated and standardized. I was expected to follow a scripted manual for teaching English that required daily drills and repetitions of words, phrases, and sentences.

After the first month, I was so frustrated with the drills that I decided to make some changes. For instance, we produced plays of classic children's stories using English. I was excited about teaching again as students would knock on the door after recess and wait for me to ask, "Who is it?" and they would reply, "It's me, Little Red Riding Hood".

But the other teachers complained to the principal, and I was ordered back to the drills contained in the manuals. I had a vague notion of impropriety about this, but I could not articulate my concerns. The repetitiveness and impersonal deliveries were unbearable, so I enlisted my aide to teach the English lessons for me. When I watched the drills, I wondered what the students were thinking, but I couldn't ask them. I didn't speak their language.

This experience started a shift in my thinking about teaching. I became less concerned about my own creative outlets and more concerned about what was good for students. Since neither the teachers nor administrators would consider instructional alternatives, the following year I taught only the English speaking class.

I regained my autonomy and refocused my attention on student needs. I had many learning centers in the room, but now students helped decide what would be in them and their ideas shaped the curriculum more often than the latest ideas from Teacher magazine.

While my professional insights were being raised, I was also being exposed to different social conditions. I considered myself to be from a relatively poor family, with five siblings competing for the benefits of my father's meager salary, but poverty had new meaning for me as I drove past homes crudely constructed of cardboard and plastic, some built against the walled fences surrounding a wealthy family's mansion. Even with the constant reminders of injustice, I tried to keep my attention on teaching. Only later did I realize what a very narrow view of teaching this was.

By the end of the second year, it was impossible to ignore the political and social unrest in the country. Neighborhood children slipped notes under our door telling us to go home, buses were burned, people were ambushed and assassinated just blocks from the school, students were escorted to school with armed bodyguards, and soldiers appeared everywhere. My naivete insulated me from feelings of personal danger, but we decided to take our two children and return to the states.

We settled temporarily in the university town of my college years, just 10 miles from my hometown. I became a full-time student again, this time to get a ticket into school administration. I was convinced I could help students and teachers more as an administrator, and I was so sure my way was right.

Increasing concern for the situation in Central America emerged as I worked on a master's degree in Educational Administration. There were almost daily newspaper accounts of atrocities being committed there; campus signs appeared and meetings were held about these issues. My curiosity and concern for the social issues were growing, and I was beginning to notice similarities within our own social structures.

When I finished my degree, there were few openings for principals in the area, so we decided to look for overseas possibilities. The realities of discrimination became apparent as many administrators openly stated their preference for men. I had marched for the Equal

Rights Amendment with thousands of others in Chicago that year, but I was just beginning to understand the significance of it.

We eventually received an offer from Saudi Arabia to teach; I was to teach third grade. I was impressed that they wanted "only the best" teachers and that we would be receiving a substantially higher salary than in the states. I mistakenly assumed this meant more autonomy and status for the teaching profession.

Teaching conditions in Saudi Arabia seemed optimal. Class sizes were small and the budget seemed unlimited. I was assigned an aide for nearly half the day, and the principal was helpful and supportive. But the most haunting memory of that first month, after observing and visiting with the other third-grade teachers, was the striking similarities in all the classrooms. I expected more variety from America's best. At the time I was not concerned with why they were so similar, but with whether I would be allowed to be different.

Two people were particularly supportive of my experimental approach. One was a first-grade teacher working with my husband. This teacher had been using a holistic approach for several years and was anxious to share it with others. He provided a steady stream of literature on the topic which I enthusiastically absorbed. I had wanted to teach more for the child and less for the teacher, and now I was finding the theoretical foundations for doing that.

The two first-grade teachers and myself met at lunch to discuss how we were implementing the whole language philosophy. Others became interested, and a Whole Language Support Group evolved. Some teachers

remained, by choice, unaffected. But the important thing to me was that teachers were talking with each other about how to improve student learning.

The other supportive person was the principal. He worked to understand what I was trying to do and supported and defended my efforts. The school district was involved in a Madeline Hunter program, and some central administrators felt the whole language approach was not compatible with the Hunter model. My principal helped appease them and at times even concealed my actual methods. This was my first experience with administrative structures beyond the building principal.

The teaching situation was ideal for me, but the culture was difficult. Teachers did not have the status I had anticipated, and women seemed to have even less. To illustrate, we lived in an American compound with other employees of the oil company. Occupations were given numerical rankings and special privileges such as movies and swimming pools were open to employees who were 11s or higher. Teachers were considered a 10, but were given special permission to use the facilities anyway. As a woman, I was not allowed to drive or be without a male escort outside the compound. Women were not supposed to work except as teachers and nurses. I was paid less than my husband and was required to dress modestly.

I came to understand and appreciate the Saudis' views toward women and teachers, but I could not accept them. After the second year, I returned to the states.

<u>Return to the U.S.</u>

I resettled in the same university community, and took a temporary administrative position in the school district of an adjoining city, the setting for this study. I became an assistant principal at the intermediate school with the highest minority, low-income population. This 1-year assignment provided a new perspective on the problems of teaching because it was my first exposure to minority and low-income students. Much of my day involved disciplinary actions with students. I was treating symptoms without the time or knowledge to identify the basic problems and work toward lasting solutions.

There were few outlets for my knowledge of whole language that year. However, I maintained my interest by reading literature and attending professional meetings. When Frank Smith spoke at the university, I stayed for the small-group discussion after his public address. Sitting next to him, I was puzzled by his responses to teachers' questions pertaining to the practical application of his ideas. He told us that he was a philosopher, a thinker, and that it was our job to apply his ideas in practice, not his.

The following year I took the only available opening in the district, teaching eighth-grade science at one of the other intermediate schools. I taught the same science lesson, one after the other, five times a day. I had no formal training in science, so it was a struggle to keep up with the content. But more overwhelming was the fact that now, rather than teaching the same roomful of children

all day or working with them one-on-one, 25-30 students went in and out of my class each hour. There was little time for personal involvement or individual diagnosis.

The major obstacle for me at this time was the lack of support from the principal. He had been my colleague, working with me on administrative committees, but now he was my boss, seeming to work against me. He handed me the teacher manuals and returned only to criticize my bulletin boards, unorganized desk, incomplete lesson plans, and lack of supervision in the hallways. Now that I had become more student-centered, I spent more time developing teaching strategies to improve learning and less time creating an ostentatious classroom. My reward was a poor evaluation. I realized that I would have to look like a good teacher as well as be a good teacher. I recognized the futility of trying to change this situation, especially since much of my emotional energy at the time was expended on personal matters. I took an educational leave at midyear.

For the next year and a half, I was a full-time doctoral student and graduate assistant at the same university I had graduated from twice before. This was the first time my educational goal was to advance my own learning. I was not seeking a ticket into or out of teaching; I wanted to know more about being a better teacher. I also hoped the status of Ed.D. might give me more credibility with administrators.

My philosophical understanding of whole language teaching blossomed during this time. I had no formal background in reading

but, recognizing its importance in elementary schools, chose reading as my area of emphasis. Two of my instructors, who later became my advisors, were published advocates of a holistic approach. The dialogue among students and instructors helped me articulate and formalize my ideas about how children learn to read.

I attended my second International Reading Association convention in 1983. The high point for me was attending the meeting of a special interest group, "Political Issues Affecting Literacy," being addressed by Ken Goodman. My understanding of the contextual influences on teaching was expanding. Many of the ideas I had been reading about gained new significance as I was introduced to the personalities behind those ideas. These were people, philosophically not unlike myself, who shared a vision of what should happen in schools.

Other course work included several research classes. Initial courses emphasized quantitative approaches to research. Later I enrolled in a qualitative research class as the only student. I resisted the idea that quantifiable data could prove there were best ways of teaching in much the same way I had resisted the idea that following a teacher's manual could prove students were learning what they needed to learn. I believed teaching to be far too complex to hold any definite answers. I accepted the idea that qualitative information provides a holistic description of educational events that is open for interpretation just as I had accepted the idea that whole language teaching provides a holistic view of students' learning that is open for interpretation.

Jefferson School

A week after the public schools had started classes, I was called back from my educational leave to interview with the building principal at Jefferson School for a fourth-grade position. The study reported here is based on my experiences during my second year of teaching at this school. Consequently, more background about Jefferson School will be presented here than was presented about the earlier schools.

When I walked into the principal's small, dimly lit office for my job interview, he offered me a seat across from his desk. Mr. Richards was wearing a Marine cap, and Marine emblems were displayed on his desk. He turned down his radio slightly, glanced at my resume, and commented briefly on my world travels and doctoral student status.

I planned to be brief and direct during the interview. I wanted to avoid the conflicts experienced with my previous administrator, so I told him that I was not a traditional teacher, that I liked to try different approaches in my classroom, and that it was important for me to know that I would have his support. He assured me there would be no problem with that and related some of his own teaching experiences which he considered innovative.

We then toured the building while he related his own background of experiences and the improvements he had made in the semester as principal. There were no questions about how I would be teaching, which seemed to be the trend throughout the time of this study.

Although Mr. Richards had significant impact on general school policies, he remained relatively uninvolved with my program.

Mr. Richards described the Jefferson School student population as predominantly low-income with one of the highest minority populations in the district (approximately 40%) and the lowest standardized test scores. He indicated that most of the student body, which numbered about 400, received free or reduced lunches and many of them also ate breakfast at the school. He mentioned numerous behavior problems in the school last year which he had worked to reduce.

As we toured the older, two-story building, Mr. Richards pointed out the classroom and teacher for each grade level. On the first floor were two kindergarten classes, three first grades, two seconds, his office, the art room, music room, and gym. The second floor included the library, two special education classes, three Chapter 1 classrooms, two third-grade classes, a combination second-third grade class, two fifths, and two fourths.

The classes had a number of transient students; class enrollments was usually about 30 students. At least one-fourth of the students received supplementary reading instruction. More than half of the students began fourth-grade reading at least one level below grade level in the basal program.

The adopted districtwide reading program was derived from a basal reading series chosen by a committee of teachers. Approval from the Reading/Language Arts Coordinator was required if additional supplementary materials for reading instruction were used.

Students were allowed to be placed two reading levels below their grade level. If the student's deficiencies were greater, it was recommended that the principal consider referring the student for evaluation for special programs. Teachers and administrators monitored student progress in the reading series through criterion-referenced tests provided by the basal series. Information was available at the building level regarding student performance after completing each unit within a book as well as after completing each book. At the district level, administrators monitored student reading progress through the use of standardized tests as well as the basal reading tests.

Teachers kept records of test scores from the basal tests and gave them to the building principal for review, who then sent them to the reading consultant. Teachers were encouraged to label reading groups and keep them consistent throughout the year so that their progress could be monitored by administrators. According to a memo from the Language Arts Coordinator, May 2, 1986, "Each group must be labeled on each report. The label must remain the same throughout the year so that groups can be followed from level to level."

Principals could exercise an option to recommend placement of students above or below suggested guidelines by filing a statement with Dr. Newman, head of the division of curriculum and instruction. Pacing charts were given to teachers to ensure coverage of basal materials. Three pacing choices were available: maximum, average, or variable. Fourth-grade students were expected to complete Level 10.

Choice of pacing schedules was determined by how close students were to grade level. For example, fourth-grade students beginning Level 9 and needing maximum pacing time (177 days) were expected to complete Level 9 in Grade 4. They would do Level 10 in Grade 5 at average pacing. According to the district's reading instruction handbook, "Maximum pacing for difficult units coupled with shortening literature units should allow enough flexibility to ensure the completion of Level 10 in Grade 5."

When Mr. Richards and I reached the room I would be teaching in, he explained that the other fourth-grade teacher, Ms. Rogers, would be next door. He explained how the teachers were organized into teams. Each team had a leader who met with the principal once a week to discuss school concerns and issues. The leaders would share the information with their teams at weekly team meetings. Ms. Rogers, the two fifth-grade teachers, Ms. Eggers and Ms. Hammond, a resource teacher and I would be a team. Mr. Richards then showed me the teaching manuals and left.

My room had wall-to-wall desks arranged in rows on a hardwood floor. New windows covered the west wall. The walls reaching up to the 10-foot ceilings and the two bulletin boards covering the south wall were decorated with colorful, purchased materials. The east wall was mostly cupboards. When I opened one of the doors, there was an avalanche of papers and school supplies. The north wall was covered with chalkboards, waiting for the next lesson. That was a Friday. I started teaching on Monday.

Since the previous teacher had taught the class for a week, he had also written lesson plans for the next week. I studied the manuals all weekend and decided to follow his plans.

The first day was like a nightmare. The room felt like a cracker box after 29 students filed in. Nearly half were minority students and over half were boys, some very close to my size. I was shocked with the off-task behaviors and constant chatter. I later learned that the class had been stacked with behavior problems since it was assumed that a male teacher could handle them. This became a challenge to me as a teacher and as a woman. It was harder than anything I had ever done.

The greatest influence on how I approached this challenge was the doctoral course in the sociology of education I attended one evening a week during that first semester. As we discussed the philosophical implications of low-income and minority oppression in a capitalist society, I began to make connections with my experiences at Jefferson. I had accepted the American creed that all should be treated equally as human beings, especially after witnessing the blatant violation of this creed in other countries. It was difficult to accept the evidence that many of the teaching practices employed in schools were discriminatory, yet little was being done to change these practices. Even more difficult to accept was the idea that the hegemony of the capitalist system had convinced educators that traditional practices are what is best for all. Believing that education provided equal opportunities for all was like believing in Santa Claus; it was

comforting to believe, but traumatic when the truth surfaced. Knowing the root of many of the school problems my students faced often left me feeling hopeless, but I kept reading, discussing concerns in my university class, and talking to other teachers.

I did not hesitate to ask other teachers about what they were doing to handle discipline problems. Many teachers thought I was a beginning teacher. I was not offended by this perception and wished I could have used that as an excuse. I was extremely frustrated that all my experiences and education had not prepared me better for working with so many unmotivated and highly active students.

I relied most on my partner, Ms. Rogers. She had been teaching fourth grade at Jefferson for many years and was working on a graduate degree in school administration. She was close to my age and had the same marital status, so we became quick friends as well as professional allies.

When I first mentioned to Ms. Rogers that I would like to try some alternative approaches to teaching reading, she warned me of the danger if Ms. Crane found out. Ms. Crane was the Reading Language Arts Coordinator for the district. She was very close to retirement and, from what everyone said, was very set in her ideas about teaching reading.

A similar warning was expressed by a parent of one of my students who was also an administrator in the district. He came to see me because he was concerned that his daughter had not used a workbook yet. I kept a collection of resources next to my desk in case anyone

questioned my approach. I showed this parent the materials on Veatch's (1984) individualized reading and Graves' (1983) process approach to writing and explained my goals. He seemed to accept my approach but advised me not to let Ms. Crane find out I was not using the basal. He promised he would not tell anyone.

I did not like the feeling of doing something wrong, so the next day I called Ms. Crane and told her I had some questions about the reading program. She came to observe the next day while I was teaching reading. She stood toward the front of the room with her arms crossed and expressionless. I offered her the Veatch book, but she declined. While my students were in music class, Ms. Crane and I discussed the rules for teaching reading.

She gave me three choices: (a) use the basal as provided by the district with the manual plans as my major focus, (b) use the basal text and manual with my own ideas and activities in lieu of using workbooks or duplicating masters, or (c) use the basal until a detailed plan was written outlining the specifics of my individualized reading instruction.

These choices were typed and given to the principal and me (see Appendix A). The principal was instructed to follow up on my decision. Mr. Richards made no comment to me in response to or as a follow up to this memo. Since this was my first year of teaching there, I was formally evaluated, which required two observational visits by the principal. Both visits were made after this memo was sent, and both were done while I was teaching spelling, not reading.

I tried following the basals again, but was not happy with the students' responses. I then went in the direction I had started, following other teachers' advice: "Just get your scores in when you're supposed to, close the door, and do whatever you like." This became my strategy until Ms. Crane approached Mr. Richards with plans for a pilot project to get students closer to grade level in reading before they passed to the intermediate school. Jefferson was one of the schools in the district selected for this project, and fourth grade was the focus for the first phase.

Ms. Crane's project was based on the belief that students not reading on grade level needed more direct instruction from the teacher than students who were reading at or above grade level. Ms. Crane had grouping suggestions for Ms. Rogers and me to consider over the Christmas break.

A meeting was set with Ms. Crane for January 15 to share our decision. Mr. Richards was invited but responded with a note indicating that, "I wish not to be in attendance--inform me of the outcome." The meeting began with a discussion of high-risk students who did not qualify for any special program. Ms. Crane's concerns centered on which tests were given and how the students scored. I explained that my students seemed to have negative attitudes about school and low self-concepts, giving up easily on tasks they felt to be too difficult. Ms. Crane responded with questions about how students were doing on their periodic reading tests and the Dolch word test.

Finally we turned the conversation to the next year's program. Ms. Crane was concerned about the students who were promoted from third to fourth grade because there was a significant decrease in allotted time for reading instruction in the upper grades. She wanted to implement a program of more reading time for off-level readers before she retired at the end of the first semester of the next year. The recommendation was to give more direct instructional time for teaching skills to off-level readers.

Ms. Rogers and I agreed to departmentalize completely for the following year. I would teach reading and language arts to the low group in an uninterrupted block from 9:05-12:00 in the morning while she taught math, science, and social studies to the top group. We would switch classes at noon.

My concern with Ms. Crane's suggestions was her expectation that the low group should get more of what had failed them before, drill on specific isolated reading skills. Since we had clashed philosophically before, I reserved comment and decided instead to write a proposal for a more holistic approach. I explained my concerns with Ms. Crane's proposal and my own proposal for improving student's reading ability to Mr. Richards. He nodded as I was talking but made few comments. When I finished my explanation, he decided to call in Dr. Newman, Associate Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction Services.

The next morning I met with Dr. Newman and Mr. Richards. I explained again my concern with Ms. Crane's plan and my own philosophy

of reading. Dr. Newman seemed fairly open to my ideas and agreed with many of the points I made. She summarized her opinion with a statement that indicated I could do anything I wanted, even sing the lesson to them if I wanted, but that I would have to have the same accountability as everyone else. As long as I gave the same periodic tests as everyone else, she assured me that I could teach any way I wanted to. Her greatest concern was that what worked for me might not work for other teachers.

I proceeded to write a brief proposal, with Ms. Rogers' input, and submitted it to Ms. Crane in April. It described how students would be ability grouped in that off-level reading students would have reading during the morning when there was a larger uninterrupted block of instructional time and the on-level students would have reading in the afternoons. Reading instruction would be organized around the skill sequence provided in the level 10 basal program, and whole-class instruction would be used to present the skills, as recommended in Becoming a Nation of Readers (Anderson et al., 1985). Students would read from a basal reader at their own instructional level, but a variety of other materials would be used to support the skill lessons. Skills from previous levels, particularly decoding skills, would be continually reinforced as needed when students were reading or with direct instruction if a group of students demonstrated a particular weakness.

I proposed that writing instruction be interwoven into the reading program so that most independent work during reading would be

the development of students' own forms of writing rather than workbook forms. Independent research skills would be developed during language arts instruction and applied in Ms. Rogers' content area classes. Accountability measures would be as dictated by the district for all teachers. Students would take periodic reading tests at their appropriate levels to determine areas of weakness. In addition, other forms of student evaluation would be developed to provide valid measures of academic growth in reading and writing.

After the proposal was sent to Ms. Crane, I received from her a summary of the district expectations for the project (see Appendix B). It included goals, activities, a description of what Ms. Crane would do, and the district requirement. As part of her responsibility to my program, Ms. Crane agreed to make monthly classroom observations with follow-up conferences for the purpose of adjusting curriculum and procedures and reviewing test data as they were completed. She also was responsible for a written summary of the project, with input from me, at the end of the semester. This would include evaluation, concerns, plans for the remainder of the year, and implementation recommendations for others.

I spent the summer writing my dissertation proposal, which was a plan for describing my experience implementing a whole language approach, and reading more about whole language teaching as well as strategies for working with at-risk students. I wanted all the knowledge I could to help my students break free from the bonds of oppression. I was so concerned with what I would do for students that

I ignored the warning signs that others would not appreciate my missionary zeal.

Methodology

This study evolved from the forces described in the preceding sections; the situation was not constructed for purposes of the study. The self-report case study design was particularly effective for providing an in-depth perspective on change from the teacher's point of view. As with any autobiographical-type study, establishing a single definite beginning point is difficult. Nevertheless, formal intensive data collection was done at Jefferson School during the first half of the 1986-1987 school year, the second year I was at the school. Casual observations and document collection continued to the end of the school year.

During the first month and a half of formal data collection, daily entries were logged on a word processor. I kept a spiral notebook on my desk at school to record noteworthy events during the day. Every evening I typed my reflections of the day, aided by the notes from school. By the middle of October, I switched to weekly summaries for two reasons. One, writing daily reflections was extremely time-consuming. Since I was trying to implement a new program, I lacked the time to plan instruction and summarize and reflect on field notes on a daily basis. And two, my field notes were becoming somewhat repetitive.

Changes in my observational scope occurred as Spradley (1980) described. The focus was wide in the beginning, including many

observations. Although these continued, my observations became more focused on specific interactions related to the reading program and the process of change. By the end of the formal data collection period, observations were selective, generally including only those related to the change effort. The field notes also became more reflective. An attempt was made to separate descriptive and reflective notes as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), but this study seemed to lend itself more to an integrated account of both due to the autobiographical nature of the study.

The duel role of teacher/researcher was difficult to maintain using this self-report case study design. Interactions with others helped to achieve a balance between objectivity and emotional involvement in the process. Several outside observers provided documentation during this study. Three observers were district administrators. The District Language Arts Coordinator made monthly visits through January. There was a follow-up conference or write up after each observation. Two other district administrators observed and provided feedback on several occasions.

A master's degree student in reading education observed weekly during the first semester. Her write-ups became part of my collection of field notes. During her visits, she also interviewed students and observed a third-grade teacher, the other fourth-grade teacher, and a fifth-grade teacher. This provided a perspective on what my students experienced the previous year, the other half of their day that year, and what they would have the next year. Two doctoral students

interviewed teachers in my building to document their perceptions of my changes. A member of my dissertation committee also interviewed the reading language arts coordinator. Documents such as staff bulletins, memos, student writing samples and test scores, and personal notes from others were collected. At the end of the formal period of data collection, there were over 300 pages of single-spaced notes and over 100 documents.

My notes were periodically read by and discussed with a member of my dissertation committee. The purpose of these debriefing sessions was to clarify understandings as suggested by Green & Wallet (1981). I also clarified my interpretations of events by discussing them with the other fourth-grade teacher and occasionally sharing portions of my actual field notes with her for her interpretation.

Similar to McPherson (1972), I adopted a conceptual scheme to hold together all the observations and interpretations made over the 2-year period with particular emphasis on the 4-month period of formal data collection. This conceptual scheme evolved from numerous readings and rereadings of the notes and attempts to make sense of the data. The data then were organized and arranged in reference to this scheme, which is reported in Chapter 5.

This study is an insider's perspective. Information is presented about the constraints one whole language teacher faced as she attempted to implement change in a skills-oriented district. The next chapter details the key events relative to this change process that occurred during the period of formal data collection.

CHAPTER III

IMPLEMENTATION

This chapter describes my attempt to implement a whole language philosophy. It serves as a preliminary for the chapter to follow that analyzes how my idealistic views were transformed. This chapter provides a chronology of my efforts during the period of actual program implementation. Each monthly summary focuses on issues that influenced my idealism. This narrative begins with the second paid workday I was allotted to complete my plans for an alternative program.

August

When I arrived at the district administration building, Ms. Crane was sitting alone in a large room with several tables. I said, "good-morning" and asked about her summer. She replied with a simple "OK" and proceeded with concerns about my project.

First, she wanted to know how I was going to develop vocabulary since she had not seen any mention of that on my rough-draft proposal. I hesitated with my response, trying to decide whether I should tell her what I thought she wanted to hear or what I believed about teaching vocabulary. She told me I needed to teach vocabulary and decoding and that I needed to come up with a plan for getting it done. I stifled my impulse to describe how I thought students learned these skills through meaningful experiences with reading; instead, I told her I would work on it.

The other concern involved scheduling the basal tests. I had produced a year-long planning calendar at our June meeting, so I just reviewed it with her. She asked which tests I would be giving. I told her that I planned to give only the Level 9 test since the Level 7, 8, and 9 tests were very similar. I asked for her opinion.

She responded that I should be careful not to frustrate the children with tests that were too hard for them to read. I recalled the school policy that students should not be placed in material more than two levels below their grade level. If they were lower than that, they were to be referred to a special program. In our building, there were not enough special programs for all the students that would qualify.

She also mentioned that the students might miss skills by skipping tests 7 and 8. She suggested that I go back and check so that all the skills were tested. Verbally I agreed, but mentally I resisted. I considered the tests invalid assessments of reading ability and therefore a waste of time. However, I knew using the approved assessments was one of the key requirements for getting permission to try something different, so I went along.

Our philosophical differences were highlighted when Ms. Crane returned to the decoding issue. Her view was that someone had to tell students the generalizations; the students needed to be able to talk about how they figured out words. I recorded her comments as though I was taking notes on what needed to be done. This might have encouraged her as she went on to tell me how to teach students

strategies for figuring out unknown words. She went into rudimentary concepts about topics such as phonics, context clues, and syllabication as if these were new for me.

I was tensing up again. I resented her condescending tone of voice and the simplistic content of her message which implied that I had no expertise in reading. I tried to imagine how Ken Goodman or Frank Smith might respond. I believed, as they do, that students intuitively and inductively figure out their own generalizations about sound-symbol correspondences from many meaningful experiences with reading and that students might not always be able to articulate these generalizations. I sensed that Ms. Crane and I had similar goals for students but very different ideas for how to reach these goals.

I wanted to change the subject, so I tried to discuss some options for getting other reading material for students to use. Her immediate response was that I must have everything okayed through the proper channels. She warned, "You need to cover yourself by checking with anything that's not the normal thing." I was told they might "slap your wrist" if anything was done without permission. I mentioned the channels I had been through with the superintendent and associate superintendent. She briskly responded, "Just so it goes through the right channels, then you should be okay," and abruptly got up to go back to her work at the other table.

For the rest of the morning I worked on an evaluation plan that would fit my holistic goals. I was struggling with finding the best way to assess attitude and interest and how to keep an ongoing record

of student performance and progress. I knew that record keeping was very time-consuming, so I wanted something efficient but effective for formative evaluation. The basal reader tests would not help me understand individual learning processes. I considered these required tests as a means of getting past the gatekeepers.

I still had not produced anything I was comfortable with by noon, but I decided to change tasks; I worked on deciding what materials to use. I had explored different options during the summer for acquiring money to buy books for the class. It came down to making choices about how to spend a very limited resource--time. I didn't have enough of it to actively pursue the money options myself and still keep up with the other demands on my time. I decided to use only available materials. I thought it would be politically wiser because many people, especially Ms. Crane, had stressed the fact that there were no funds available. I hoped my program might be better accepted if I didn't have to purchase a lot of extra materials, but I couldn't stop visualizing how much better it could be with other materials.

Later, I asked to leave so that I could go to our school library and the local education agency to see what books were available. Ms. Crane hesitantly agreed since it was over an hour before the designated quitting time, but she said she would put me down on the time sheet for working the full 8 hours.

I went to my classroom at Jefferson to check on available materials. I sat at my desk for a few minutes contemplating the challenge that lay ahead for me. It all seemed so overwhelming. Ms.

Crane had expected me to plan my whole year in 2 days, and I had begun to have that expectation for myself. But I was far from having everything planned and had almost forgotten the incompatibility of that expectation with my whole language philosophy. My program needed to evolve from the students; I shouldn't impose some predetermined program on them. But I needed a structure to work from, and I needed elements that would satisfy the district. This became a recurring dilemma.

The next 5 work days were for all teachers to prepare for the arrival of students. The first day back we had a staff meeting. Mr. Richards moved quickly through the meeting's agenda, allowing no time for discussion or questions. When he read the budget information, he highlighted his plan to give me an extra allowance because I was not using workbooks. After the meeting was adjourned, a teacher grabbed my arm and said, "Congratulations on your coup." This caught me off guard, and I asked what she meant. She said, "Against workbooks." It was great to hear that because I appreciated any sign of support.

I spent many hours that first week getting the room organized. I was able to rationalize the time spent on housekeeping tasks since my effectiveness as a teacher had once been judged by the appearance of my room. I took down all the phonic rules from last year's teacher and put up posters to promote reading and writing. The storage closets were cleaned out and organized. My desk was pushed into a corner in the front of the room. I cleared the space above the windows to leave room for a list of student-generated words.

There was one round table in the back east corner and one long table in the back west corner where a collection of class books was displayed. My room and the adjoining fourth grade room were the smallest classrooms in the building and the only ones without an office or closet outside the classroom. The bookshelves and the file cabinet were cleared of the workbooks, worksheets, old text books, and outdated materials. The file cabinet was emptied so each class had a drawer for their personal writing files.

Between housekeeping chores, I met with Ms. Rogers, the other fourth-grade teacher, to coordinate our curricular areas. We sketched some year-long plans for integrating my reading and language arts with her content area subjects. I went to lunch all week with Ms. Rogers and two other teachers. Ms. Stevens was one of the kindergarten teachers and Ms. Williams was our guidance counselor. This group became a continuing source of support for me.

After lunch the first day Ms. Eggers, a fifth-grade teacher, stopped by to discuss the students she had this year that I had last year. The fifth grade had departmentalized, so Ms. Eggers, like me, taught all the reading and language arts. Ms. Eggers was concerned about which books the students should be in. I made some suggestions for grouping these students based on work habits, attitudes, and performance. She also was worried that she could not use the Level 10 materials for those students who had already been through it. I tried to assure her that since these students had not read every story and

their reading skills were low that they might benefit from going through it again. She asked to see the test results.

When I showed them to her, I pointed out the low scores on decoding and high scores on every other part of the test. Her response was that Ms. Crane had told her during the summer that the group coming in was really low in decoding and would need work on that in the beginning. I tried to defend my teaching from last year with my response, "I didn't teach decoding the way it's tested, so I didn't expect them to do well. They get very frustrated with that section because it makes no sense. It was even hard for me to take. Don't you think it's more important that they can read than whether they can pass a decoding test?"

Ms. Eggers agreed but expressed concern that students would have to pass the test because that was the policy in this district. I was sitting at my desk during this interchange and jotted things down as we talked. I couldn't believe what I was hearing: all that work to get kids to see reading as meaningful and enjoyable might be lost if they were subjected to a heavy emphasis on decoding drills. Once again I struggled with how strongly I should express my views. I did not want to alienate her, but I didn't want her to do anything detrimental to students or to my reputation as a teacher.

Ms. Eggers changed the subject. She was getting two new students who were just finishing Level 8 and wondered if they shouldn't come to my class for reading. I agreed without hesitation and went on to explain how easily they could fit in since we wouldn't be going

through every story in the basal. Ms. Eggers responded immediately, "You're not using any basals? Does Ms. Crane know?" I explained the work I had done over the summer. Ms. Eggers raised an eyebrow but said nothing. She decided we should meet the next day to go over the students more thoroughly, but she did not return on that day.

When Ms. Hammond, the other fifth-grade teacher, stopped in 2 days later to see how things were going, I mentioned my surprise that Ms. Eggers had not stopped back to talk about my students from last year. Ms. Hammond said, "Oh, I talked to her this morning. She took the test scores home and completely rearranged the groups." My shocked response was, "She made new groups only on the basis of those test scores?!" Ms. Hammond replied affirmatively and went on to defend Ms. Eggers. She described her as being from the old school, everything by the book, but that she really cared about the kids and even had one of the "real stinkers" over to her house during the summer.

I softened a little on my view of Ms. Eggers. I decided that her interactions with students were more important than what she teaches. I wanted to think the best of her. I didn't want the extra strain of worrying about what my students would get next year when I was struggling with what I wanted to give them this year. Future attempts to discuss academic programs with Ms. Eggers were strained. She did not seem to approve of my instructional approach, even though she knew little about it.

I was concerned about evaluating students in ways that would satisfy the district and my own needs. I asked the research and development consultant from the local education association for assistance. Ms. Crane had not asked him to help evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot projects she had proposed. He indicated that she avoided evaluation issues since it was not an area of expertise for her.

Ms. Rogers and I worked together whenever we could during those work days. Our goals were to develop consistent procedures for such things as discipline, student materials, hall passes, use of the lockers, and scheduling aide time. We also spent some time trying to integrate our subject areas for the year. Other times we discussed the Carnegie Report (1986) and other professional issues.

I finished the week feeling totally overwhelmed. Two bulletin boards were still not finished, and I had no specific lesson plans for the first day or week. But I did have an outline for the whole year. Somehow that didn't seem right, but my obligations to others were fulfilled. I worked in the room Saturday and made final lesson preparations Sunday. My commitment to this project was taking over my life.

<u>September</u>

On the first day with students, the room was ready and I was ready with the week's lesson plans and the year's goals. I was looking forward to the challenge of applying the theories of Allington, Veatch, Smith, Goodman, and many others to the practice of

teaching. But I had not spent enough time considering what these particular students would need. It took almost the whole morning the first day to go over procedures and organize the materials they would need. The students had received a list of needed materials during the summer, but few students had them all and one student came with nothing.

I tried to keep my plans the same for the afternoon class. However, since art, music, PE, and library were scheduled only in the afternoons, my language arts lessons had to be condensed. This was not usually a problem since I could improve my presentations the second time around in the afternoons, and there were more able readers in the later group.

After the first day of establishing routines, I focused all my energy on my curriculum. The first writing assignment was for my students to share their feelings toward reading. I sat down to write with them just as Calkins and Graves recommended. My plan was to use this as a pretest measure of attitude toward reading and an initial writing sample. But when I collected them, not all were handed in, many had no names, and most were only a sentence. I questioned whether they couldn't write, thought they couldn't write, or just didn't want to write. This limited output could have been predicted since handing in assignments had been a continuing problem the year before. I naively assumed that since my plan was so organized that compliance to my ideals would just happen.

The response was similar when students were given papers with three columns to brainstorm ideas for writing. The headings were: Things I'm Very Interested In, Things I Have Some Interest In, and Things I Have No Interest In. I also filled out a chart and pointed out how interests influence what we choose to read and write about.

<u>Reading</u>

I began the school year hoping to implement an individualized approach to teaching reading thus avoiding the problems associated with ability-grouped students. Ideally, I wanted to integrate reading and writing, but I needed to set up some basic reading habits so students could work independently. Using a theme approach, I collected stories about "School" from many sources, including the public library and the basal readers. Students were allowed to choose their own books to read using two rules of self-selection suggested by Veatch (1984): (a) you must be interested in the book, and (b) you must be able to read it. They learned the five-finger method to determine if the book was too difficult: read a page with lots of words and put a finger down everytime an unknown word was encountered. If there were more than five unknown words, the book would probably be too difficult to enjoy.

The first time I explained that each student would choose their own book to read silently one boy asked, "How will you know if we read it?" I answered, "Why wouldn't you want to read it if it was interesting to you?" He just shrugged his shoulders. The words of Frank Smith reinforced my response: trust them to learn.

The initial response was very encouraging. Everyone chose a book and looked through at least one while I circulated to discuss their choices. I had read or reviewed all the books that were on display so that I could respond to students who read the books.

I had not anticipated that some students might not be interested in my theme. Four boys became excited about horror books one of the students had brought. Their enthusiasm was obvious as they read parts to each other (e.g., "Hey, look at this, it says here, that Godzilla . . ."). I told them we would do a theme on scary things in October, and Rodney started naming books I should get. I told him to make a list, so the group worked on it together. They wanted to stay in for recess, but I wanted to work in the room so I sent them out with notebooks. I had collected books on school and learning, and their interests right then didn't fit my plan.

A group of girls also spurned my choice of books. They chose to read a play in the Level 10 basal together. They argued about taking turns. I watched, hoping they would resolve it themselves which they eventually did by breaking into smaller groups.

George and Lawrence, two of the lowest readers were also using Level 10 to practice the sign language included with one of the stories. I struggled with the dilemma of whether to insist they read something at their own level. I decided to suggest related stories which they eventually read to each other. Dana and Tony drew pictures during self-selection. I was torn between letting them draw, like the teacher I had just read about in a professional journal, or insisting

they read. I asked them to tell me about their drawings. They explained that Ms. Rogers was having them draw ships for their study of Columbus and that they were designing their own ships. I asked what lands they were going to discover. They looked like they were thinking as other students started requesting my time. I was fighting the urge to direct rather than facilitate students' learning.

Along with self-selected reading, Veatch recommended using planning forms to help students create projects to go with the books they had read. I carefully explained the procedures for book projects and asked if anyone had any questions. There were none, but when I handed out the sheets for them to start working, the response was, "What are we supposed to do?" Frustration welled up inside me as I struggled with the cause of the confusion. Was it my ineffective teaching, their learned helplessness, or their lack of ability? It struck me how little I had considered students' difficulty moving from what they had the first 4 years of school to what they had with me. I wanted my way to work, and I wanted it instantaneously. It had worked so well with other classes I had taught that I assumed I could make it work here.

I persevered with the plan sheets but gave the students several models they could copy from. The teacher's aide took out a group at a time to work on plays. That made things much easier in the room as each student worked on different book projects. It was very confusing at first but not unbearable for me.

During the first month, students chose to socialize more often than stay on task with book projects. I had expected detailed plans for their projects, but their responses were vague such as, "I will listen to the teacher" or "I will read." I expressed my disappointments and frustrations with some of their choices as I struggled to get students to explain their thinking. They would just stare at me without comment. However, some days reading was exciting, especially when all but two students were working on plans in groups. Jenny pretended she was a newspaper reporter and interviewed the baby bear, played by our aide, for her book project. I hoped this would spark others.

We started weekly reading friends with first graders to dignify the choice of reading books at an easy level for many of my students. The interest in reading aloud to young students was obvious, but it was difficult to get my students to practice the book before they went. I continually emphasized the importance of being prepared and worked with individuals whenever possible.

Writing

I was more confident about teaching writing. I had been using the writing process since my years in Saudi Arabia and had even given teacher workshops in writing. I tried to model my program after the one described in Calkin's book, <u>Lessons from a Child</u> (1983). We had Writer's Workshop using the stages of prewriting, writing, revising, rewriting, editing, and final draft.

The first day there had been few complaints, but after the second day there were more comments such as: "I can't think of anything to write about" or "I'm done" after two sentences. I sounded like a broken record, "You're never done with Writer's Workshop." It was easy to be consistent with this because writing was an important skill for me and I believed in the approach I was using.

I tried using timed writing to increase fluency and to give my students more confidence in writing down their thoughts. The directions were to write whatever came to mind without stopping for 3 minutes. The complaints were, "I don't know what to write!" With each complaint I calmly directed them to write anything, as I wrote myself. David wrote made-up words for almost a week of timed writing. James rarely had more than three words on his page. I remembered Goodman's advice, look at what they can do, not at what they can't do. I sounded more positive than I felt when I told them not to worry, that it would get easier. It worked before with my third graders and eventually it worked with them.

Some students caught on right away but were reluctant to share their writing with others. Some days the writing time was productive for most; sometimes it was disastrous. After the bad days, I would return to the books by the experts and try to sort out what went wrong. I kept thinking it was something I was doing wrong and not just an off day for students.

They would get easily discouraged when I penciled in comments on their papers to confirm and extend their ideas. I shared my own

writing with corrections written all over it and related similar feelings. Still, most students resisted revising, so it was especially rewarding when Mary discovered the benefits of this process herself. She wrote for several days about the murder of her father. She said it took a long time to write because it made her sad to think about it. When she handed in the first draft, I wrote some positive comments and some questions in the margins about things that weren't clear in the story. When she saw my writing, she said, "You mean I have to write it over?" I told her that she didn't have to, that she could keep making this story better or she could start a new one. She looked extremely discouraged. I wondered if I'd done the right thing as other students seemed to empathize with her. I regretted not writing the comments on a separate paper.

However, just before the end of the writing time I noticed Mary absorbed in her writing. I asked her how she was doing. She was beaming, "I rewrote it and it's a lot better now!" I was so relieved to hear that she had made that choice on her own. I asked her if she would like to share her feelings about her writing with the class. She didn't, but she said I could tell them. I celebrated her joy in rewriting with the class and reminded myself of the uniqueness of each individual.

We started keeping journals after viewing the movie, "Writing Says It All," which is about a boy who works through his problems by writing in a journal assigned in class. I was also inspired by something I had read about giving disabled students a voice, that what

they had to say was important. I used the school money from not using workbooks to buy spiral notebooks for both classes for the journals to avoid the hassle of some students not having one.

I followed the district requirements for spelling. However, I did alter some guidelines such as the one stating that students who missed more than half of the 20-word list must have a modified list of fewer words. The 5 students who qualified all wanted to study the whole list like the rest of the class. I let them because I was confident that their spelling would improve through their writing. A cooperative learning technique for group study of their word lists increased their motivation to practice so that all students received passing scores by the end of the year.

To avoid any building conflicts, I went along with the additional spelling requirements mandated by Mr. Richards to help boost standardized scores in spelling. Other teachers complained enough so these requirements eventually were lifted. They also formally protested the district requirements for reporting spelling scores, but I chose not to get involved.

Accountability

I started the year with high hopes for evaluating students. The schedule for administering basal reader tests as required by the district had been set, but I did not consider that as a tool for evaluating students. Instead, I focused on naturalistic evaluations and made plans for developing efficient and effective ways to use them. I wish things had been that easy.

A week after school started, I still had not started the individual reading tryouts I had planned. The resource teacher asked if I was keeping a record of how students were doing with my approach. I panicked because I had been so involved with the curriculum and behavior problems that I had not done much with record keeping. The next day I stressed listening to each student read and recording it on tape. It crossed my mind several times as I struggled with faulty recorders and defective tapes, using every spare minute of my planning time, that it would be easier just to have the traditional groups. I had noticed Ms. Rogers' grade book with math scores and wished it was that easy keeping records for reading and writing.

I didn't start individual conferences during reading time until the third week of school because students were struggling to learn how to choose books and read silently for 20 minutes at a time. I used the Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) time for these conferences, sacrificing the ideal of reading with them.

The reading tryouts increased my awareness of individual needs. When I listened to 2 students, who were both assigned to a Level 8 reader, I was amazed at the differences. Adam read the passage with good fluency, expression, and excellent comprehension. Joseph miscued on almost every other word. In a traditional class they would be in the same reading group. I wondered what Ms. Crane would say about that.

The third week of school I stayed after school one night until 5:30 p.m. looking through student reading folders and records. I was

nervous that I did not know these students well since I did not use the basal placement and movement plan to show that they were learning. The Chapter 1 test results indicated that many students tested far below their basal level placement. I wanted to get this information organized in case I had to justify what I was doing, but there never seemed enough time for it.

Reading forms were due in the office the second week of school. These forms recorded the number of students at each basal level and the story which they were reading. I told the secretary that I did not have any students in the basal, so I could not fill out the form. She gave me a suspicious look until I explained that I had Ms. Crane's approval.

Interactions with Administrators

The people who had given me permission to try something different were usually an invisible force affecting my teaching. Sometimes I would get so involved with teaching that I would forget the pressure to prove myself. But when I had direct contact with any administrator, I was immediately reminded of my responsibility to the system.

The superintendent continued with his open support and encouragement. Other teachers and administrators expressed surprise that I had permission to try my own program. A visiting administrator asked, "Well, where's this new reading program I've been hearing about?" as he walked over to my desk and looked over the papers. I smiled and started to explain the different aspects, citing

ideas from Veatch, Goodman, Calkins, and Graves. He shook his head, "You've got to have something packaged or it'll never fly. I'm surprised you ever got permission from Dr. Newman for something like this." I told him it wasn't easy and that I had gone to the superintendent first. He said he thought that was a good idea because it probably would never have gone past Dr. Newman.

Ms. Rogers asked him how he would feel if a teacher in his building wanted to do something like my program. He replied:

> Well, first of all, they'd have to get permission. It probably wouldn't go any further than that. Dr. Newman railroads all the curriculum changes. That's just the way things are here. We have to accept that. There's too much accountability and not enough flexibility.

I had not experienced this side of Dr. Newman. She made one brief visit during the first month just before students were dismissed for lunch. She asked how things were going. We chatted about the merits of departmentalized teaching while students became increasingly restless. I followed her gaze to the two posters on the back wall that had fallen. She commented on the extra money I was given for not using workbooks. I thanked her for her help with that and excused myself to dismiss the students.

Ms. Crane had scheduled a day for observations but canceled it when I told her we were giving standardized tests. Instead, she made an appointment to discuss my program. Ms. Rogers expressed doubt that Ms. Crane had any real interest in my program since she was retiring in a few months and the visit was probably required by Dr. Newman. With this in mind, I decided not to get into the philosophy of my

program but to pacify her by giving her the skills I was teaching and how my program fit the basal program. Changing her views on reading seemed pointless.

The day of our meeting, Ms. Crane was waiting at the door as I took the class to PE. She was punctual as usual. As I walked back to my class to meet with her, I kept telling myself to stay calm and just answer her questions, not to try to prove anything to her. It didn't work.

The first thing she did was pull out a large data chart with about 20 different columns for test scores and isolated skill checks. She wanted to see the Dolch word scores. As she looked down the list, she saw many low scores. She told me that I would have to develop a composite of unknown words and work on them with each student. My muscles began to tighten. I kept telling myself to just go along with her requests, but I resented her telling me what I shoud do with my students.

Then she told me to look at the standardized test scores and compare them with their basal level completed last year. She told me I should push those students who had high test scores and low basal placements.

Next, she started on the list of reading skills such as, "Do they have inferential reading skills . . . which decoding skills are they missing . . . do they understand main idea?" I became extremely tense. Part of me wanted to say, "Yes, they're beginning to master all these and this is how I taught it." Another part was trying hard

to hold back my resentment for the condescending manner in which I was being treated. I had been studying reading instruction intensely for the past 3 years. I was trying hard to control my anger, which took thoughts away from articulating my position.

My jaws were tense as I said, "Would you expect this from teachers using the basal?" She said that she wouldn't expect them to have this chart, but that they would all know by now, after 4 weeks of school, whether their students had mastered each of these skills. She said that I didn't have the structure to help me determine how kids were doing.

I became defensive at that point. This concept of structure hit a raw nerve because I had been struggling with it. I had structure even though it was not what I wanted it to be, and it certainly was not what she thought it should be. I remembered the research on the failures of traditional approaches, which renewed my commitment to finding an alternative.

I started to make a point about a holistic approach to reading instruction. I told her that I thought kids learned to read by reading. She scoffed at this and said, "Where does it say that children learn to read by reading?" Her response caught me by surprise. I told her there were many sources that said just that. She said she'd like to see them, and I immediately agreed to send her some things to read.

Then I took a deep breath and told her that I was feeling myself getting defensive and that I didn't want to do that with her. I told

her that it was my understanding that I could teach any way I wanted as long as I used the same tests for accountability as everyone else. She agreed on this point, but she believed it was her job to check up on me to make sure the kids were learning what they were supposed to learn.

I told her that I looked at the testing done by the Chapter 1 teacher and that many of the students that supposedly passed Level 7 or 8 were reading at a first- or second-grade level. I commented to Ms. Crane, "That means that whatever was done before with these kids is not working and it's time to figure out something different. I may not have the perfect answer to that problem, but it's what I think is best for my students." I was really boiling inside, but fortunately, I had to excuse myself to pick up my students.

Colleagues

I felt that I could stay in my room and do pretty much whatever I wanted with my students. But I wanted to build some support among other teachers for several reasons. I missed the camaraderie of sharing instructional concerns that I had in Saudi Arabia with the group of whole language teachers. I didn't want to feel isolated or weird, but part of the group. I was especially concerned with Ms. Eggers because I would pass my students on to her and I felt it would be much better for the students if there was continuity from fourth to fifth grade.

I made a number of attempts to open up discussions with Ms. Eggers. After our discussion on writing, I put Calkin's (1983) book,

Lessons from a Child, in Ms. Egger's mailbox. I included a note inviting her to discuss my students she would be teaching or what we did last year. The book was returned the next week with a simple note of thanks.

Ms. Eggers had some very traditional ideas about teaching. For example, she thought the whole school should do the Pledge of Allegiance, and she felt it necessary to ask special permission from the principal to use a different door for dismissals. After a teacher inservice the third week of school, I asked Ms. Eggers what she thought I should do differently to prepare students for fifth grade. Her first comment was that students were terrible decoders. "They could not identify digraphs or blends and some even had trouble with root words." I disagreed totally but tried to stay calm. She then explained how she taught her students to find diagraphs and blends by having them circle or box those parts when they studied their spelling words. She thought they were coming along very well now.

I told her that I could understand why my students were having trouble because I did not work with them on that. I told her that I didn't believe they needed to know those labels but that I would try to teach them some of those things toward the end of the year so they would have an easier transition into fifth.

Her response was something about them needing to know those labels in sixth grade. I said, "They shouldn't be working on that in sixth, they should be spending their time on comprehension and study

skills." Ms. Eggers responded, "Maybe so, but they're not. Some of those kids are still in Level 10 and Level 10 still has decoding skills." I could see I would get nowhere with this, so I dropped it.

I asked how the students were doing with workbooks. She said they were fine with that. I asked if she could tell that they had done a lot of writing last year. She said that they had several writing assignments so far and they seemed to do all right except that their spelling was really terrible.

She was excited about the writing assignments she had given them. One was to imagine being a balloon, one was to write an opinion about too much sports on TV, and another was to decide whether athletes were paid too much. I asked if students chose the assignments. She said they had not.

These conversations with Ms. Eggers were disturbing. It forced me to question the effect I would have on students in only 1 year and whether doing something so different from fifth grade would hurt the students. I told myself that I could not have done it any other way; however, I decided to find out what the fifth-grade teacher did and do something compatible with my fourth graders the last month or so of school. I did not want my students to suffer because of my teaching methods.

Ms. Eggers believed strongly in following the rules, especially those about testing. During a team meeting, she complained about the testing and placement procedures done in sixth grade because the

teachers were going against district policy and they were not addressing individual needs if they put them all in the same level.

I wished I could have come up with an articulate, convincing argument to change her thinking a little, but it seemed pointless. I didn't want to ostracize myself, but I didn't want to sacrifice my beliefs either.

Chapter 1 and Resource Teachers

I also wanted to build support from the Chapter 1 teachers since they worked with 8 of my morning students and 4 afternoon students. The second week of school Ms. Reilly, the Chapter 1 teacher, came in while my class was in art to ask about my students she had on her list for testing. She wanted to know from which book they were reading. I wanted to avoid any philosophical discussions because I knew her views were very different from mine and I had a lot of work to do. Rather than giving the book title, I told her the level at which I thought they would do best.

Ms. Reilly came back a few days later because she needed to know what book they were in. I told her they weren't in specific books, but that I could tell her what book they finished last year and what book they would have gone into this year. When she looked puzzled, I asked her if she knew I was trying something different. She did but didn't know I took them out of the basal. She was concerned about what she should write on her forms for book level. I told her that I was doing basal tryouts and I could give her reading levels. No, she

had to have a book level. I told her just to write one from the third grade.

While Ms. Reilly was there, we went through the list of children from my room that she had tested. Several students had done Level 8 in third grade but had tested at less than second grade on the informal reading inventory she had given. According to Ms. Reilly's testing, Ronda should be reading from a Level 4 reader but she passed to Level 8. I told Ms. Reilly that my program would help these kids who were being pushed through the basals. There would be no stigma in fifth grade of having already read a certain book. She relaxed a little, "Oh, so you'll put them where they're supposed to be." I was happy with this response since it seemed to be a sign of support.

The resource teacher, Ms. Belmond, worked with 2 of my students. Her suggestion was to supplement my program by having my students work in the basals. I suggested she do things that were more consistent with what they did in the classroom. She agreed and wrote individual goals that focused on motivation and interest. Unfortunately, her supervisor wouldn't accept those goals because they were too difficult to demonstrate growth. She changed one goal to "Cory will read ___ words per minute in a Level 8 and 9 basal reader." I asked Ms. Belmond if she agreed with the change. She just shrugged and said, "I do what I'm told to do." My first reaction was to talk to her supervisor to get that changed, but I didn't have the time or emotional energy for that kind of conflict.

Ms. Rogers

Ms. Rogers became my main supporter. She understood and believed in what I was trying to do. We often shared professional literature and discussed a variety of educational issues. I wanted to talk with her more often but I needed every spare minute to prepare for my classes.

We seemed to give each other confidence in trying new things. Ms. Rogers stopped in my room one afternoon to show me some pictures her students had drawn of Columbus sailing across the ocean. She told me how she had started teaching the lesson from their social studies book and found herself bored with it, so she told them all to close their books and started telling them stories she had read about Columbus. Then they drew and wrote stories about what they thought it would be like to be Columbus. She had decided not to let pacing schedules push her through lessons so that neither she nor the students enjoyed them.

I soon learned that Ms. Rogers could take on issues that I felt strongly about but did not have the time or energy to get involved in. When I requested at a team meeting that the secretaries be encouraged to take care of as many noninstructional tasks as possible, Ms. Rogers supported my comments by reading a part of the Carnegie Report. She stated that about 40% of the school day was devoted to noninstructional duties. She added a note to the minutes that, "It would be greatly appreciated if teachers could spend less time on noninstructional duties. Children would benefit because teachers

would have more time to devote to preparing for and teaching the actual academics. Could this be discussed in a committee or at a staff meeting?" This was not well-received by the principal, but Ms. Rogers was the one criticized for complaining, not me.

I appreciated support from colleagues, but there was no one at the school I could talk to about whole language teaching. I sometimes felt overwhelmed by the feeling of isolation, that I was doing everything myself and no one understood the full complexity of my situation. Thus, it was a boost to my self-confidence when I was asked to speak to a university class about grouping students for reading. I wanted to spread the gospel of whole language.

Dilemmas

I struggled with how much off-task behavior to allow. Intuitively I felt that students had to struggle to become more self-directed, that I couldn't do it for them. I expected changes in attitude to take time, but other people seemed to expect immediate results. Trying to live up to other people's expectations and my perceptions of students' needs was a continual dilemma.

My main priority during the first month was to find a routine that would make planning easier for me and expectations clearer for the students. I had resented the routines I was forced to conform to during my own education and wanted something better for my students. I was haunted by the literature describing the horrors of rigid teachers, but those first weeks were too flexible even for me.

Ms. Crane commented on my lack of structure on her first visit. I agreed that more structure was needed, but I sensed that our views of how that would look were very different. I wanted the kind of structure that allowed for individual choice and curricular flexibility, and I guessed that she wanted to see me following the manuals. I was quite defensive about that when I met with her because I knew it was something I had to work on.

After her visit, I worked out a sequence of activities for students to follow, providing for teacher-directed individual work, small-group work, and whole-class sharing. I also struggled to find an acceptable routine that would meet her expectations and my own needs. But there were many distractions that stole precious time such as meetings, mechanical breakdowns in equipment, paperwork, custodial chores, and miscellaneous interruptions. It seemed like a conspiracy by the system to allow only enough time during the school day to teach from the manuals.

October

I continued my efforts to help students learn to plan their own learning time as part of my individualized approach. I provided structure by writing the plans for the reading lesson in outline form on the board and having students copy it in their reading diaries. A reading sequence was established with a teacher-directed lesson, Silent Sustained Reading (SSR), and then self-selection each day.

I was encouraged by the improvement of many students in writing their plans for self-selection time. Some students could even list

the steps for completing a project. However, several students still would sit with empty plans and respond with, "I don't know what to do."

I thought I was making it easier for them by having them copy the part I had planned for them and then they would write their own plan for self-selection time. I was often reminded of the literature on learned helplessness; many students seemed to give up without trying. This was discouraging, and I struggled to find a way to overcome this obstacle.

A few students really blossomed with this approach. Carlos made a game at home to go with the book, Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs. He had rules and story events included on the gameboard. On the box cover he wrote "by Anderson Brothers," which was his last name. He made several rough sketches of what he wanted to make during class but construction was done at home. This inspired Keoni who made a game, writing out rules with several students as they played the game. However, more students appeared to be wasting time. Self-selection time started getting shorter and shorter. George still needed his choices narrowed the most. I had the urge just to tell him what to do, but I was convinced that this would reinforce his dependency on someone else to provide direction.

I explained that the reason self-selection was so important to me was because when I always had to do what my elementary school teacher said and was never allowed to choose. I explained that personal planning was something no teacher could teach; students had to try

things out for themselves. I convinced them it was important to me, but not all were convinced it was important for them.

Finding enough books for students to select from was a continual concern. The collection of books from the public library was a welcome resource for the first theme, but I discovered that many of the books were missing when it was time to return them. I paid overdue fines and missing book fines. I relied then on the books from our own school library and the area education agency library.

The theme this month was "Playing with Language," and fortunately there were enough Amelia Bedelia books for each student to have one. When the books were distributed, the direction was to read and enjoy the book, noticing how Amelia played with language. One student asked what the assignment was. I told them it was to read and enjoy. When several students looked at me suspiciously, I told them we would record some of their favorite parts the next day.

Having similar books for all the students to read, rather than different books for each student, made discussions easier to conduct even if a few were not interested in the story. With the next theme for Halloween, I took an even easier route. I chose two mysteries from the Level 9 basal so that everyone read exactly the same stories. They were given a worksheet I had made to help them identify the steps to solving a mystery. I expected them to complete the worksheet while I continued doing basal tryouts with individual students. They were quiet and seemed to be working well.

The next day I asked them to take out their worksheets so we could discuss responses. Only four appeared completed, most were empty. My first impulse was to blame the students, but instead I decided more modeling was needed. We went over the first mystery together, reponses were recorded on the board, and I told them to fill their charts in while we talked so they could do the other one on their own.

After a lengthy discussion, I walked around to see how they were doing. Many papers were still empty. I felt myself getting angry but I was unsure why. Was it their fault or mine? What could I have done differently? I released my frustrations by giving a minilecture that I soon regretted. I told them that I didn't give them very many worksheets to do, that there would be more in fifth grade so that when I gave an assignment, I expected all of them to do their best. I rationalized my decision to make this assignment. I told them that their work showed they didn't understand, but their discussion showed they did, and that they must be able to show it in writing because they would write often in fifth grade.

I gave them another opportunity to finish their mystery worksheets during SSR while I checked their work. I expected all worksheets to be filled in, falling back on task completion rather than demonstration of understanding as a goal. Anne stuffed her paper in her desk. When I asked for it she scowled, flipped it to me, and turned away from me with a pout. I asked if she could explain her paper to me. She just pouted and shrugged. This was a common

reaction when things didn't go her way. When I asked Anne to meet me in the hall, she started to argue so I led her out by the arm.

She started crying once we were in the hall. Last year I would have been gentle, but I learned that showing I cared by being firm worked better. I told her the pouting was unacceptable, especially when I was trying to help her, and that if she chose to behave like that she could stay in the hall. Through her tears she said something about not understanding the assignment. I told her that if she didn't understand, she should ask for help. She responded, "But in fifth grade they're not going to help us. We have to do everything ourselves." I had raised her anxiety to a counterproductive level.

Back in the room everyone was working except Lawrence, who looked very sad and distant. I tried to talk to him but he just sat. I didn't want another confrontation, so I left him alone. I asked him later in the day what the problem was, and he said he didn't understand the assignment. Facing him with both hands on his shoulders I said, "I think you thought you didn't understand. And I think you know more than you think you know. I think you're a whole lot smarter than you think you are. What do you think about that?" He had been staring at the floor. He looked up at me and smiled, which was a rare sight. When I surveyed the class after a minilecture on doing their best, Lawrence seemed the most affected, the most thoughtful. But he would not share his thoughts verbally or in writing. What he was learning would not show up on a test, at least not this year.

A new student joined the class in October. During his individual conference he asked, "Why don't you have groups like other teachers?" I told him I thought he would learn how to read better if he chose the books and had lots of chances to read. He liked the idea and agreed that he thought he would learn more. He was the only morning student to ask directly about the differences.

Writing

The students were responding well to the journal writing; some did not want to stop. At first, only about three students automatically started writing when they came in the room. Others needed reminding, but this improved steadily as it remained consistent in the schedule.

As soon as attendance was taken, I would sit down and write in my journal with them. The class quickly quieted, just like Calkins and Graves had described. Occasionally journals were traded so they could read each other's. The focus was to get their feelings out, but it took several weeks before most students would get very personal. I wrote a model entry each day on the board with thoughts and feelings.

Seldom did they write about things that happened in school, even when they seemed really mad or happy. Some students started suggesting that classmates work out their feelings in their journals when they were upset. This seemed important for them. From all the reading I had done on at-risk students, I was convinced that they needed the release and they needed to know that what they had to say was important.

The first formal writing assignment was to write about something that happened to them. Several students wrote two or three drafts. Both classes handed in experience stories for editing the same day. I told them they would learn how to edit later. Several could not find their story even though I had given them manilla envelopes for their prewriting and rough draft papers. I did not know how to teach them to keep track of their materials. Their organizational skills were a continual aggravation.

I didn't realize how time-consuming my editing students' papers would be! It took me all night to read the experience stories, so I asked the class to come up with a plan for handing in journals because I couldn't read 27 at a time. We brainstormed ideas, and 1 student came up with assigning hand-in days so I would read about five a day from each class.

Students were showing more interest in writing. Christin, a usual scowler and pouter, was excited about writing. After she read her story to the class, she announced several other topics she planned to write about. Rodney, however, was still very unmotivated. He tried hard to hide his deficiencies from others and made little effort to improve. The story he wrote was barely legible and had only a few unconnected sentences. I called his mother to make sure he had time to work on the story at home. He redid it, adding many details but the spelling and mechanics still made it very difficult to read. I reinforced his efforts with content and told him I would help him edit it so that anyone could read it. He became so discouraged at the

thought of recopying that he conveniently lost his paper, promising, but never producing, a new story. I blamed myself for expecting too much too fast again and for not giving him a better purpose for making a final draft.

I was becoming more aware of the students and their needs. The ilusive theories of learned helplessness were becoming more concrete. I had an emerging sense that these students held a lot more potential than they were realizing. This was reinforced by a note left on my desk one day from a bright but very quiet student:

> Do you think that I'm smart? You know I know a lot but I just don't want to show it. But the other kids are just embarrassed to show you that they are smart. I like to listen to your jokes and listen to you speak because you have a voice that no one can turn down. I know I won't turn you down.

<u>Colleague</u>s

Student behavior and responsiblity became a frequent topic for discussion with Ms. Rogers. We were convinced from our observations that the way children acted in this school had much to do with how they were treated. We noted a vicious cycle: students who had a negative attitude about school often caused teachers to react defensively and try to control student behavior, which led to more negative attitudes. It seemed to us that the more we tried to control students, the more students resisted and resented the teacher and school. The more resistance and resentment by students, the more teacher control.

We were also convinced that it would be better for students if everyone in the building would focus on a positive approach, modeling

appropriate behavior, giving students more responsibility, and sharing decision making. We had both listened to the fifth-grade teachers complain about their punishments and how parents didn't support them, and we often heard the third-grade teachers yelling at students to "Shut up" and "Line up." The principal walked through class with a paddle and warned students who didn't follow rules that they would be found and punished. Ms. Rogers volunteered to present a teacher inservice workshop on the discipline approach we had been using with our students.

Ms. Rogers was always there to share problems and work out solutions. We had daily discussions on specific classrooms concerns, general professional issues, and personal problems. At times she acted as my personal cheerleader. For example, she stopped in my room with a question on spelling one morning when I was especially down about students' lack of participation and their apathy toward learning. Sensing my discouragement, she sent a note in later with a student that read, "'There are no hopeless situations; there are only people who have grown hopeless about them. To accomplish great things, we must not only act, but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.' You look so sad, Vicky. Can I be of any help?"

Fortunately, there were also opportunities this month to get support outside the school. A teacher from another district and I made a presentation to the local reading association on alternative grouping methods. She had been recently introduced to whole language

teaching and was beginning to make changes in her teaching. I felt more confidence in my plans after talking to her.

The district she taught in had a whole language support group. I was asked to discuss my program with this group. It was a tremendous boost to my morale to talk with other teachers who supported a whole language philosophy, so I continued to sit in on their monthly meetings.

I also spoke to another unive, sity class about grouping alternatives. One student asked how children did with self-selection. I was honest, saying that some did well and others were still learning to make choices. She thought schools should try to match teacher and student learning styles. I asked why that wasn't a concern in traditional classes. She just shrugged.

I was trying to stay very positive about Ms. Eggers, but it was difficult when students I had the previous year would stop by after school to complain about her teaching. They were tired of reading the stories in the basals and didn't like not being able to choose their own topics for writing. When they became very critical, I stopped them and said, "What are you going to do about it?" I told them if they were unhappy with how they were treated, they should talk to their teacher, consider both sides, then try to reach a compromise. They didn't seem enthused about that. This renewed my concerns of whether I was helping my students if the next teacher was so different. How much conformity should there be, and who should conform to what?

The two Chapter 1 teachers, Ms. Reilly and Ms. Sharp, and I held bimonthly lunch meetings to keep each other informed. At our first October meeting, we discussed philosophies about decoding. I shared my view that students generalize rules intuitively much like the oral language learning process. Ms. Reilly worried about what would happen to students in fifth grade because Ms. Eggers stressed decoding skills so much. I tried to reassure Ms. Reilly that Ms. Eggers and I had very different views on how to teach reading but that we discussed these differences openly without trying to change the other person's views. I told Ms. Reilly I would take the last few months of school to stress things Ms. Eggers felt were important. I believed that Ms. Reilly was using Ms. Eggers as an excuse to continue with her own approach.

During the first few meetings, I tried to discuss things I had read by Calkins and Veatch about literacy instruction and by Cummins (1986) about learned helplessness. Ms. Reilly seemed defensive. She responded to one article I gave her on congruence and consistency between pullout and regular classroom with, "I guess I'm just old-fashioned, but I think these kids need to learn decoding skills." I tried to go into my views on that, but she did not seem receptive. To avoid conflict our meetings became a mere sharing of what we were doing with the students. This was the safe alternative.

When I stressed how I was trying to get the students to think for themselves, Ms. Sharp said she had the opposite problem, "They come in and have things they want to work on, like their stories, and they

won't wait for me to give them directions." She was concerned that she wouldn't accomplish her plans.

Accountability

I continued the individual conferences with taped basal reading tryouts. I learned much about each student. To illustrate, during Calvin's conference he stated that he hated reading even though he read very well. LaToya struggled with words in a Level 10 reader, her placement from third grade, and could not retell what she had read. When I told her about the importance of getting meaning from reading, she reported that she read the Bible every night with her daddy but usually didn't understand it. Ronda struggled with nearly every word but could retell the whole story.

Elly read from a Level 8 reader. When I went over the protocol with her, I pointed out her self-corrections. I told her those were places where her brain was really thinking and that was what good readers did, think while they read to make sense. She looked up with surprise and said, "I've never done that before!" I was caught off guard and asked, "Never did what?" She replied, "I never thought before when I was reading. In third grade, I just read and I didn't think about it!"

After Sharon read, she wanted to know if she would have to stay at Level 8. I told her it was up to her, that if she read a lot she would be able to move to the next level as soon as she was ready. She became worried about moving up a level too soon. She wanted to know if next year she would have to read all the stories in the lower-level

books that she didn't read this year. I assured her that she wouldn't have to if she read well and passed all the tests.

Ms. Crane had been critical of me doing only two of these conferences a day. I had great expectations for doing more, developing a whole program around these individual conferences as Veatch recommended. But there just wasn't time to do what the system wanted and what I wanted. I knew there would have to be signs of growth in terms the district would accept. I was concerned about how students would do on standardized tests. Students had progressed tremendously with group decision making and problem solving, but I doubted whether others would appreciate what was happening. There was no test to measure this, and no curriculum that dictated it.

I was very anxious about how my students would do on the first basal reading test. I struggled with how much I should teach to the test, considering the idea of giving the tests without any direct instruction on the skills. But I was afraid they would not do well. The skills listed in the basal program had been integrated into our discussions, writing, and spelling, but I was concerned about how students would handle the test format. I believed that if students developed good thinking skills, they could easily do the tests, regardless of format.

Decoding sections of the test seemed particularly confusing and invalid for assessing reading ability. These tests contradicted my belief that reading should be for meaning. When I asked other teachers what they thought of this part of the test, they suggested

that I walk students through the test, item by item, so students would have scores high enough to keep Ms. Crane from bothering me about decoding. One teacher said she put the test on the overhead and went over each item with her students. When I asked why teachers didn't try to change the tests rather than resort to such questionable practices, they just shrugged.

I called Dr. Newman about the possibility of excluding the decoding part of the test. Her recommendation was to use the whole test because that was the agreement made with the district. When I asked about future possibilities, she said she would talk to Ms. Crane. I told her that looking at scores alone was an unwarranted way to characterize students' reading because teachers were administering the tests differently. She repeated her comment about using the whole test, either missing my point or ignoring it.

I was still tormenting myself as to which tests to give to which students. After the basal tryouts, it was obvious that my students' reading achievement varied substantially. I struggled with giving the same test that students would have taken in a traditional class or using my own judgment and giving tests at the levels at which I thought students belonged. I decided to use my own judgment.

Ms. Crane

Ms. Crane made her first observation, sitting silently and without expression at the side of the room taking notes. A student told her goodbye when she left, but received no response. Ms. Crane returned later the same day to set up a conference time. I tried to

be pleasant and asked what she thought. She said she had some
concerns and that we would talk in the morning.

The next morning we met before school. Ms. Crane was critical of
several aspects of my teaching, highlighting our obvious differences
in philosophy. She believed students should master one concept, such
as describing setting, before moving on to another concept. I
believed learning was developmental, that students would develop
concepts with experience and repeated exposure. She believed the
children at Jefferson needed things broken into small pieces to be
successful. I believed this fractionation was why they had
experienced so much failure in the past. Ms. Crane believed strongly
that a skills continuum was needed to ensure that students did not
miss any skills. I believed the skills would be developed in the
context of their reading. She believed I should be more directive in
teaching those skills because she never had children who were having
difficulty picking them up on their own.

Ms. Crane also was concerned that I was not having more
conferences with students, believing that I ought to be routinely
conferencing with each child at least once a week. This was not
expected of other teachers, she said, because teachers were working
with groups in which every child within a reading group would have
some interaction with the teacher on what they were reading. The
quality of the interactions was not addressed.

Ms. Crane wanted my instruction planned and predictable, while I
worked best with an open-ended format with opportunity for student

input. She was concerned that all students appear to be on task. I was concerned with the quality of the task.

Ms. Crane further indicated that her experiences with teachers who tried to be innovative had taught her to be skeptical. She had seen many innovative teachers become frustrated because innovating became too big a job so they returned to traditional methods. She also was concerned that a 1-year interim of not working in the basals would cause students to not learn the necessary skills. Finally, she believed one teacher's innovation could not be transferred to other teachers and classrooms, especially in my situation since I did not have it clearly written.

Several points were made by Ms. Crane in her interview with a committee member that would have been useful if my relationship with Ms. Crane had not been so strained. I failed to use Ms. Crane's knowledge and experience in the district as a resource. She pointed out that I had not considered what had come before in the system. She described a previous program which had an individualized portion that was similar to programmed reading. But Ms. Crane explained that they had "just finished the projects that were individualized and decided they were not effective." We each had different interpretations of the same term.

She also explained the linguistic, sound-by-sound approach which students had been learning from until the previous year's switch to the basal reading series currently in use. She defended the students' lack of reading skills by stating that students did not have that

background built up in the same reading series. She defended any teacher shortcomings by stating that they have been teaching from this basal for the first time.

Ms. Crane admitted that my request to do my own thing was naturally suspect because at one time the district had five different series. She explained that each building did their own thing. But the concern for children who move often, as many do in this district, led to a more standard approach.

Timing was another factor I had not considered. But Ms. Crane pointed out that the district was greatly involved in the teacher effectiveness inservices involving all teacher in all buildings; consequently, they were not really open to other innovations.

<div align="center">November</div>

Reading

Whole-class instruction was infringing more on my individualized approach. The individual conferences and SSR continued, but whole-class assignments accounted for more of the instructional time. November's theme was on communication. A wall-size web recorded the different kinds: listening, speaking, writing, reading, and nonverbal. Students actively participated in building the web, unlike previous whole-group activities where I was the only participant.

A story from the Level 10 basal was assigned. When I asked the class if they knew why I chose that one, they readily explained that it was related to our theme. I also asked if they thought Level 10 would be harder than Level 9. George said it looked harder because

the words were printed smaller and Lawrence said it was thicker. I explained that some stories might seem easier if they're about an interesting topic that readers knew much about. I used examples of books individuals had chosen that were more difficult than any stories in the Level 10 basals but that were easy for them because they knew so much about the topic.

We discussed some vocabulary from the story, then I gave them a purpose for reading: Find out how your experiences help you communicate better with people. I let them read with a partner. Most students seemed to be reading with interest. However, Rodney was angry because he had a play he was working on, so I told him to write his feelings in his diary, which he did.

The next day, when I tried to discuss the story, only about 3 students contributed. I desperately tried to get a discussion going. I looked at the university student observing in the back of the room, wondering what I was doing wrong. She said later she thought they hadn't read the story. But I had seen them reading. I wondered if they were still reading without meaning or if they were reading, understanding, but thinking they didn't understand enough to discuss it. I thought perhaps I was asking the wrong questions. I developed a growing sense that we should be meeting in small groups for discussion, but I wasn't yet confident that two groups could work on their own independently.

Later I did move to the small group format. Students chose plays to perform for their parents in December. These self-selected groups

became three reading groups for the next 4 weeks. Our aide took one group out each day to work on their plays, one group discussed readings with me, and one group silently read books on their own.

Students were increasingly asking for help with words. This was a sign to me that they wanted meaning from what they were reading. They were also beginning to share strategies for figuring out words. For instance, Elly wrote <u>nevertheless</u> on a piece of paper. When she asked for help, I asked what she thought it was. She said she pronounced each syllable and thought it was "never the less" but another student didn't think it was.

Ronda once paused while reading and said, "I've seen that word before!" She read it and said there was a sign outside her apartment building with that word on it. I was excited that she could make this connection. Sharon asked, "Is this word <u>overseas</u>?" It was, and I asked if she knew what it meant. She said it meant, "Like in another country across the ocean," and she knew so because an uncle went overseas once.

Their reviews of what they learned became more honest and detailed. I had modeled this daily on the board and encouraged a critical analysis of what they learned and what they could have done better. One student said she thought she could have used her time better because she stood around waiting for her skills class to start instead of reading a book. I insisted that they write what they really felt and wanted to remember, not something to please me.

I could also observe the transfer of my lessons about making connections from things they read to real experiences they had. My students would ask their first-grade reading friends things like, "Did anything like that ever happen to you?" "Have you ever see a circus like this?"

Writing

Writer's Workshop was becoming much more productive. Peer response groups worked better when they chose people to work with rather than with my assigned groups. Jill said her group made her write her story over four times. She told me they kept making suggestions so she kept changing her story.

I was very comfortable with the writing program. There were still some who would just sit or get off track talking with friends. I would remind myself of my own fluctuating interest when I had to do a writing assignment. I didn't expect total participation all of the time, but I felt the familiar pressure that others would expect it if they stopped in. A university observer confirmed my impression that students were progressing with the comment: "The peer group I talked with did a very good job of making positive remarks. They gave some good ideas for additions, changes, and expansions in each other's stories."

Writing and revising were going well, but they did not want to edit their drafts to produce a final one. I went back to the books for advice and was reminded that I needed to give them a purpose for producing a final draft, some sort of publication or recognition. My

only purpose had been for them to demonstrate to others that they were learning and that what I was doing had merit.

Another reason I enjoyed writing so much was because it provided information on individual students and what they were thinking. For example, Lashara wrote this fiction story:

> Once there were some poor people. They lived in a dark alley and their neighbors' kids made fun of them even though they are just the same and they have an old transzam thay don't have alot of money. and they do not have a father because he allwasy stayed out at night so they got divorce the family is going to save there money for a penthouse and the pent house is expensive. so they live better then thay did befor.

George's fictional story included his best friend: "One day a boy name Lawrence came home. And his mother was dead so he went to school the next day. He was mad. He got 5 checks and 2 refferls. And when he got out of school he jumped off a bridge and killed himself. The next day they found him in the river dead."

I sent Raelynn out in the hall for bothering others and for pouting at me after I asked her to get busy. She wrote this note to me later: "Yesterday my grandpa might died because he was in the back of the grage (garage) smoking a cerite (cigarette). and this what my grandma dad. I want you to stay a live for a long time. So that way (why) can't work well because I think that he might died when I'm in school."

The Substitute Teacher

I finally had to get a substitute teacher. Ken Goodman was speaking to a nearby school district that was converting their reading

program to a whole language approach. I took a professional leave for 1 day to hear him speak and observe other teachers in the district.

I was very nervous about turning over the class. I had learned from experience that a substitute can be a powerful public relations person. I prepared two sets of plans, one describing what to do as I would, the other a manual-following approach. I had intended to give the sub a choice, but I ended up giving her the more traditional plans. I wasn't confident that my students would control themselves with a different person, and I didn't want a sub to think it was my whole language approach that was bad.

I coached the students on their behavior and the importance of giving a good impression of themselves, our school, and my teaching. I told them they would be using the language textbooks to do a lesson on writing friendly letters. One student asked why we had not used them before. I explained that the skill exercises in the book covered the same skills we were doing except that we used our own writing instead of someone else's. To demonstrate this, I read the skills contained in the table of contents and pointed out that they were the same ones we had done in Writer's Workshop for fiction stories. The students made comments like, "Yeh, we've done that already!" Some students looked like they understood my message: You don't have to have textbooks to learn.

The greatest disappointment for students was not having self-selection when the substitute was in charge. I explained that we had been working on this since the beginning of the year but some people

still had trouble using this time productively. I told them I understood that this was a learning process, that eventually all the students would learn to work independently on things of their choice. But a substitute would get very worried about those students who distracted others. I told them that when everyone could work well on their own then I would let a sub try to run the day the same way I did.

The substitute left this report: AM: during discussion they did well, but didn't work well when they were writing the letter. This class had a difficult time staying on task without talking. I had to spend much time on disciplining. I do not feel they were at their best. PM: This class stayed on task and worked better even when the activities weren't teacher-led. It is obvious that your students love you and miss the variety of activities they usually do with you.

When I returned, I shared with my students what I had learned. Ronda was surprised that I was still learning things. I asked her if she thought I already knew everything. She looked very thoughtful and answered, "I guess not."

Support

I continued to receive support for my innovations from different sources. I spoke to another university class and presented my program to the local reading council. Questions from the groups highlighted some concerns I was constantly struggling with: "Don't some teachers just hate you?" "What about the fifth-grade teacher? Aren't you worried about what she'll think and how your students will do?" "You

must be secure in your job. I'm afraid I might lose my job if I didn't do what I was told." One student rationalized my efforts, pointing out that I was working on my doctoral degree but that a regular teacher could not defend herself as well. One person suggested that an improvement of standardized test scores would be proof that what I was doing was working. Several people were concerned about how I met the needs of learning disabled students. I cited Allington's work and commented that we should be asking teachers in traditional programs how they were meeting the needs of these students.

My visit to the district moving to whole language was also very encouraging. I spoke with Ken Goodman briefly about constraints on change, and he encouraged me to persevere. In his speech, he made several statements, some that I found most encouraging: "Don't make them read, invite them to read;" "Appreciate mistakes;" and "Don't correct their writing, empathize." I believed these sentiments, but I struggled to fit them into my reality.

As I observed the whole language classrooms and attended the workshops in this district, my confidence and commitment were recharged. But their situation was very different because the system supported the change. I went back to my classroom more convinced that I was doing the right thing, but I began wondering whether it was the right thing for this school at this time.

Accountability

One day after viewing a movie about reading, my students wrote their reactions in their journals. Everyone was very positive and willing to share. This was so dramatically different from the first day of class that I wished I had been more systematic about keeping a record of attitudes. It had become too easy for me to accept the periodic tests as the only accountability measure.

I decided to give Level 9 and Level 10 basal tests even though some students were labeled as Level 8. When I gave the tests, I explained why they were getting different tests. Since there had been no ability groups, this would be the first time some were identified as less able readers. I told them that all students in the district had to take these tests.

My anxiety level seemed higher than theirs as I went around the room during the testing. A university observer noted later that students were asking questions she thought they could answer on their own. I realized I was helping them too much. I wasn't giving any answers, but I explained directions instead of letting students work it out on their own. I thought of how much help other teachers gave on these tests, but I wanted my students to do it independently.

I did not help with the decoding part of the test. I told the students that I did not agree with this kind of test, but I had to give it. I reminded them of the importance of reading for meaning, then explained that the purpose of this part of the test was not to see if you could read for meaning, but to see if they could isolate

sounds. Part of me wanted them to fail at this and do well in the comprehension subtests to support my beliefs.

The results were generally as I suspected: they did poorly on decoding. It was somewhat surprising that the two top readers had the worst scores and one of the lowest readers had the only perfect score.

During parent conference breaks I went through everything in the student reading folders. I hadn't looked through them before, I just found what level they had completed. I asked Ms. Rogers and Ms. Hammond if they ever looked at the reading tests in the folders. Both said they didn't think anyone actually used the tests for information, because they didn't show anything anyway.

Ms. Crane

Ms. Crane observed me again this month, sitting in her usual spot taking notes on her yellow legal pad. I gave her a handout I had developed for parents at conference time. I was excited when students came up to me while she was there to share strategies or comments about unknown words. I glanced at her hoping she would notice their enthusiasm for reading and their efforts to understand what they read, but she was watching two students who had finished reading the story and were having trouble moving on to their own selection.

Ms. Crane left a note on my desk as she left telling me to call her about a time we could discuss her observations. I didn't want to spend any more time with her since parent conferences were coming up, so I sent her a note asking for a written summary of her observations instead of a meeting.

Other Issues

My paranoia about room appearance continued. The posters kept falling, and I was still not consistently stopping class in time to have students get everything in order before they left. I couldn't believe I was letting these little things upset me, but I didn't want a disorderly room to distract visitors from the important aspects of what I was doing. It seemed petty, but appearances mattered most to some people.

As I struggled with the issues of appearance and accountability, I had a nagging sense that there were bigger issues I should be considering. For instance, one student was becoming progressively more withdrawn. When I tried to talk to her after class, she clung to me and cried. She would not or could not express the causes of her behavior. I discovered from other teachers that this girl had been sexually abused when she was in kindergarten. I had become so obsessed with proving myself as a teacher that student needs were being neglected. I began to regret my public proclamation of my alternative approach.

<div align="center">December</div>

Reading

This month's theme was "Food in Literature." Book sources were narrowed to the school collection and my personal library because many of the area education agency books had not been returned. The basal readers became a more frequent resource. I still wanted students to feel like they were making choices, so we hunted through the three

levels of basals listing stories related to the food theme. This list was used to choose stories for SSR as well as for reading groups. I made a point of planning a lesson from the basal when Ms. Crane made her monthly visit.

SSR rules about silence became more enforced for at least 10 minutes. I had allowed quiet sharing or partner reading, but I felt we needed quiet to allow others to read. I was reacting somewhat to outside influences who expected to see total on-task behavior and everyone in their seat. The first time a student got up during this time to walk to the back, my first impulse was to make her sit down and read. But I walked over and asked what she was looking for. She replied that she was writing a story and wanted to write the word chapter but couldn't remember how to spell it. She remembered a book that had that word and was looking for it. This shattered my plan to keep everyone in their seat and quiet. How could I justify handicapping strategies like this? But what about the students who would misuse the time?

After silent reading we shared comments about the books. I enjoyed the vocabulary development that evolved from their reading. Rodney shared a favorite part where a character incorrectly defined vampire as someone who makes the calls at baseball games. Rayanne proudly proclaimed that she figured out the word horrified "All by myself." She then demonstrated how to read it in a horrifying way.

As students showed more interest in learning the meanings of unknown words, I looked for a way to work on vocabulary development

without killing interest. Once again, I turned to Veatch's books and decided to use word banks. Each group had one box with alphabetic dividers and cards for each group member. I stressed that words written on the cards should be ones they wanted to learn. I showed them a modified word bank I used for myself. Nevertheless, Cory started filling his cards with words from his book as if it was a contest to see who had the most.

I was encouraged by the incidental learning that took place. While Anne was reading I stopped her when she said "ree-sipe" and asked if that made sense to her, was it something she knew. She said it wasn't. I asked what she could do when she came to unknown words while reading. She said she could look them up in the dictionary, which she then did. Her eyes lit up when she found the word and she said with a big smile, "It's recipe! I know that word!" Since that discovery, she looked up words enthusiastically and added them to her word bank almost daily.

James, who usually either avoided reading or faked it, found a book about dogs which he read during SSR. While reading groups were changing, he showed me a character's name, Anne, pointing out it was almost like the character we were reading about, Anna. Then he pointed out the word astonished, which his group had put in their word banks, and he informed me that he remembered it. He said, "I can read big words now!" His journal entry the next day was: "I read a book about a dog a boy manded ander (named Andrew) had a imanamir (imaginary) dog I liked the story I got haff ove it. It was good,

great, triffic, fantasck, mavalise, and I found a word I dinit no. It was astonishing, stubbornly. It was fun."

Ronda, who was one of the lowest readers, was excited because she found in Peter Rabbit some big words that she didn't think she could say. During the reading time she came over many times to show me a word she had figured out and added to her word bank.

Stacy found the word, enthusiastically. She showed it to me and said, "I know I've heard you say this but I can't remember how to say it myself". I suggested she look it up. She did and used the phonetic respelling to sound it out. When she said the whole word she smiled, "Now I remember it" as she pronounced it and reminded me I kept telling them to read that way.

The room was sometimes noisy, even for me, during self-selection when they worked on their own book projects or at centers set up related to the theme. One group worked with menus, discovering exotic foods such as caviar. Another group compared cookbooks from different countries. About five kept reading in their self-chosen books. This was the kind of reading I had hoped for but couldn't plan for because some days it just clicked. The feeling that others who observed this scene would not appreciate it as much as I did continued to haunt me.

Students began practicing more conscientiously for their reading friends. It was exciting to watch students reading and sharing their reading with enthusiasm. I was convinced they were learning far more than they would in a traditional setting, but uncertain of whether they could show that learning in a way that would convince others.

During one group lesson on reading with expression I was frustrated with the lack of student participation. At the end of the lesson I wrote a critical review of it on the board similar to what students did in their reading diaries. The observing research student thought I was being too critical of myself; she thought it went well. I could see why it might appear that way because the students were quiet, but I wanted interaction.

A third-grade teacher stopped me in the hall to share a comment about one of my students, "Elly just came up to me and told me I wasn't reading 'Sick' (a Shel Silverstein poem) right. She told me she could read it with more expression." There it was again, the affective component. Elly, who hated reading, now wants to teach her third-grade teacher how to read with expression.

Reading groups were going well as students continued working on their plays, SSR, and basal stories. The participation in small groups was lively, focusing on reading favorite parts aloud and clarifying unknown words. Transitions when groups changed were noisy at first, but once they understood the routine it went smoothly.

Just before the holiday season vacation break, we evaluated the reading diaries. Some students' comments indicated they wanted simply to give me what they thought teachers traditionally wanted, but others were developing a constructive, critical view. Most comments were very positive, such as: "I like it because you can record things going on around you. You can put down what the teacher says so you can remember what to do." "We can see improvements. We don't have to

depend on the teacher to tell us what to do." "You know how to plan on your own. You depend on yourself." One student said she started using a notebook at home with her mother writing back and forth to each other.

Others were not so positive. I encouraged them to be honest, telling them that I would not feel bad if they didn't like something because learning what it was might help me become a better teacher. Several students admitted they preferred workbooks because they were easier and the expectations were clear.

Writing

Students continued to show more interest in writing. When the class took a field trip, many students took their spirals voluntarily to take notes. Several students commented how much they missed Writer's Workshop when we went a week without it because I couldn't keep up with the responses. During the first week of December we started writing stories that we would give as Christmas gifts. I used the book, Gifts of Writing, by Susan and Stephen Judy (1980) as a resource. For the prewriting stage, we decided who we wanted to give the story to and then we each made a jotlist of topics we would be interested in writing about.

I had planned for the stories to be ready 2 weeks before classes were out so we could make book covers and write the final drafts into the books. Unfortunately, there were numerous classroom interruptions with special programs, practices with other teachers, and our own impending performance for parents.

Finally, students had a compelling relevant reason to produce a final draft. Whenever they became discouraged with their writing, I showed them a sample of the book covers and reminded them of the bookmaking date as an incentive to keep going. However, when that date came on a Friday, very few stories were ready for final draft. The bookmaking materials were collected, a volunteer was in class to help, and it was the only available day before the winter break for uninterrupted work. I decided to go ahead with the book-making project anyway, hoping there would be time in the next week and a half to write the final drafts in their books.

We worked on the books until the dismissal bell rang. Students hurried to put things away, including their newly made book covers. On Monday fewer than half the students had their book covers. Some said they already wrote the story in it, wrapped it and put it under their tree. My students' attitude toward their work as well as my lack of foresight frustrated me again. I should have allowed more time for the writing process and monitored where the stories and covers went once they were completed.

The lack of materials and poor organizational skills of students remained a problem. Some students would pull out a new piece of paper each day to write on and lose it by the next day. I had firmly believed that students should be responsible for getting their own materials but I was beginning to look for alternatives. Several students still did not have a spiral for a reading diary so I arranged

for a local business to donate spirals for each student to start the new year.

Accountability

Students took their second periodic tests this month, but this time I arranged to have all the Level 9 students take their tests together and all the Level 10s take theirs together. Some students made surprised comments about who was in Level 9. Several Level 9 students appeared embarrassed at being set apart from their friends. I regretted doing it, but I justified my action by thinking that it was easier for me to administer and students would have to get used to being labeled by levels for next year. I was going against what I believed was best for students, but I rationalized that perhaps this would at least help them succeed in school.

I was anxious about the test results, but all Level 9 students earned mastery scores on every part of the test except for 6 who did not pass the decoding part. What impressed me the most was that I provided much less assistance with directions this time and fewer students asked for help.

Ms. Crane: The Beginning of Serious Trouble

I continued my struggle to appease Ms. Crane. During her monthly visit I tried to conduct a lesson in the basal the way other teachers would because I thought it was what she wanted. But at the follow-up conference her first comment was, "I thought the students had more of a spark and the rapport was better with you during my other visit compared to what I saw yesterday."

Her primary concern was whether I had all my records to show student progress. She expected a numerical ranking of isolated skill mastery on a chart form that she could copy and take with her. This was the first mention of record keeping since the summer workshop when I agreed to the same testing requirements as other teachers. The results of basal tests had been diligently recorded and turned in as requested but she seemed to expect more. I showed her the notebooks I kept on the students. The individual record sheets and protocols from the informal basal tryouts were there and I mentioned the taped oral reading samples, the work folders with samples of their writing, and their journals which were all information for me.

I became annoyed and defensive about her disregard for my records of progress. I reminded her of the agreement that I would have the same accountability as other teachers and that I had handed in the basal test scores as we agreed on. I pointed out that other teachers had given one periodic test just as I had, so they had nothing to show student progress except their own judgment. I again pointed out the record keeping I had done and added that I wrote up field notes every week. I offered to write a summary of each student's progress but admitted that it probably was not what she wanted.

At one point Ms. Crane remarked, "Well, I would think that if you're using this for your doctoral program that you would want to keep a record of how students are doing". It dawned on me then that she might have the wrong idea of the focus of my dissertation. I tried to clarify that I was not trying to prove that my approach was

better than another approach but that I was merely observing and describing the process of implementing a different program.

Ms. Crane described her responsibility to report on her perceptions of my program and make recommendations for whether it should be continued. She stressed that since I had received special permission she could not require me to provide extra information, but that it would be to my advantage. It seemed obvious that her opinion about my program was formed regardless of the information I gave her. When I mentioned this to her, she agreed and then attributed any possible student growth to the Hawthorne effect.

As she left, she asked for the basal test record-keeping chart to copy, which I quickly supplied. I regretted ever involving her in this process. I regretted not heeding the other teachers' advice to close the door and do whatever I wanted. I also learned to regret my involvement with Dr. Newman.

Dr. Newman: Serious Trouble

Dr. Newman had visited about a half an hour on the day of our bookmaking, leaving without comment. She returned several days later to see how the stories had turned out. I felt like a criminal caught in the act. My plan to have perfectly edited books had failed and my fear that this failure would reflect poorly on my program was soon justified. Dr. Newman observed my class for about 20 minutes; then we discussed her observations and concerns while my class was with their reading friends.

I summarized areas of progress which I had observed, stressing the changes in attitude and motivation. She confirmed that the students obviously liked to read and felt good about themselves. She thought they were doing very well affectively but she stated that she needed to see some measurable signs of progress. She used the book-making project as an example of skill deficiencies, noting that students seemed unaffected by the misspelled words they used or the improperly written stories. She expressed concern with how parents would perceive these errors, pointing out an incident in which a parent wrote a letter to the editor of the local paper criticizing the district's schools for not teaching writing skills. I admitted to my mistake of not holding students more accountable, but Dr. Newman seemed to take it as an example of skills not being taught well.

As we discussed the use of whole language, she seemed to dismiss, as Ms. Crane had, the possibility that students who want to read and like to read would pick up skills on their own. I stressed my belief that students were learning this way in my classroom. She highlighted my frequent belief statements, mentioning her own dissertation work and the need to prove what is thought. As with Ms. Crane, I began to realize that her perception of my research differed from mine. When I clarified the purpose of my research, Dr. Newman seemed concerned that district administrators would not be represented very positively in my paper because they didn't understand what I was doing. As I explained the virtues of whole language teaching, Dr. Newman questioned why I would want to teach in this district if I didn't

agree with it's philosophy. I told her that I thought this approach was good for students and that it was beneficial for teachers to be exposed to alternative approaches. I realized I wasn't hiding my missionary zeal well, that I was basically telling her I thought my way was better.

She defended the use of basals, saying that they provided a record of skills taught. I went over my system of record keeping, but she pointed out that for people in the system, for those who didn't understand what I was doing, I needed to meet their need to see evidence of growth in terms they could understand. This proved to be a valuable lesson for me.

As Dr. Newman was leaving, she mentioned that some people would perceive what I was doing as fluff. It was difficult for me to face up to the tremendous oversight I had made by not providing better documentation in traditional terms of what I was doing. I felt a strong urge then to teach from the manuals, to conform.

After Dr. Newman's visit, I went to Mr. Richards to clarify his understanding of my accountability. He said, "I didn't understand that you had any more responsibility than the rest of the teachers, and that is the periodic tests only." I commented on the district's lack of support. Then Mr. Richards reached over, closed the door, and in a lowered voice said, "To be honest, there was some pressure on me at the beginning of the year not to let you do it. But I don't want to stifle creativity." I thanked him for his support and left to get my students. When I discussed this later with Ms. Rogers, we both

commented on the feeling that I was doing something bad or wrong by trying something different.

Colleagues

It was difficult not to show some discouragement after my meeting with Ms. Crane. One teacher asked how things went. I told him Ms. Crane didn't approve of what I was trying to do. He shook his head and wondered why someone in her position wouldn't want to encourage a teacher to try something different, especially with these children who weren't doing well with the regular method. I kiddingly said something about it being a plot by the system to keep the lower class down. His eyes lit up and he pointed a finger at me and said, "I think you're right!" Then he went on to defend why he thought there really were people who support any system that keeps these students in the lower class. This was the first time I'd heard a teacher other than Ms. Rogers speak so radically.

Ms. Stevens and Ms. Rogers came in to see how my meeting had gone with Ms. Crane. Ms. Stevens thought it sounded like harassment and suggested I report it to Dr. Newman. Ms. Rogers shook her head, and expressed regrets that I would have to go through that when it was obvious that my students were gaining so much from what I was trying to do. I said aloud what I had been thinking many times, "I never dreamt it would be this hard!"

After Dr. Newman's visit, I went to tell Ms. Stevens about the meeting. Her response was, "You just can't fight the system." I was

beginning to think she was right. I didn't start out wanting to fight anything but illiteracy.

When I finished writing field notes for the December meeting with Dr. Newman, I shared them with Ms. Rogers. She sent over a note:

> This makes me so sad! Answer this question for me? Which would make you feel better about yourself: 1) continue with your project and get hassled and frustrated along the way? or 2) "Follow the books" and give up on yourself? I don't know what the right answer is. But I think I can guess what will eventually make you happiest. I admire you for what you're doing. It takes guts. Maybe if you start expecting resistance and no support it will become less emotional for you. You are reaching the children. That is what counts more than anything else! I'm behind you!

Ms. Rogers also shared an article that she thought sounded like what I was trying to do; she thought it might encourage me.

My goals and many of my methods were reinforced, but I was frustrated by the irony of this situation. I believed that what I was doing was right, I had support from colleagues and the professional literature, but I felt attacked in practice. I had read about hegemonic influences, but I had naively assumed I could work through the barriers just because of this awareness.

A New Year Begins and the Innovation Ends

I used the Christmas break to recharge my batteries and renew my commitment. Ms. Rogers and I met several times to plan a more integrated approach. We decided to use the social studies books for reading and conduct a unit on the different countries covered in the text. I prepared a new seating chart and a new schedule for students. I studied cooperative learning techniques to improve group processes.

When the students returned, they seemed to expect some changes and adjusted quickly and with few complaints. I tried to be even more organized because a student teacher was assigned to my class this spring semester.

I was feeling confident about my teaching until I received a call from Dr. Newman soon after the spring semester began. She said she had been thinking about our last conversation and was especially concerned about the focus of my dissertation. It was obvious from her tone of voice and strong comments that she was very upset. She began with strong criticisms of my teaching, referring several times to my bookmaking fiasco. I agreed about my mistake in not scheduling more time for the project, but I attempted to defend myself, only to be interrupted frequently.

Dr. Newman's main concern soon surfaced. She asked to read my dissertation proposal. I pointed out my expectations, saying that my accountability to her was only through the basal tests. Her expectations were obviously different. She had assumed that I was doing a traditional quantitative study comparing methods of instruction and that I would be able to show her pretest and posttest data.

She avoided my question of whether my program was allowed only because of my dissertation work or because of the merits of the program. She said she wouldn't necessarily endorse a developmental program such as the one I was pursuing. Instead, she again requested

a copy of my proposal and anything else that my committee had about what I was doing.

After these materials were sent, I made several attempts to clear up the misunderstandings. Dr. Newman insisted on using the term deception in reference to my research. I pointed out that deception requires intent and under no circumstances was there intent. I explained that misunderstanding was a better term to characterize the situation. Dr. Newman apparently felt that I had purposely misled her about the focus of my study. I was not effective in clearing up this misunderstanding, but Dr. Newman eventually agreed to focus only on my program in her work with me.

Shortly after the exchange between Dr. Newman and me, Ms. Crane asked to see the reading folders for my students, and a few days later a meeting was set up to review my program. A time and place were set for the meeting to go over the project summary written by Ms. Crane. Ms. Rogers volunteered to go with me. On the day of the meeting we left as quickly as we could after the students were dismissed.

At the district administration building Dr. Newman directed us to the meeting room. Dr. Newman sat at the head of the table farthest from the door. To her left were Ms. Crane and another district administrator. I sat to her right, with a chair between us. Ms. Rogers sat next to me, and Mr. Richards sat at the end across from Dr. Newman.

A 26-page handout documenting the evolution and progress of my program was distributed. Dr. Newman began the meeting by stating the

purpose of the meeting, which was to share information from the administration's perspective of my project. She clarified the district's understanding that the changes were in how I would teach, not what I would teach.

Mr. Richards attempted to defend my program by sharing standardized test information for the students I had last year, which had improved. He mentioned his original reservations, particularly ones stimulated when Ms. Eggers wrote to Ms. Crane requesting that all teachers use the basal readers, but he stated that he felt my students showed progress on the tests.

Dr. Newman expressed delight with my students' progress on those tests, but stated that she expected progress from everyone. However, she felt cumulative basal tests were more important because they assessed what was being taught. She was concerned with the uncertainty of not knowing the skills students did and did not have. She felt a need for an analysis which would normally be done through the cumulative basal tests.

Mr. Richards clarified her comment saying, "So it's okay to deviate if they take all the tests. These seem like reasonable requests." However, Dr. Newman stressed that teachers who deviated from the clear expectations of the district needed to do more in-depth analysis; administrators expected more information from those who deviated. She stated that teachers could stand on their head if they wanted as long as they showed that kids were learning.

When Ms. Rogers tried to defend my effectiveness as a teacher, Dr. Newman's immediate response was, "We're not discussing effectiveness. My concern is that Vicky did not keep her end of the deal. She did not use all the tests that were required."

I tried to remain quiet and controlled, assuming that Dr. Newman was still upset about the misunderstanding with my research and was using my oversights with record-keeping to vent her frustrations. The only required tests not given were the cumulative tests to students who had skipped a level but Ms. Crane had been aware of that since the August planning session. This seemed reason enough for Dr. Newman to increase my accountability to the district.

Dr. Newman and Ms. Crane had prepared a list of recommendations for completing the district's requirements. The list read as follows:

> Due to lack of evidence that supports the continuation of the present project, it is recommended that:
> 1. Data be collected that will determine where students should be placed in the basal series.
> Cum tests for levels skipped should be given. Analysis of results will define skills to be taught.
> 2. All students who do not have acceptable Dolch scores be retested and appropriate remediation be provided.
> 3. All students be given a writing assignment to be analyzed for appropriate communication skills remediation.
> 4. The 5-day cycle of direct teacher-pupil interaction as found in the revised Spelling Program should be a part of the daily schedule.
> 5. All cursive writing forms should be reviewed and high standards of legibility be maintained.

My students' work folders and taped oral reading samples were considered unacceptable because I did not record my data in a form that could be reproduced. After I made assurances that their requirements would be fulfilled, I got up to leave. As I walked out

the door, Dr. Newman commented, "Vicky, you say you're interested in the change process. But you did not follow the change model. You have to work with the system."

She was so right. I had learned this lesson the hard way and was upset mostly with myself for not foreseeing some of these problems. I could understand her perspective. I recognized the rational view I had read about so often, but my commitment to my own needs had blinded me to their needs.

I felt very close to completely giving up my ideals after I read Ms. Crane's summary of her monthly observations which were included in the handout:

> Observations of this project were done by the Language Arts Coordinator who was under the impression that the original proposal for this project was being implemented. This meant that the observer thought she was observing a classroom of 26 students who were all reading below grade level in the HBJ basic series. Later it was discovered that 7-9 of these students had successfully completed all the third-grade reading levels and should have been ready for the regular fourth-grade curriculum. The procedures were also implemented in the PM sessions with a heterogeneous group of students. As a result of observations in the fourth-grade classroom during the AM language arts block of time the following concerns have arisen: During each observation there appeared to be only 6-8 students who consistently handled the structure well. They appeared to be on task a majority of the time. While students did begin work almost immediately after teacher directions, many were "through" and off task by the time 8-10 minutes had gone by. If conferences are the source of providing for individual needs, they need to be frequent enough for the student to have enough direct teaching and practice to strengthen the areas of weakness. Conferences with students appeared to be short and few enough in one period as to be unlikely each student had minimally one weekly conference. There was much student movement during the students' individual work periods--pencil sharpening, aimless wandering, etc. As the movement increased the noise level increased. At no time that the observer was in the classroom was a discussion held over their reading. This was one of the activities that was to be included in the project. Students were assigned writing tasks

during every observation. When students were asked to share their writing the same students volunteered. In at least one instance observed, a response was read as a paragraph even though the student had only a short list of words on her paper. While it appears there are 6-8 students who respond well to this approach, the majority of students evidence a lack of ability to function well in this environment.

After reading this report, I thought of the progress the students had made. I reminded myself that even if I was not a perfect teacher that my approach was better for students. As a way of demonstrating this belief to myself as well as to the district, I chose the topic "What I Learned This Year" to use as a required writing sample for my students. These papers were to be turned in as their first draft. We made jot lists of things they might include in their writing, but I avoided coaching them in any way.

I was proud of their responses because I knew where they had started in the fall. Everyone could express their ideas in complete sentences with mostly correct punctuation. But the best part was the critical insight they showed into what they had learned.

Several mentioned learning that more reading led to better reading, others commented about learning how to read with expression, and others noted how reading better helps you get a job. Some examples of these comments are as follows:

"Ms. Mashek taught me to think on my own. I use to come to her everytime I had a problem. And she say, how do you think you can solve that problem? And I will think about it, then I solved it myself."

"I learned to write better and that self control will help me when I grow up. I like my teacher because she teaches us to be what we are and nobody else. In reading we picked our own books. I like it. In Writer's Workshop we write what we want stories. And in our journals we write our feeling about things and I love it."

"I learned how to read better in school. I like myself, I'm a winner." (written by a learning disabled student)

"I learned to read a lot better this year. I learned to pick a book that I was interested in. After getting used to the idea, I began reading bigger books. It was hard but I did it. Now I like to read a lot. Now I read books more than I use to."

"I learned to write a lot better this year. I learned how to indent paragraphs. It was very hard when I first got here but it was worth it."

"I learned to be more responsible for myself. I learned to solve my own problems. This has helped me to understand people more and more."

I was trying hard not to let the conflict with Dr. Newman affect my teaching. But I realized it was being affected when a student handed me her journal to read with three full pages addressed specifically to me. She had been withdrawn and not doing her work which was very unusual for her. I was concerned so I talked to her privately about whether there were problems at home. She would not respond verbally but did so in writing.

In her journal entry she described an incident where she needed help and I was too busy with others. She wrote in part, "I thought you hated me. I felt bad all day. . . . The only reason I'm working so hard is for you! Y.O.U. I overwork myself for you! I do many things to please you! After the counselor talked to me I realized I had a deep inside feeling to my whole life. I like you so much. I hope you understand how I feel."

No matter how much I wanted my program to work, I could not justify this kind of strain on students. I wrote a letter to Dr. Newman which follows:

> After considerable thought and several drafts of letters, I believe my response to the Grade 4 Project Summary meeting on January 26, 1987 still needs to be put into writing. I agree that I failed to keep all of the records which are required of other teachers. I disagree with the way it was brought to my attention. I will limit my comments to the two areas of testing you focused on:
>
> 1. Dolch Vocabulary Words--On June 6, 1986, I collected these scores from the third-grade teachers and recorded them on a chart. In September, the Chapter 1 teachers and I retested or tested students as required by the district. I forgot to record these scores on the green sheets in student reading folders. A simple reminder would have sufficed.
>
> 2. Cum Tests (for levels skipped)--On August 20, 1986, I told Ms. Crane that I would be giving the L9 test to all off-level students and the L10 test to all on-level students. As you may notice from Appendix F of your handout from the Jan. 26 meeting, Ms. Crane sketched in L9 next to each of the anticipated testing times on the planning chart. This appendix also states that 15 students had not completed L8, yet Ms. Crane made no suggestions that those students be given the cum test before skipping the testing level.
>
> The periodic test scores for L9 and L10 were sent to Ms. Crane in November and December. There was no reminder that students skipping a level should have taken the cum tests. Although it is true that this policy is stated in the Reading Handbook, I fallaciously assumed that my professional judgment,

based on taped oral reading samples from each child, was being honored.

I am sorry that these issues could not have been discussed in a more reasoned and civil manner. Certainly I think the implications that I have been deceitful or uncooperative with the system are inappropriate. Such was never my intention.

I also attempted to clear the air with Ms. Eggers. I was not aware, until Mr. Richard's comments in the meeting, that Ms. Eggers had written a letter of protest to Ms. Crane. I went to Ms. Eggers to express concern that she had not discussed her disagreements with me before writing the letter. She declined to discuss the issue at that time, referring to her busy schedule, but she agreed to give me a copy of the letter. The next day it was in my box with an attached note, which read in part as follows:

Dear Vicky,

I'm sorry that you feel unhappy about a letter that I have written. I did not receive a reply back from Ms. Crane nor have I talked to her or Dr. Newman.

You have had several opportunities during the last two years to voice your opinions about reading. It is only right that you should be given that opportunity, but I should be given the same opportunity without pressure that I shouldn't speak. I hope that you have a good day!

Love, Ms. Eggers

Ms. Eggers' original letter, dated December 3, was as follows:

Dear Ms. Crane,

I'm very concerned about the word attack skills that the kids have. I am also concerned about the basal reading program. We worked for years here at Jefferson to see that all the grades were in the same series and it's almost as if we're going backwards when we had just begun to see good progress. It also makes it very difficult for the kids when the series is disrupted. I really would like to see a unity next year with all grades using the basal.

She had a valid point about the need for unity, and I was the minority vote on my approach. This was another push for me to conform.

After Dr. Newman's requirements from the January meeting had been fulfilled, another meeting was set up to go over my program and record keeping. By this time, Ms. Crane had retired and her replacement joined us at the meeting. In an effort to meet their needs, my observational information was put into chart form. My records clearly showed student progress, especially the 2 students who moved up two levels in the basal. Dr. Newman made a comment minimizing those results and asked to see records for writing which she would expect to see in an organized program. I had holistic scoring charts and referred to the student folders with writing samples.

She then made additional requests for documentation of what I was teaching, since she could see what was going on when teachers used the basal, but she didn't know what I was doing. I agreed to type up an outline and include materials for the next unit we would be doing and send it to her. She ended the meeting with a suggestion to me that teaching would be easier if I put the students back in the basal with the workbooks. If I chose to continue with my program she reminded me that I would have to include other documentation.

I realized I was fighting a losing battle. Even though my beliefs, and the research behind those beliefs, had not been altered by these unfortunate turns of events, the project became too

burdensome an ordeal to continue. It was more appropriate to end the attempted innovation.

I let the student teacher finish the unit she was teaching, then finished the year with basal reading groups and workbooks. Ms. Eggers recommended that students use workbooks so they would know how to do them better in fifth grade. She also gave me a two-page list of skills which students were expected to define such as consonant digraphs and blends as well as 50 other isolated skills.

I told Ms. Eggers I would do what I could to prepare my students for fifth grade. I felt so sad for my students. All I could teach them now was coping skills. There had been so many things I planned to do, dreamed of doing, but didn't have the time, energy, resources or support. Was it an impossible dream?

CHAPTER 4

AWAKENING

The most poignant realization from this experience was that my alternative approach, the one that I believed was right, might not have been right for the particular school at the particular time with the particular people. Idealism fueled my desire for change, but my idealistic program became a Utopia, a destination I struggled to reach regardless of the means. Fortunately, the stark pitfalls of reality curbed my extremism, awakening in me a new vision for change.

Idealism: Fuel for the Journey

My idealistic view of teaching developed early. The church had a strong influence, providing a model of commitment and concern for others. Childhood experiences involved numerous opportunities for nurturing and caring for others. My decision to become a teacher was based on a missionary zeal to help others.

Once I started teaching, my idea of what helping students meant began a slow metamorphosis. I eventually realized that teaching required much more than caring and wanting to help students and that teaching involved more than what happens in a classroom.

In my intial teaching experiences, I believed I was helping students by isolating skills and imposing my own agenda. This approach had been reinforced by others so I accepted it as the way things should be and I believed I was doing the right thing.

Subsequent experiences helped me focus more on students as individuals.

I eventually became aware of the social, political, and economic influences on schools. In my first teaching position I was somewhat spoiled by the illusion of complete autonomy. Later I experienced feelings of discrimination for not fitting into the status quo, for not being like the other teachers. Added to this were the experiences of discrimination for not being part of the powerful elite, for being a woman, and for being just a teacher. This broadened my scope of concern for doing what was right. I found myself on a continual crusade, searching for the one best way to teach. Belief in this righteous pursuit took root and became deeply entrenched.

The discovery of whole language contributed significantly to this righteous attitude. Whole language made sense to me: it was based on how students learn, it had a strong theoretical base, and it was strongly supported in professional literature. I thought it was the right way to teach.

I had read the Carnegie Report, convinced that they had the solution to the nation's educational ills. I tried to be the teacher the report called for, thinking for myself to help others think for themselves, acting independently yet collaborating with others, and rendering critical judgment. I tried to develop knowledge that was wide-ranging and that deepened my understanding.

I experimented with many different approaches, all based on things I had read by the experts. When things worked just the way I

had read that they would, I was reinforced that I was on my way to discovering the best way. When they did not, I returned to the readings for greater enlightenment and moral support.

I had developed a very idealized view of what should happen in schools based on readings, experiences, and an evolving sense of justice. This view was strengthened by reacting to the traditional nature of the school environment, which was manifested clearly in the established reading program as well as the educational system. The more wrong they seemed, the more right I felt. My idealism also was reinforced by support from others and success with students.

Tradition

I had read the critics' reports on traditional educational practices. Many aspects of teaching at Jefferson fit their descriptions of what was wrong with education.

The reading program. The reading program at Jefferson Elementary fit the description of traditional reading programs. The basal reading program with its specified skill sequence seemed to account for most of what happened during reading instruction. Teacher adherence to these materials appeared sacrosanct, as several people warned me of possible consequences if I did otherwise. It was assumed that there would be reading groups, and we were encouraged to label them.

Information on student progress in reading was to be given in terms of test scores. The district wanted a chart of skills mastered, not work samples or taped oral readings. Oral reading tryouts

revealed flaws in the reading program. For example, the stability of group placement despite reading ability seemed obvious after listening to students read. Many of the oral reading tryouts were inconsistent with group placement. Adam and Joseph were assigned to Level 8 from third grade but Joseph struggled at that level and Adam was soon moved to Level 10. The literature suggested that the expectation that every story in the book be read before passing to the next level contributed to this misassignment. This suggestion was supported by Sharon's concern that if she went to a higher level in fourth grade without reading all the stories, she might have to go back and read them all while in fifth grade.

Many students were not reading for meaning nor did they seem to enjoy reading. When I pointed out to Elly that self-corrections in reading showed that she was really thinking, she responded, "I never thought before when I was reading!" When students were given time to self-select books and read silently, a student asked, "How will you know if we read it?" Group discussions were difficult since some did not understand what they read and some made little or no attempt to even read the assignment at the beginning of the year. Even with the picture books for the reading friends, many students avoided practicing before reading to the first graders.

There was continual evidence of learned helplessness. The "What are we supposed to do?" questions after directions were given, losing papers, not having materials, and general disorganization and apathy

were recurring evidence that traditional reading programs were flawed and that new ones were needed.

Another aspect of the traditional reading program that reinforced my idealism was the other teachers' seemingly blind acceptance of the program. Many teachers acted like robots programmed by commercial materials; these teachers revered tradition and authority. To illustrate, Ms. Eggers would not stray from the basal without Ms. Crane's approval. She had formed reading groups by test scores only and seemed to avoid any meaningful dialogue with me concerning teaching practices. Her excuse for emphasizing decoding skills was because "it's the policy in the district." Even when she disagreed with rules made by others, such as the spelling requirements and which door to use for dismissal, she was reluctant to do anything to change it.

Ms. Reilly stressed decoding skills because she considered herself "old-fashioned." The resource teacher followed her supervisor's request to change her affective goals for students because she did what she was told to do. Ms. Rogers confessed that much of what she did was because she was told to do it. Ms. Stevens' advice after a confrontation with Dr. Newman was, "You can't fight the system."

Other teachers shared survival tactics, the effects of which I could only conjecture. When I shared concern about students passing the decoding section on the reading tests, some teachers shared their strategy of walking students through the test, even reading it to

them, so that the district didn't say anything. The advice to just get my scores in, close the door, and do whatever I liked reinforced my idealism. I resented the implication that trying to improve instruction was something bad that should be hidden.

Educational system. Many of my teaching experiences within educational systems reinforced my idealism by giving me something clear to fight against. In El Salvador, it was the edict to follow the manuals with no discussion of alternatives. Teaching eighth-grade science, it was the boss-employee relationship with my principal. At Jefferson it was the numerous rules made by others. The most sacred rule I had to face at Jefferson was the requirement to follow the prescribed manuals for instruction. This allowed for standardization among teachers and across schools. Ms. Crane stated on several occasions that she considered it her job to check up on teachers and their use of these materials. Dr. Newman also stressed that one aspect of her job was to monitor test scores as a measure of student success with these materials.

Bending or breaking any of the rules required permission from district administrators. Other teachers, an administrator from another district, and even the school secretary, expressed concern about whether I had permission to break the rule of following the basal reading program. Ms. Crane strongly reinforced this concern with the comment that I needed to cover myself "by checking with anything that's not the normal thing" or I might get my "wrist slapped."

Other aspects of the educational system such as the noninstructional demands, the lack of resources, the overcrowded classrooms with little support, and the disregard for professional expertise served to lead me to an idealistic view. These aspects of the system seemed like part of a conspiracy to maintain a power structure in the school with teachers on the bottom. With little power given to teachers to change traditional practices, the lower class students would also be destined for the bottom of the capitalistic structure of our society, regardless of their innate ability. My resolve to change the system was reinforced by its clear shortcomings.

Support from Others

Most teachers supported my attempts to try something different, and this support renewed by idealism. For instance, the congratulations on my coup against workbooks and another teacher's agreement that the district's demands on me were a plot to keep the lower class down strengthened my resolve that I was doing the right thing.

Several teachers offered moral support against the system after one of Ms. Crane's visits. When other teachers complained about her advice, I did not take Ms. Crane's confrontations personally. It was helpful to learn from a district consultant that Ms. Crane's reliance on test scores might be related to her lack of knowledge about evaluation.

My regular support group meetings with Ms. Rogers, Ms. Stevens, and Ms. Williams often included discussions of educational issues and concerns. Rarely were specific philosophical teaching issues discussed, such as my whole language philosophy, but the group was always there for me to vent my frustrations.

Ms. Rogers was especially supportive and the most involved with my change efforts. Our working relationship was the closest to my ideal for collaboration with colleagues. We shared and discussed professional literature. We worked together to solve problems such as discipline as well as coordination of our instruction to provide continuity for students. She kept me going when I was most discouraged.

Ms. Rogers was a very supportive colleague and friend. She understood my emotional involvement in trying to do what was right. Her advice to never give up hope and to expect resistance not support and her volunteered presence at the January meeting with Dr. Newman strengthened my idealism.

Specific support for my whole language philosophy and for feeling like a professional came from outside the school. Speaking at university classes, presenting at the reading conference, visiting a school district using whole language, and becoming part of the whole language support group in another district were opportunities to recharge my battery.

Successes with Students

Student successes reinforced my idealistic beliefs. The group of boys who read horror stories and who wanted to do more at recess was one success. Mary and Jill voluntarily rewrote their stories just to make them better. Many students were sharing the discovery of new words and their strategies for figuring them out. James shared his excitement that "I can read big words now!" Students wanted to take their spirals on field trips to take notes. They could transfer the strategy of making webs for writing stories to using webs for writing reports in Ms. Rogers' class. They became more involved with current events, with real world reading.

Individual creativity was being expressed. Elly did an interview with the three bears. Carlos and Nicole designed and made their own games based on books they had read. We produced plays for the parents. Elly wanted to teach her third-grade teacher how to read with expression.

The students learned to appreciate and use self-control and self-initiative. The student essays on "What I Learned This Year" emphasized this. Fewer students required additional tutoring in their social skills by the end of the year.

Academically, most students were passing the reading periodic tests, except for the decoding section. By January, all but three passed the Dolch vocabulary test. By the end of the year, all morning students averaged 70% or better on their final trimester spelling tests. That included Cory, Rodney, and James who scored consistently

below 50% the first trimester. Indeed, 85% of the class averaged 80%
or more. Students were willingly writing and rewriting, using
complete sentences, indenting paragraphs, and remembering most
punctuation.

Utopia: An Impossible Destination

Without the reinforcement of my idealistic convictions noted
previously, I would have given in to traditional methods or abandoned
teaching. The bright side of my idealism was that it fueled my search
for ways to improve education. The dark side was that this idealism
became a destination, not just fuel for the journey. I felt I had
found the truth, the ultimate solution, and I felt a missionary
responsiblity for leading others to this right way. Since I
considered whole language the right way, the unspoken assumption was
that everyone else must be teaching the wrong way. Clarke (1987)
referred to such idealistic thinking as:

> the dark side of monotheism. . . . It is the conviction that we
> have God on our side which allows us to commit acts of supreme
> self-sacrifice, stubbornly arguing that we are right even as the
> world comes crashing down upon us. This conviction allows us to
> ignore the possibility that there may be no ultimate, universal
> Truth, and therefore, no single set of possible solutions to
> problems. (p. 393)

I was convinced that I could find the ultimate, all-embracing
solution to the problems of teaching and learning. The behavior
resulting from this conviction has been referred to as the Utopia
syndrome (Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). Because I believed so
strongly in my search for the perfect solution, it was logical for me
to try to actualize this solution; I would not have been true to my

own self if I did not. However, the result of this belief was what Watzlawick, et al. discovered, "Utopian attempts at change lead to very specific consequences, and these consequences tend to perpetuate or even worsen what was to be changed" (p. 48).

Since I could not fathom the possibility that there may be no ultimate solution, I acted as if I was wearing blinders that were leading me toward my vision of the truth. However, these blinders impaired my judgement along the way. My errors in judgment included: (a) assuming that permission to do something different was a sign of support, (b) ignoring the historical context of instructional programs in the school, and (c) appeasing people or avoiding issues.

Assuming Permission Was Support

One key error I made was assuming that permission from school administrators to be innovative indicated their support. When I started at Jefferson, I was honest with the principal about not being a traditional teacher. He seemed to accept this. When he later avoided any involvement with my reading program, I reacted in much the same way that the teachers in McPherson's (1972) study did. I felt lucky to be left alone. But when a parent complained that first year about me not using the basal, and when Dr. Newman questioned my efforts in January, my principal didn't know enough about what I was doing to support me.

The superintendent gave me permission and verbal support but had little direct involvement. He and Dr. Newman both initially implied that how I taught was not as important as whether students learned

what they were supposed to learn. The added stipulation was that I use the same accountability measures as other teachers. Dr. Newman reminded me of this again when I suggested the decoding section of the basal tests be eliminated. She emphasized "our agreement" to use the same tests others used.

I also assumed that I was getting Ms. Crane's support upon receiving her permission. As the project proceeded, though, she seemed to resent the fact that those above her had given me permission. During the interview with a committee member, Ms. Crane stated that her role was to check up on me, not to help with alternative forms of evaluation or to support alternative programs. She openly admitted that she could not support what I was doing because of our philosophical differences. I should have predicted and accepted this situation after her edict my first year to go back to the basal with no encouragement to do anything otherwise. Instead I took it as a challenge.

Ignoring the Historical Context

A second mistake I made was ignoring the historical context of instruction at Jefferson School and that district. The superintendent and Ms. Crane told me that there had been five different basals used at one time and that their concern for continuity in such a transient district led them to choose one. I made few allowances for this continuity concern initially. I believed my approach would help students develop thinking skills that would help them be flexible

enough to adjust to any environment. Later I realized that I couldn't accomplish this in only 1 year.

Ms. Crane and other teachers mentioned an individualized program that had been used in the school for many years before I came. It turned out to be inefficient and expensive, so they discontinued it. When I proposed my program, which had a component of individualization, many teachers apparently thought I was promoting a return to a failed program. At first I didn't recognize the different interpretations some of the other teachers and I had of this term. The term individualized had very different connotations from my nonmechanistic view and the district's mechanistic view. If I had considered where the district was and where it had been, I would have known that their view of individualized was a scaled curriculum.

Timing is important in any change effort, but I failed to consider the effects of what was happening in the district at the time I made my proposal. For example, the district was involved in teacher-effectiveness training, so they were less open to other innovations.

Another example of bad timing was the fact that Ms. Crane was close to retirement and saw the pilot projects she proposed as her last contribution to the district. I underestimated her sense of ownership in her project. I also deprecated the program in place by pointing out that what students had was not working and that they needed a change. My discovery that Ms. Crane had done demonstration

lessons in the other school should have signaled me to wait or else be especially astute before presenting my proposal.

Appeasement and Avoidance

A third type of error in judgment involved my appeasement and avoidance. I tried to do what the administrators said so that I could do what I wanted. When I was caught not using the basal as prescribed my first year at Jefferson, I was given three choices: following the reading program totally, using the manual and student readers but not the workbooks, or going back to the basal until a plan for an alternative approach was written and approved. I chose the third option to appease my superiors; it would have been relatively simple to follow the other teachers' advice to verbally comply with the traditional program, get the scores in, but close the door and do what I wanted.

My decision to appease my superiors backfired. When I went public with my whole language approach, the district listed three goals for me: (a) to have more students complete Level 10, (b) to increase standardized test scores in reading and vocabulary, and (c) to develop a model for other teachers. I didn't agree with any of these goals, but I went along with them. From the beginning of my program, my personal goals conflicted with goals that I stated to appease the district.

The requirements for planning my program also conflicted with my own philosophy. I was expected to plan the whole year in 2 workshop days. This countered whole language teaching, which was to be jointly

planned with students in a continually evolving fashion. Since I was to plan the whole year before meeting students, the program that I planned at times merely replaced the basal program. I wasn't letting the program evolve from students as I thought it should. The more planned my agenda was, the less I allowed for student interests and needs. But I did my best to fulfill the planning requirements set by the district.

When I received permission to try something different, I also received an expectation from district personnel to prove myself and my approach. I accepted this expectation in order to appease the district. One expectation was to show immediate results of near total time on task and academic excellence. When Ms. Crane made her monthly visits, she expected to see all students absorbed in their learning. Dr. Newman seemed to expect flawless writing by January. Her expectation for immediate change was a constant pressure. I became impatient and transferred some of this pressure onto my students. I coached the class to be on their best behavior whenever Ms. Crane or another visitor came in. I was so anxious about their performance on the reading tests at first that I helped them more than they needed. By not holding out for more reasonable expectations, my program was undermined.

I found myself trying to appease or avoid Ms. Crane to reduce my own stress. In November I avoided a face-to-face meeting by asking for her written comments. Each time Ms. Crane came I tried a more traditional approach until I was doing a lesson straight from the

manual. This was a concession not worth making. It wasn't better for students or for me, and it didn't improve her image of my teaching.

I realized by the end of the study that Ms. Crane was quite critical of the opportunity I'd been given to stray from her established program. I couldn't shake the feeling that Ms. Crane wanted me to fail. I didn't want to face that feeling, so my defense was to immerse myself in my plans, avoid her, and give my attention to my program and my students.

I had avoided some of the required reading tests and the bookkeeping of recording Dolch word scores because I invested more time with naturalistic assessments which I felt were more valid. But the work folders and oral readings were not what the district recognized as measures of growth. I failed to recognize their need to measure growth in traditional terms and respond to it appropriately.

I avoided discussions with Ms. Eggers for the same reason I wanted to avoid them with Ms. Crane. Their views were set and there was nothing I could do to change them. But I was guilty of the same thing I was judging them for; mine were also set. I wasn't accepting their differences and working with them like I tried to do with my students.

Reality: Redirecting the Journey

The errors in judgement resulted from my unilateral goal of implementing a whole language program. Idealism was becoming a disease and realism was the cure. But reality had to be digested, not resisted or avoided. As Alinsky (1971) observed:

>Most people do not accumulate a body of experience. Most people go through life undergoing a series of happenings, which pass through their systems undigested. Happenings become experiences when they are digested, when they are reflected on, related to general patterns, and synthesized. (p. 68)

Experiencing reality through reflection, searching for patterns, and synthesizing what happened helped me redirect my efforts to make positive changes for students and helped dissolve my goal of arriving at a Utopian solution. Reality reminded me that I was part of a system. As such, I had to consider the needs of students and the educational system as well as my own.

Needs of Students

Students needed to feel successful both academically and socially. I assumed that the whole language approach would solve all the behavior problems by empowering students with effective literacy skills. I wanted to teach reading and language arts, but the days seemed to be filled with other issues not addressed directly by any curriculum in the school or discussed by professionals in the system. These issues centered about the fact that students needed to feel good about themselves before they could tackle anything academic. I became certain that if my students felt good about themselves, they would be more likely to hand in papers, have materials, and not give up on themselves so easily. Indeed, I was ashamed of some of the tactics I reverted to out of the frustration of not knowing what to do and not having the time or support to work out something better. I didn't want to get angry with students, but I did. I didn't want to use

demeaning threats, such as putting them back a grade, but I did. I didn't want to use the assertive discipline methods, but I did.

Eventually, I realized that my approach to teaching reading was not solving the self-concept problems. Finally, Ms. Rogers and I collaborated on a discipline plan, developing the chart and social skills program and keeping it open for changes. There were no blinding idealism or Utopian goals for behavioral approaches. We openly accepted the uncertainty of ever developing one right way to empower students.

I also realized that concessions, not lowering of expectations, had to be made for my students. Ms. Crane had been right. I gave them too many choices and too much responsibility at the beginning. The fear of simplifying things to get through the lesson, just as traditional teachers had been criticized for in the literature, kept me constantly examining my tactics. When I wrote on the board answers to a worksheet and told students to copy them, the message I felt I conveyed was that they were not smart enough to produce answers on their own. Their low self-concepts were interfering with their learning, and my whole language tactics were failing me.

Students also needed to have some continuity in their lives. Ms. Rogers and I worked together to ensure some continuity during their day as they moved from one class to the other. But students also needed continuity from year to year. I had talked with the third-grade teachers about the program my students had experienced with them. Only amid the frustrations with helping students succeed did I

realize how I could have used that information to make the transition easier for my students by adjusting my program.

Eventually I realized that I needed to help students make an easier transition to fifth grade. I knew that if they couldn't perform well by Ms. Crane's standards it would reflect poorly on my approach and future whole language approaches would be jeopardized. These pressures were sometimes transferred to students, which I didn't realize until students responded. When I gave the mystery worksheet that most students struggled with, I overdid the speech on how much they would have to do on their own in fifth grade. I didn't realize the anxiety I was creating for students until Erin started crying and expressing those feelings. LaShondra was another reminder when she wrote several pages in her journal expressing frustration at how hard she had been working for me.

I had justified my autonomous approach by telling myself that students would learn to be flexible and adjust to the differences between the teaching approaches. But former students stopped by to complain about the rigid structure and lack of choice in fifth grade, and a substitute pointed out how much the students missed the variety of activities they did with me.

I began to accept some responsibility for students after they finished their year with me. I asked Ms. Egger what she would like me to emphasize. Rather than totally concede to her methods, I tried to help students develop survival tactics. For example, I showed them how to figure out workbook directions on their own so they would not

have to bother a teacher who used reading groups. I also told them to have ready a book to read or a story to write when they finished their work so the teacher wouldn't give them more to do.

Continuity between school and home was the most neglected yet crucial area for helping students succeed. Parents were silent participants in their child's formal education, but they were prominent in their child's development. When I pursued my Utopian goals, parents were easily ignored. When I became concerned about lasting change for students, I redirected my priorities the next year to include more parental involvement.

The Needs of the Educational System

Along with student needs, I had to consider the needs of the educational system in order to succeed. The educational system needed proof in its terms of student success. I gave the periodic reading tests even though I did not think they were valid measures of reading ability. The periodic tests, to me, were the crux of what was wrong with basal reading programs. When I agreed to give them, I naively assumed that any student who learned to read for meaning and developed critical thinking skills could pass these simplistic tests. I didn't realize how much I would need to adjust my instruction so that students could pass the tests. I would never have guessed that I would separate the groups by ability levels to take the tests. This was the stigma of grouping I had worked so hard to avoid.

The basal reader tests were one of the predominant assessments of student performance in the district. Viewing my way as right and the

traditional ways in place as wrong, I failed to acknowledge that others would need assurance in their terms of student success. I was certain that the naturalistic assessments that I had planned to use from the beginning were the best devices for helping me improve instruction. Naturalistic assessment was done to help me adjust my teaching, to understand the students, and to monitor how the learning process was proceeding. My methods of assessment were difficult to determine a priori; they took several forms throughout the ongoing teaching-learning process. But the methods of assessment for the district were preset and objective. This had been made clear from the beginning. The administrators were not interested in my naturalistic assessments or my attempts to put my observational information in a chart form. The district valued test scores and objective data. This was a reasonable concern considering the public interest in the quality of education being provided by the schools. Test scores were a familiar form of assessing student progress, for making educators accountable. Rather than see this expectation as an annoyance, I could have provided both qualitative and quantitative information and paved the way for more collaboration on developing alternative forms of accountability. Rather than resent their requirements, I should have provided the scores until an alternative could be worked out together.

The educational system, like most systems, also needed to have continuity. The standardized curriculum in place was designed to ensure continuity among teachers and schools in order to promote

uniformity in student outcomes. Teachers, as technicians, were to transmit this required curriculum as efficiently as possible. In my nonmechanistic view, no curriculum could be completely standardized because of the individuality of teachers and students. Uniformity of student outcomes was not my goal since I tried to optimize individual differences. Regardless of the differences, I should have recognized and responded to the needs of the district rather than resent and resist their restrictions. I should have viewed my use of the basal skills sequence as a strategic decision to meet this need for continuity, not as a concession to the system. I could have articulated my program of materials and strategies while including the literature used to support this program.

Originally, I felt I was sacrificing my beliefs by using the skill sequence in the basal because I didn't believe reading should be broken down into separate skills. But using the skill sequence provided a framework for building instruction, and it helped maintain some continuity among teachers. I recast the idea of skills into strategies which was more compatible with my philosophy. However, when talking with other teachers or with district administrators, I should have discussed my progress through the skill sequence in terms they could understand.

Although I generally disregarded the needs of the educational system, I respected their needs three ways. First, I did not believe in the rigid levels of reading but I learned to use the terms of book levels to designate reading levels. This was a common language for

discussing student performance with others. As Alinsky (1971) discovered, "Fear of change is one of our deepest fears, and a new idea must be at least couched in the language of past ideas; often, it must be, at first, diluted with vestiges of the past" (p. 108).

Another concession to the system was my using the district spelling program even though I believed students developed spelling skills through their writing and rewriting. The spelling program was predictable and rote, something I felt the students had been trained to accept. It was something familiar to them and easy for them to see their success, even if it didn't carry over to their writing.

Finally, I realized the benefits of having some routine structure to the day. I feared the idea of routine from all the literature on teaching and feared the type of routine Ms. Crane seemed to expect. But I eventually realized that having a predictable structure could still leave room for flexible teaching and learning, and it certainly reassured observers that learning was occurring.

Personal Needs

The realities of the situation relative to my personal needs also helped direct my idealism. I needed and depended on feeling successful as a teacher. There were so many obstacles that I finally had to admit that there were limitations which made my Utopian goal an impossibility. I learned to make adjustments and to experiment with solutions.

I had high hopes of soliciting funds to buy an abundant supply of classroom books. There was not enough time for me to follow through

with this, and no money was available in the district. Thus, I collected books from the public libraries, but too many were not returned. Then I used only the school's library and my personal collection. Again books were lost or mistreated. By the end of the year I was using only the basal and the few books remaining in the classroom collection. Originally I took this as a sign of failure. Eventually I realized that these were necessary accomodations to reality. The problem was reframed; it was not just a matter of having materials, but of being able to use them appropriately. My need for time and resources limited my idealism.

I also had hoped to integrate more lessons with Ms. Rogers, to conference with students more often, and to read their journals and reading diaries more. There just wasn't enough time for everything and occasionally when there was time available I had no more energy left. Concessions for time and energy had to made.

I also needed to have a sense of continuity, of fitting in, with those around me. I enjoyed sharing professional articles and discussing educational issues with other teachers. This worked well with teachers who were open to my ideas. I learned to relax my expectations that all teachers would want to participate in this kind of interaction when Ms. Reilly and Ms. Eggers openly disagreed with my approach. I thought they accepted the fact that I wanted to experiment but I discovered later, learning of the letter Ms. Eggers wrote to Ms. Crane, that Ms. Eggers thought all teachers should be following the same program. I could see then why it was difficult to

have a discussion with her. She thought she was just as right as I thought I was.

Another aspect of reality that affected me personally was the knowledge I gained that pushing my beliefs too much would be counterproductive. There were many issues that I did not agree with, but I made a conscious effort not to get involved with all of them, choosing my battles more carefully. I wanted to push my views on the supervisor who made the resource teacher change our subjectively stated affective goals to more measurable goals. I decided that was the teacher's battle, not mine. I wanted to protest the spelling requirements and the demands of noninstructional tasks. I expressed my views when asked, but let the other teachers take actions to make policy changes. I wanted to coordinate my program with the Chapter 1 program. Our views were not compatible and our dialogues were strained, so we stayed with separate programs. I wanted to push for more compensation for not using workbooks, but I accepted what was given. I wanted to proselytize and use the term whole language, but I didn't out of fear that it would seem to be a passing fad like the ones that the veteran educators had watched come and go. I described my approach more in terms of the outcomes of students reading for meaning, reading for enjoyment, and becoming independent thinkers.

The greatest dose of reality that tempered my idealism was administered at the meeting in January to review my program. The accusations of being deceitful with my research and not keeping my part of the agreement made reasonable dialogue impossible. Because

the situation became too personally stressful, I decided to give in but not give up. I decided to fit in, to appear the same, and to work within the constraints of reality for positive changes.

<u>Reflection: Expanding the View</u>

I felt frustrations building throughout my attempted innovation as I stubbornly clung to the image of a Utopian solution. I became agitated as it became increasingly clear that others did not support my efforts to change to a better way. Only through reflection long after the experience could I accept the idea that there was no one right way to teach. I had verbally expressed this, but it was not part of my belief system until I thought through my experience of trying to implement a whole-language classroom in a skills-based district.

Reflection helped clarify why I wore blinders during my change efforts. I was thinking only in terms of right and wrong, good and bad. In my opinion there were two opposing forces: my nonmechanistic view and the mechanistic view imbedded in the system. I had a holistic, or nonreductionistic, view of teaching reading; they had a component, or atomistic, view. I wanted to use an integrative approach to curriculum; they wanted a linear approach. I was a qualitative researcher; they expected quantitative research. These differences were grounded in a clash of world views, of how we thought people should be treated, how learning should proceed and for what purpose.

Despite these differences, a powerful similarity existed: we both adhered to the belief that one best way could be determined, and once this best way was discovered, an equilibrium or stable state (Schon, 1971) could be achieved. Both views held strong convictions of rightness. Whole-language teachers who seek change should realize this situation.

Teachers should also realize that whole language is not merely an approach to teaching reading. The term, whole language, seems misleading. Indeed, holistic education or holistic world view might be a better term. As a philosophical stance, whole language requires a belief structure that should affect relationships and decisions beyond the classroom. I gradually realized this broader application of whole language and how the basic tenets of whole language philosophy could be applied to the change process. These basic tenets paralleled the recommendations for teacher-initiated change presented in Chapter 1. The following three parallels are implications for practice derived from the research reported here.

Continual Theory Building and Critical Inquiry

One implication is that whole language teachers who are involved in continual theory building should also engage in critical inquiry. Continual theory building and critical inquiry are both intellectual journeys, not standardized courses to follow. Continual theory building begins in the classroom and critical inquiry has broader implications.

While whole-language teachers interact with students, they are continually experimenting with ways to better meet the needs of students. Engaged in critical inquiry, teachers must be continually experimenting with ways to improve education and question the status quo. Whole-language teachers encourage students to approach reading in the same manner that teachers should view critical inquiry, as a continual process of problem-posing and resolution.

Respect for the Learner and Collaboration

The second implication is that whole-language teachers who stress meaningful learning and respect for different people's interpretations of meaning should apply these beliefs to improve collaboration among educators. Whole-language teachers develop holistic understandings of learners and respect each one as individuals. Whole-language teachers must also develop this level of understanding and respect for colleagues.

Whole-language teachers trust students to learn, and they encourage individual development without sorting or labeling. Collaboration with other teachers is enhanced when teachers are trusted to do what they believe is best for students and when traditional teachers are not demeaned. Sarason (1972) noted that "The feeling of superiority is lethal for the process of understanding and change" (p. 232).

Whole-language teachers recognize students' social need to communicate. Students are encouraged to talk about things they need to understand, not just what the teacher wants them to understand.

Teachers need the same encouragement to communicate their work and concerns in a group and not be led to discuss only one teacher's work and concerns.

A Holistic View of Language and Organizational Literacy

A final implication is that just as whole-language instruction begins and ends with whole texts, whole-language teachers concerned with change must begin and end with the whole system. Whole-language teachers believe that language is learned best when the focus is on the meaning, not the form, of the message being communicated. Teachers may be most effective with change efforts when the focus is on the meaning of the change effort in relation to the system, not on the form of instruction an individual teacher decides to take.

The problems of student and teacher empowerment have their genesis in the social structure. However, I approached my whole language teaching as a way to change individual behavior. Since whole language is a philosophical orientation to the entire enterprise of teaching, my change efforts should have been guided by the beliefs inherent in this philosophy and directed toward the social and political situation in which teaching occurred.

Whole-language teachers attempt to adjust to the child. They look for solutions to learning problems by altering their instructional approaches, avoiding the assumption that there is something wrong with the learner. Decision making is shared with students who assist in determining the direction of instruction. Planning remains fluid in response to ever-changing conditions within

the student as well as within the classroom. Teachers should have a similar approach to the educational system when attempting change. They must be willing to alter their approaches based on an understanding of the system and be willing to share the decision making. "The nature of schools seems to work against living out a vision of teaching. If we know when it is the nature of schools and not our own vision that is at fault, perhaps we will be better able to continue our attempts to live out that vision" (Bolin, 1987, p. 227).

Whole language teachers seek to empower students, but they must also strive to empower their profession. Ayers (1987) believed that:

> In order to empower others one must also be powerful. A teacher cannot convey and model courage with timidity, confidence with diffidence. There is a link between empowering others and maintaining humanistic values and a humane perspective on our work. The connection is this: Teachers with faith in and commitment to others open themselves to surprise and change. They avoid the dulling habits and routines that become a prelude to burnout. Because they assume a shared world of responsiblity and personal meaning, they maintain a perspective on accomplishment and failure. Meeting people on their own terms, then, becomes, in part, an act of professional reassessment and personal renewal. (p. 91)

I opened myself to surprise and change and received condemnation for my attempts. I wanted to give in to the system or give up teaching. But using whole language as the foundation for my evolving world view, I discovered the meaning of assuming a shared world of responsibility and personal meaning. The blinders have been lowered to improve my view.

EPILOGUE

The year following the attempted innovation, I continued to teach at Jefferson but followed other teachers' advice to get my test scores in when I was supposed to, close the door, and do whatever I liked. I modified my program to meet the district's needs and taught the whole year with no observations from any administrator. I left the district the next year to complete the writing of this study.

During those two years, Ms. Crane's replacement, Ms. Hardy, helped move the district toward a whole language philosophy. Ms. Hardy organized a task force of 25 teachers and administrators. I volunteered to serve on the task force but was not selected. This group reviewed research in relation to the district's language arts curriculum and recommended changes. Collaboration and the building of teacher consensus was considered essential to the process.

Ms. Eggers was one of the original volunteers. She spoke enthusiastically of her renewed interest in teaching as she worked to integrate her reading lessons with the content areas. She reported that she is committed to using more trade books for reading instruction and plans to buy her own book sets to use with her students.

Throughout the process, Ms. Hardy demonstrated organizational literacy skills. She avoided the term whole language, and used the term integrated curriculum, a term used in the state curriculum guidelines. Rather than abandon the skill sequence prescribed in the basal reading program, she guided the task force in selecting critical

objectives using the skill list. Traditional evaluation instruments were eliminated or revised.

I am returning to the district as a teacher in another building. The changes within the district will make it easier to implement a whole language philosophy in my classroom. The changes in my own thinking will make it easier to apply this whole language philosophy to the process of change. My passion now has a plan.

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APPENDIX A

MEMO FROM MS. CRANE

Date: October 18, 1985

To: Mr. Richards

From: Ms. Crane, Language Arts Coordinator

Subject: Conference with Vicky Mashek

As a follow-up to our conversation on Wednesday, October 16, regarding the individualized reading program that Vicky is using in her classroom I thought you should be aware of the results of the conference between Vicky and myself.

Although she was not happy with the conclusions reached, I think we agreed that she had three possibilities for handling the reading program in her classroom. She will need to decide which procedure to use and begin implementing her decision. The following are the possibilities agreed upon:

1. She may use HBJ as provided by the district using the manual plans as her major focus.

2. She may use HBJ texts and manual but use her own ideas and activities in lieu of using workbook and/or duplicating masters.

3. She may go back to HBJ temporarily while she writes a plan for individualized reading instruction. Included in this plan would be objectives and specific procedures that will result in the same skill development as is available for the HBJ levels used in her classroom now. In addition she needs to include a procedure for any teacher receiving a student from this class that will allow a receiving teacher to easily fit such a student in a regular classroom. Upon receiving approval from myself and Dr. Newman she may again institute the individualized process.

No matter which decision she makes, she must use the testing program from the HBJ series.

After allowing a reasonable time for transition it should be advisable to see what decision she has made and how well it is being implemented. Please call if you have any questions.

CC: Vicky Mashek

APPENDIX B

JEFFERSON GRADE 4 PROJECT

GOALS:

1. To increase the number of students at Jefferson who have
   successfully completed Level 10 by the end of Grade 5.

   --Students will score at or above criterion on the Periodic and
     Cumulative Tests.

   --Students will show growth in their vocabulary and reading
     scores on the fall 1987 ITBS.

2. To develop a model that can be implemented in other Grade 4
   classrooms throughout the district.

ACTIVITIES:

1. June Workshop (The teacher will need names of students ahead of
   workshop dates.)

   --Analyze students' ITBS and HBJ test results. List the
     resultant difficult skills and prioritize based on need.

   --Using HBJ Level 10, analyze and list skills which are critical
     to success in HBJ Level 10.

   --Using previous Dolch vocabulary test records for these
     students, discover if mastery of these words needs to be built
     into the daily planned activities. If so, make a composite
     list of words missed by these students. This will be used to
     facilitate daily practice.

   --Develop a timeline for completion of the HBJ levels which need
     to be completed this (1986-87) year and in 1987-88 in order to
     ensure that these students will successfully complete HBJ
     Level 10 by the end of the fifth grade.

   --Using a teacher workday calendar for 1986-87 and the HBJ
     levels each student will be expected to complete that year,
     pace out the number of HBJ periodic and cumulative tests that
     will be given. This will provide the blocks of time available
     for developing needed skills through project activities.
     List a tentative goal for each block of time.

--List materials to be used (include source). Write a brief synopsis (including a skill goal for each) of the anticipated procedures for each material listed. (Be sure to consider the need for the HBJ available materials.)

2. September 1986--Implementation at Jefferson

3. Monthly classroom observations by the Language Arts Coordinator. A follow-up conference with the purpose of adjusting curriculum and procedures as needed will be scheduled. This will include review of test data as it is completed.

4. January 1987--A written summary of the project will be the responsibility of the Language Arts Coordinator with input from the teacher. It will include the following:

> Evaluation
> Concerns
> Plans for remainder of year
> Implementation recommendations for others