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# An Art Teacher's Personal and Prictical Knowledge of the Classroom: An Ethnographic Study

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#### **ABSTRACT**

#### AN ART TEACHER'S PERSONAL AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THE

CLASSROOM: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

By

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July, 1999

The purpose of this project was to search for meaning in the socially constructed and constantly changing environment and practical knowledge of a Fine Arts Instructor. The researcher wanted the teacher to gain new insights on the subject of self, instruction, subject matter, role as teacher, role as colleague, curriculum development and the lives of students. A yearlong internship was conducted in which the researcher took on the role of observer and then of participant-observer. A journal of field notes was chronicled throughout the internship. From this journal, interview questions were developed and two interviews were conducted. The goal was to learn from another's life experiences within the world of teaching through ethnographic methods. It was found that lessons most critical to life are often those gained only through one's experiences and that in order to be a successful teacher, one must consider the well-being of students above all other factors in teaching and learning.

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#### CHAPTER I

#### THE PROJECT

#### Introduction

#### Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic research in the context of education has been receiving increasing attention in recent years. The term ethnography comes from the science anthropology. Ethnographic research is also known as qualitative or field research (Wiersma 1986). The Random House definition of ethnography is "a branch of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual cultures" (Wiersma 1986, p 233). The issue pertains to another recent argument: quantitative verses qualitative research. Generally in an ethnographic study, a researcher travels to the natural setting of those to be studied and may assume position as an observer only or as participant-observer. Ropers-Huilman (1999) talks of her experience partaking in ethnographic research:

My experiences as participant in research suggest to me many questions about the ways we conceptualize what we are doing when we research and write about our knowing. Inspired largely by the work of Beth Brant (1994), Bill Tierney (1994), and Michelle Fine (1994), I suggest that we might think of ourselves as witnesses located within complex intersections of knowledge. Through the simulations or translations we create as witnesses, we take part in shaping the discourses in which we and our research participants are situated (p 2).

In a qualitative ethnographic study the researcher is constantly searching for meaning. The researcher is not looking for a structured set of facts or quantitative-like data, but rather the "socially constructed and constantly changing reality" (McMillan and Wergin 1998 p 89). Researchers conducting ethnographic studies take a "phenomenological approach" placing themselves in the subjects shoes (McMillan

and Wergin 1998 p 89). Additionally, McMillan and Wergin explain that understanding the "point of view of the individuals being studied is critical" to the study. Traditionally, research was not deemed academic unless it was of quantitative nature. However, current research has shown that there are issues within education that can best and sometimes only be attacked through an ethnographic study. Wiersma (1986) offers summaries of important points of ethnographic research:

- Ethnographic research involves field research and requires contextualization—the interpretation of results in the context of data collection (Wiersma 1986, p 234).
- The participant—observer attempts to generate the data from the perspective of the individuals being studied (Wiersma 1986, p 235).
- Ethnographic research takes a general and holistic perspective. Hypotheses are more likely to emerge from the data than to be formulated prior to the research. Theory is considered only as it appears relevant (Wiersma 1986, p 236).
- Ethnographic studies focus on organizations, which consist of defined groups of people who interact in regular and structured ways (Wiersma 1986, p 237).
- Organizations are considered to be composed of cultures, and cultures are made up of perspectives (Wiersma 1986, p 238).
- The process of ethnographic research is an integrated process in which procedures are conducted concurrently (Wiersma 1986, p 241).
- Foreshadowed problems follow from the more general statement of the phenomenon to be studied; they provide a focus for the researcher (Wiersma 1986, p 243).
- \* For this study foreshadowed problems may be defined more generally as topics of study instead of *problems*.

Given the full year internship that the researcher experienced, she was placed directly within a naturalistic educational setting. This setting was the classroom of a visual arts instructor, Marnie Harris at Wenatchee High School. Mrs. Harris taught several art classes daily. Those were Art survey, Drawing, Design, Advanced Design, and Ceramics.

The conditions of the year long internship were that the intern would begin the year solely as an observer. As the year progressed the intern would begin to take on the role in small stages as participant-observer, and eventually full participant. As a part of the intern's duties towards educational goals with Central Washington

University, a project for partial requirements for the degree of Masters of Education ensued. This naturalistic educational setting at Wenatchee High School was one conducive to the terms of the Masters of Education Project and of an ethnographic study of the teacher's personal and practical knowledge of the classroom.

Mrs. Harris had began her teaching career twenty-four years ago and had been teaching art for twenty years. In observing her in the classroom and conversing with her during prep times, it was immediately apparent to the author that she had an immense amount of knowledge to share. She had knowledge of self, knowledge of curriculum development, knowledge of subject matter, knowledge of students, situational knowledge, social knowledge, political knowledge, collegial knowledge, experiential knowledge, and knowledge of motivation, persuasion and participation.

The goal of this study was to define, characterize and interpret Mrs. Harris's role as a fine arts instructor with an emphasis on her unique personal, practical knowledge. Irwin (1995), Clandinin (1994) and Conelly (1994) note that by conducting a study in this method teachers, administrators, parents, educational leaders and faculty may be better able to understand the significance and meaning of her (Mrs. Harris's) role as teacher. Over the span of a one-year period ethnographic techniques were used in order to gather the data. Much of this data consisted of observations, participant-observational activities, field notes, talking with Mrs.

Harris's colleagues, and the two interviews. A rather large literary review was conducted in order for the author to better understand how to put the study together.

#### Purpose

The purpose of this project was to search for meaning in the socially constructed and constantly changing environment and practical knowledge of a Fine Arts Instructor. The researcher wanted the teacher to gain new insights on the subject of self, instruction, subject matter, role as teacher, role as colleague, curriculum development and the lives of students. A yearlong internship was conducted in which the researcher took on the role of observer and then of participant-observer. A journal of field notes was chronicled throughout the internship. From this journal, interview questions were developed and two interviews were conducted. The goal was to learn from another's life experiences within the world of teaching through ethnographic methods.

#### Personal, Practical knowledge

Traditionally, "research on teacher's has often tried to reduce the complexity of the classroom to a few simple factors (Irwin 1995, p36). But as related research has indicated, many educational issues are best attacked when studied in an ethnographic frame and obtaining straight on one's personal, practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is knowledge acquired from living and by doing. Practical knowledge can also be defined as one's life experiences. How does he know? Because he has lived it, he has done it. The more practical knowledge that somebody has, the easier they will be able to adjust to a variety of situational needs successfully. Irwin (1995) adds that practical knowledge is important in everyday life and is often

not seen as a form of knowledge. In obtaining practical knowledge the subject reflects on feelings, values, needs, beliefs, rules, philosophy and principal often gaining even new insights on themselves.

Recounting stories of experience touch the mind of the reader or listener in unpredictable ways and in turn yield new understanding and awareness. Educators are beginning to use stories or case studies (Clandinin and Connelly 1991; Schon 1991) as a way of reflecting upon and transforming practice. Stories offer educators a way to communicate the particulars of their experiences while also allowing for their varying interpretations of events (Holland 1989). Donald E. Polkinghorne (1988) calls us to recognize that narrative is a form of language that relates the meaningfulness of individual experience within the unified and contextualized experience of language as a whole. Through narrative, language organizes experience. Narrative also has the transformative potential in that the narrator gives significance and meaning to particular events. Stories and narrative, therefore become interpretations of experience. Finally, stories and narrative have the capacity to "define and create community" (Holland 1989, p 74). As educators share their stories, common values are expressed and the potential for collective action as a community of educators becomes possible. Educators are able to socially construct meaning through the use of telling stories, reading each other's stories, and critically analyzing the essential characteristics of the stories (Irwin 1995 p 38-9).

As Clandinin notes, "the claim in the end, is not to know the person, but a collection of skills which mark excellent performance and which may be taught" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989 p 7).

#### Limitations of the Project

1. Scope: The project was intended to allow the subject (Mrs. Harris) to gain new insights and knowledge into her role and philosophy as a fine arts instructor. For the researcher, as previously mentioned, the project was intended to facilitate through the subjects personal, practical knowledge, "a collection of skills which mark excellent performance" (Clandinin and Connelly 1989, p 7).

2. Research: To meet the given terms of the project, it was necessary to limit the ethnographic research to the knowledge of one teacher. The majority of the literature and research reviewed for the project was limited to the last twenty years. There were two one-hour taped interviews.

#### **Definition of Terms**

Significant terms used in the context of this study have been defined as follows:

- 1. Ethnography: A branch of anthropology dealing with the scientific description of individual cultures (Wiersma 1986, p 233).
- Anthropology: the science that deals with the origins, development, and characteristics of human kind, which includes such factors as social customs, beliefs, and cultural development (Wiersma 1986, p 233).
- 3. <u>Ethnographic Research:</u> Research that is intended to provide scientific descriptions of (educational) systems, processes, and phenomena within their specific contexts (Wiersma 1986, p 453).
- 4. <u>Field Research:</u> Research conducted at the natural setting of the subject being studied.
- 5. Qualitative Research: Data of a descriptive, narrative, or storytelling nature, also called ethnographic research or field research (Wiersma 1986).
- 6. <u>Contextualization:</u> The interpretation of the results of data "only in the context of the situation or environment in which they were collected" (Wiersma 1986, p 234).

- 7. <u>Phenomenology:</u> Study of phenomena or of wonder, also, the study of the essence of what is.
- 8. <u>Participant—Observer:</u> The researcher takes part in the natural setting observing all the while.
- 9. <u>Personal, Practical knowledge:</u> Knowledge gained as a result of living, doing and of experience.
- 10: Narrative: The re-telling of one's life experiences.

#### CHAPTER II

#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

Literature studied consisted mainly of an ethnographic, qualitative nature.

Teacher's experience, practical knowledge, and personal views are also displayed.

Additional ethnographic review has also been presented in chapter one of the paper.

In the first study, the researcher's goal was to conceptualize teacher's knowledge of their classrooms, give an account of the teachers' knowledge, and present it as a part of school and classroom culture. Clandinin and Connelly (1988) believe that the substance of this lies in qualitative research that not only exists in the mind, but through personal narrative, account of experience, and through observation of interactions within the school and classroom itself. In this study a collaborative working relationship is presented between the researcher and the teacher. The document both "explicates the working method and conceptualizes the method in the substantive knowledge terms of the work" (Candinin & Connelly 1988). Method of research is consistent of participant-observational method and in this case a graduate student working on his doctoral dissertation was placed in the classroom. It was found that the researchers' role is vital in the outcome of a collaborative working relationship because the researcher is interactive with the class and the teacher. In this case, the researcher and the teacher seemed to disagree on too many issues to continue their working relationship.

Clandinin and Connelly (1996) address five major questions: "What is known about effective teaching? What do teachers know? What knowledge is essential for teaching? Who produces knowledge about teaching? And; How is teacher knowledge shaped by the professional knowledge context in which teachers work?" Teacher landscape is defined as "the interface of theory and practice in the teachers' lives" (Candinin & Connelly 1996). Clandinin and Connelly engage in an ethnographic study of the subjects placing themselves within the classroom in the role of observers. During a yearlong period, observations took place, field notes were gathered and interviews were conducted. It was found that there was a notable difference in how teachers' actually saw themselves and their roles as teachers when a new administration was appointed. Candinin and Connelly (1996) find that what is known about effective teaching is what constitutes effective teaching for the individual as while still fitting the norms and values of the principal, community, and the district. "What do teachers' know?" The answer "it depends" (Clandinin & Connelly 1996). Clandinin and Connelly (1996) agree that as the teacher landscape shifts, what they know shifts, and along with that the values and norms attached to that knowledge. The notion was finally reached that the expectations placed on teachers have dramatically exceeded practical reality.

Clandinin and Connelly (1989) discuss the process of narrative inquiry and story in practice and research. They describe elements of narrative as experience, time, personal knowledge, reflection, and deliberation. Building support for narrative and story as valid research, the authors follow sporadically a principal and his efforts to rebuild a foundering school. Clandinin and Connelly (1989) answer the question of

narrative and story being valid and accepted as valuable research. Studying experience seems to be something that violates researchers' ideas of what is deemed academically appropriate. It has traditionally been thought that in order to conduct true technical research it must be of quantitative nature. "For Dewey education, experience and life are inextricably intertwined in it's most general sense When one asks what it means to study education, the answer is to study experience" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989). And following Dewey, one who studies experience is studying life. Narrative inquiry is "based on field observations, participant observation work, interviews, and participants stories" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989). "Narrative method, in it's simplest terms, is the description and re-storying of the narrative structure of varieties of educational experience" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989). The authors conclude that the best advice to any person undertaking this kind of research project is to "design a strategy continually assessing the multiple (temporally continuous and socially interactive)" levels "at which the inquiry proceeds" (Clandinin & Connelly 1989).

Cavanagh & Dellar (1997) study and document the process by which culture within a school becomes. It is established and supported that it is an evolving process shaped by many variables inside and outside of the school. With developing a model for school cultural improvement in mind, a questionnaire was developed and administered to three schools and 422 teachers on the secondary level. In two of the schools additional interview of qualitative nature was added. Both quantitative and qualitative researches were used. Observations, field notes and interviews were

conducted. Cavanagh and Dellar (1997) focus on eight factors as dominantly influencing the development of culture within a school:

- Internal Influences on Cultural stability
- External Influences on Cultural Stability
- School Sub-Cultures
- School Improvement and Cultural Growth
- Cultural Inertia
- Traditional School Improvement Programs
- Cultural Stimulation
- Systematic School Improvement and...
- School Improvement through Cultural Intervention.

Cavanagh and Dellar found that within the culture of the school, all of these factors were perplexity intertwined, each one having some kind of effect on the outcomes of the others.

Irwin (1995) addresses what current research has largely failed to do by conceiving how supervisors characterize their roles. Irwin studies, describes, and interprets the practical knowledge of a fine arts supervisor. Data collection process involved observation, interviews with the subject and interviews with the subject's colleagues. Questions guiding the research were:

What are the content areas of the fine arts supervisor's personal practical knowledge? In what context may these content areas be found? How is this practical knowledge constructed? What consulting style(s) appropriately describe the fine arts supervisor? (Irwin 1995,p 32)

In this study Irwin (1995) discovers the power of narrative:

Donald E. Polkinghorne (1988) calls us to recognize that narrative is a form of language that relates the meaningfulness of individual experience within the unified and contextualized experience of language as a whole. Through narrative, language organizes experience (Irwin 1995, p38).

Irwin (1995) found that the subjects practical knowledge "comes alive as the content is brought to bear upon a variety of contexts simultaneously" (Irwin 1995 p 130). Through reflection, narrative, and recounting her experiences, Irwin (1995) finds that the fine arts supervisor was able to pinpoint rules of practice, principals and images, and of her teaching and life philosophies. The methodologies of qualitative and ethnographic studies have encouraged these findings.

Ebbs (1996) talks of qualitative research:

There are two communities which stand to gain from the use of qualitative research inquiry. First, researchers benefit not only because of increased accessibility to preexisting beliefs and the contextually sensitive nature of methodologies such as life history, but also because qualitative research methodology helps researchers address the "singularity of values" (Lincoln 1993) so prevalent in past research efforts and understand the nature of "intercontextual work" (Goodson, 1992, p 243). A second community, the researched, benefit from qualitative research inquiry because the inquiry provides for more authentic texts and opportunities for personal empowerment and transformation (Lincoln 1993)(Ebbs 1996, p 1).

Inherent in the research is also the fact that qualitative data can go places that quantitative data cannot. Lyon (1997) states that "federal and state agencies have begun to call explicitly for ethnographic investigations in recognition of the limits of relying on quantitative data alone" (p 8). Preskill (1998) notes that "stories embrace the messy, improvisational, unexpected qualities of teaching and learning" (p. 2). Preskill (1998) also states that teaching stories "encourage educators to generate their own view of what it

means to teach well, building on and contributing to their hard-won self-knowledge" (p. 2).

One of the most effective methodologies, "narrative survives in the cultural memory" (Sandlos 1998, p. 3). Burke (1998) reports that:

Because we sought a qualitative approach that would facilitate the expression of human experience in a holistic fashion, narrative analysis was regarded as an ideal method to begin uncovering and making sense of the qualities of those teachers who are able to make a lasting impression on their students (Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995) (p.4).

The power of narrative and story is once again explained in a recount of one teacher/researcher (Gregory 1999) who states:

As I look back on my teaching career, I am struck less by what I have (perhaps, perhaps not) learned about teaching problems or teaching principles than by the memory of student faces and student stories. My mind's eye brings to me students' faces like shadows from the dark; my mind's ear brings to me students' stories like voices from another world (p. 1).

#### Summary

In summary, it is very evident that the power of narrative is all encompassing. Recent research is clearly describing that not only is qualitative research valid but that narrative, story-telling, and the study of teacher's experiences in general facilitates "teachers, administrators, and other supervisors" to better be able to "understand the significance and meaning of" their roles (Irwin 1995).

#### CHAPTER III

#### PROCEDURES FOR THE PROJECT

The purpose of this project was to search for meaning in the socially constructed and constantly changing environment and practical knowledge of a Fine Arts Instructor. The researcher wanted the teacher to gain new insights on the subject of self, instruction, subject matter, role as teacher, role as colleague, curriculum development and the lives of students. A rather large review of related literature and research ensued. A yearlong internship within the naturalistic educational setting of Marnie Harris's classroom at Wenatchee High School was conducted in which the researcher took on the role of observer and eventually of participant-observer. A journal of field notes was chronicled throughout the internship. From this journal, interview questions were developed and two interviews were conducted. The goal was to learn from another's life experiences within the world of teaching through ethnographic methods. It was found that lessons most critical to life are often those gained only through one's experiences and that in order to be a successful teacher, one must consider the well-being of students above all other factors in teaching and learning.

#### CHAPTER IV

#### THE INTERVIEWS

• The interviewer will be represented as TC, and Mrs. Harris will be represented as MH.

Interview One: June 24, 1999, 10:00 Am- 11:00 Am.

TC: "Do you think that you can know too much about a student?"

MH: "No...no...."

TC: "Why is it important to respect your students?"

MH: "Well, I think it's just like the old commandment do unto others as you would have them to do unto you. I think that everybody has to be treated with respect and I don't care if it's a two-year-old, a teenager, or an adult. I think kids need to know that you like them, and that you respect them as people with opinions".

TC: "Why is it important that they respect you?"

MH: "Well I think they need to know that as their teacher I do have some knowledge and I'm here to help them learn. And whether they like me or not, they need to know that they are going to have bosses sometime that they don't like but that you need to respect people".

TC: "You have a lot to give to the students...Could you talk about that?"

MH: "Oh, I don't know. I just like teenagers, I love high school kids, I taught junior high (seventh through ninth grade) and I liked that. I taught middle school for two years (half days) sixth through eighth grade and then taught at the high school (ninth through twelfth grade) for two years...and I hated middle school, I just didn't enjoy it at all, I just don't care for the philosophy of it. I just felt like instead of the eighth

graders being more or acting mature that bringing the sixth graders up just made it more like an elementary school. I didn't want to teach elementary school".

TC: "Why is it important that students respect each other?"

MH: "Well I think that just goes with anything, I mean you have to respect other people. When you're working with other people whether it is an athletic team, a job situation, or just standing in line at the post office you need to respect people.

Everybody has something to offer".

TC: "Wenatchee has had a large and growing Hispanic population. What are some of the ways this has affected the school system?"

MH: "Well I think we're getting more and more kids that don't speak English, and instead of teaching them English first, they're coming into the classroom without being able to speak English, and that makes things difficult I think for the kids. I've always felt that they should learn English first before they put them out into the classroom. Too many times these kids feel so bad as it is not being able to speak the language and I just sometimes feel that we set them up for failure".

TC: "Yes, because they fall behind".

MH: "Yah, I don't know. They always say that you're supposed to put them right into the classroom because they learn it faster by being around it, but were getting so many kids that can't even use correct Spanish. Then they throw them into a classroom when they don't even know English they aren't even speaking correct Spanish. I just think that it's setting them up for failure and I just wish they (the district) would deal

with learning the English first before they start throwing them out into some of the other areas.

TC: "How have your teaching experiences taught you to handle the class with authority and assertiveness?"

MH: "Oh I think discipline takes time to learn. I think that when I first started teaching that I was probably very "sit down, be quiet, do as I say" but I think that as time goes on that the biggest factor is when you can learn to deal with situations without emotion. I think that once students know that they can tick you off or bug you, that just creates a lot of problems. But I think once you learn to deal with certain situations where you take the personal aspect of it not so personally yourself. If a kid says, "oh this class sucks" don't take it personally. Just realize that no it's the kid's attitude that sucks... you know try to think of ways that you can get him/her to see your class where it doesn't suck. I just think that discipline takes time, and that the more you are in the classroom teaching and the more situations that you have...it takes about five or six years to really get your discipline down".

TC: "How do you discipline and be assertive without showing emotion? Is it just that you have to get a thick skin?"

MH: "Yah, I think you do. I think teaching you do have to get a thick skin but you also have to just like kids. I don't know, discipline has always been something that was pretty easy for me although I've learned a lot over the years, and I'd probably do things a little differently than I did when I first began. But I think you have to let the kids know that you are in charge, and that you set up a classroom where they know

that you care about them and that you want to teach them something. That just kind of helps with the discipline".

TC: "What advice would you give to a new teacher as far as being assertive with the class?"

MH: "Well I think what you have to do is enter a classroom with confidence. You have to believe in yourself as a teacher. I think you have to know your lesson, you have to know what it is that you want to teach to them, figure out how you can take it in steps for them to learn it, and go in there confident. If a kid knows that you're nervous or you're scared their going to eat you alive. Talk loud, let them hear you...eye contact is important...smile at them.... Feel relaxed yet confident".

TC: "Do you think that Wenatchee High School is too crowded? If so what are some things you would suggest remedying this problem?

MH: "Oh I love this question. Yes I think it's overcrowded. Ever since we brought the ninth graders up. I think the ninth graders need to be out of there. I just think a lot of these kids coming from a middle school philosophy, a middle school set up, and then they come up as a ninth grader... they just aren't ready for high school. I would like to see the ninth graders taken out, maybe have their own school by themselves, house it at Pioneer which is just across the street where all the middle school eighth grade classes come together in one building and ninth graders as one total class. Give some classes in study skills, getting them prepared for high school. Those kids that are more advanced could just walk across the street and take some upper division classes. But yes, we are way too crowded, it's too big".

WC: "What are some things you have noticed because of the overcrowding?"

MH: "Well yah, the tension. Of course we have forty-eight minutes in a period, which isn't enough time; we have seven periods in a day, which is ridiculous, way too many classes. We teachers have been asking for longer class periods, fewer classes for I don't know how many years but it's like our administration and school board just ignore us. I think that that's sad because we know what is good for these kids. The school's too big, you know the litter problem, the kids just act like they don't even care anymore. There are too many kids where there are a lot of kids feeling left out. If you don't join groups and you're not involved in athletics then boy, that high school is a big, lonely place".

TC: "Why do you think that so many kids feel so unmotivated when it comes to school?"

MH: "Well I think a lot of kids are unmotivated, they have probably been unmotivated their whole lives. I mean you can probably look at family life, but there's a lot of kids that back in grade school they're tagged "not very smart", they get to middle school they're tagged "not very smart" and then they get to high school they're still labeled "not very smart". I think that's a lot of it. I think society is changing. I think that a lot of times kids don't think that they have to be accountable. I think that the teenage years are probably the biggest years where parents should never stop parenting".

TC: "How much can we help a student whom is being abused at home?"

MH: "Boy, Yah I have had students in that situation and a lot of times you don't know it and then a lot of times you do. I think that the most important thing is that if you notice abuse you talk to the child privately outside of class. You try to set up a

at them whether they are put into a foster home, or whether they are still staying in the home, what ever the system does I think that it is so critical for you as the teacher to make that kid feel that this is one place he/she can go where someone cares about him. You know, whether it's just a smile, a "hello, how are you doing?...talking to them, complimenting them on their projects... It's just important to let that kid know that he is important, he is special, that he has potential to be something.

TC: "What if the child is being singled out and ridiculed at school by other students? What can we do to soften that a little bit?"

MH: "Oh, that is probably one of my biggest pet peeves. I do not like kids making fun of other people and when they do that's when my discipline really gets strong. I just very much let it be known that that will not take place and if I have to talk to those that are being obnoxious to some person, boy I will. That should not be tolerated, and if it continues outside of class whatever, you need to let administration know and boy as a teacher you really need to follow up on that because a lot of times, nothing happens when they go to the office, nothing.

TC: "Do you think that administration realizes that a lot of school is social for students? A lot of school is working on the child and his self esteem".

MH: "Oh I think that in school we pretty much know from grade school on that their self esteem is important and that it is a social part it... I think that in high school it is a little bit too social. But I think the only way things are going to change... for things not to get too social, to not just hit the gifted kids, or hit the slow learners is for the average middle class parent to stand up and say "hey, my kid needs the time and the

attention also". That's the way it's always been in education. We have for the gifted, we have for the very academic, we have for the special education...all of these programs. But there's too many kids that are just the average C-B student, they are quiet in the class room, they cooperate and you know...they are being ignored".

TC: "When a student is hurtful to you, how do you remain unemotional about it?"

MH: "Oh that takes time. I probably...my first five years of teaching if a kid said something to me I'd go home, I'd cry, I would feel so bad that.... I think what you have to do is that you just have to realize that it is not you, it is the student and if you have to have a conference with the student, with the counselor, being involved...and just let the kid know that "you can say all that you want, but that you are here to learn, I'm here to help you..." I just think that kids need to know... I guess the old famous saying that I say is that I can be the easiest person to get along with or I can be the wicked witch of the west... it's really up to them, that person they want to see in the class room".

TC: "Do you think that misbehaving is a choice?"

MH: "Yah, I think kids misbehave to get attention. They are lacking something and I think that a lot of kids have not learned how to get attention. There are a lot of kids these days that do not have a good self image of themselves...a lot".

TC: "Do you think that that comes from the home?"

MH: "yah, yah I think it comes from the home. I think that parents are busy working, it takes two people nowadays to make ends meet, there's a lot of kids that are coming from single homes, there's a lot of kids coming from divorced homes, there's a lot of kids, that shoot... they don't even know who their dad is or whatever. It's societies

problem. It is not the kind of thing where you send them to school and expect school to solve all of these problems. We can't do it and until we start getting family values back, and realizing the importance that every kid needs to be in a home where they feel safe, they are fed, they get a goods night sleep, and most importantly for every kid to feel that they are important. A lot of them are not getting that".

TC: "When a student is lying to you and you know it, how do you handle it?"

MH: Laughs... "Boy, I think a lot of times if you just have a conversation with them and...you've got to be real careful with that because kids will really come unglued and stuff...oh I don't know, I've had some kids lie and you can let them just hang themselves in their own lie if you're real clever about it. I think a lot of times if you talk with the kid, if you can get them one on one, get all their barriers down, a lot of times honesty is the best policy".

TC: "If a student looks right at you and yells profanity, how would you deal with it?" MH: "I would say, "well, let's go" and I'd probably take them down to the office because I think the most important thing is whether they are doing it to get attention, whether they are just totally emotionally uncontrollable, I think you need to remove them from that situation. They need to have a time out period. Sometimes you can tell the kid to just go out and sit in the hall. Just getting him away from the audience helps. If the kid is really coming unglued and saying things, then they need to be sent to the office. You can't talk to your boss like that, I mean there's times that I would love to tell my principal or my superintendent what you really feel, but you can't do that. You have to find better ways.

TC: "If you suspected a student of doing drugs in school how would you approach it?"

MH: "We have a drug and alcohol counselor. I would alert the counselor, I would alert administration...I think that if a kid comes to class totally stoned that what we need to do is get him out of class and get him down to administration so that they can deal with it because if a kid has a drug problem...it doesn't matter, he will not be a good student until he gets that drug problem under control".

TC: "Have you ever had a student come to class totally stoned?"

MH: "No...no... I'm sure there have been some over the years but no...no... I don't think I ever have...

TC: "What are some good ways to allow students to like you, but to also establish that you are not their "buddy"".

MH: "Oh I think that when I first started teaching I thought there was nothing wrong with them calling you by your first name, but over the years I've learned that you can't do that. You really can't because they really then think that ...you are... I think that a lot of times you have a hard time when you are first starting out, especially when you are young. When I was twenty-four and teaching high school I had a lot of kids think that "oh yeah, yeah"... you have to let them know that you care about them and that they are your students but they are not your buddies. It's a fine line that you've got to be able to draw. You know, being nice to kids, making them feel comfortable. But like if you have a kid who comes up and calls you "babe"...you know I had one this year after twenty-four years of teaching and you pretty much just have to say "I am not your babe, I am Mrs. Harris" (laughs). You just have to let them

know because kids will try things like that and you just have to kindly say, "look it here...not in here"

TC: "A lot of the kids are dressing somewhat offensive or promiscuous. What are some of the effects this has on the school day and how do you feel about it?

MH: "Well I think...we have a dress code so that helps a little bit. I think if a girl is wearing something where her bra straps are showing a bit you just politely say "hey...could you put a sweater on?" You need to let her know that this is not acceptable. If you have a guy who is letting the crack in his butt show, you have to remind him about that and then if they don't fix it that's when you have to take them down to administration and let them deal with it".

TC: "If you come across a fight on school grounds what are some appropriate ways to handle it?"

MH: "Oh I've broken up a lot of fights. I've broken up boy fights and I've broken up girl fights. I think boys in particular, when you go in to break up a fight they usually separate because I think they want it to be over with. Girls don't separate, they claw and they pull each other's hair. I just think that sometimes if you are the only teacher there, you have to go in between them and pray that you don't get hit. Other times (usually) it will take several teachers and as soon as you yell, "fight" there is someone there. But you have to be careful. I mean if there are weapons involved...no, you don't...you have to talk to them. Say "knock it off" or let them know that there is some authority figure there and that hey, it's time to stop and most the time kids do but there's always that rare exception when they don't".

TC: "If there was something of yours or a students missing in class how would you handle it?"

MH: "Oh that's happened to me and it is very, very frustrating. I've had to call up the administration before because exacto knives were not being returned... we've had to do a search and it still doesn't turn up. I think when something like that happens that they are very aware that by God, you are watching and that they are not going to get away with it even though they might have that one time. You have to be very, very careful when you are using tools that you set up some kind of a system. You have to be careful that in a drawing class if you leave the classroom to go outside drawing that if anyone has something valuable in their purses or back packs, they might take it with them because you don't lock your classroom doors. Anyone could come in.

There is a lot of things you just have to learn to do and there's times when you just take things for granted and you forget. If something is missing all that you can do is just report it to the administration and let the kids know how disappointed you are that someone did take it".

TC: "When you are exhausted, you have students coming at you in all different directions with questions at the same time, what are some things that you do to remain calm?

MH: "Oh there's times that I've blown it. I mean I get so upset I have to say, "hey, stop it! Everybody sit down, I'm only going to answer these questions at one time". Yes, you're human...you're human. And I think it's important for the kids to know that if they're coming at you with all of these questions you need to just stop the class, make everybody sit down and say "now look it here, I can only answer one

question at a time, I can only do it if we are all listening and paying attention and you can take questions then".

TC: "Not only that, but if the class is out of control?"

MH: "You have to get control of the class I think. And you know there's times that I've lost control of the class but I think that the longer you teach you learn different ways to get that control back. You know, I don't think there's any perfect teacher.

Any teacher will say that there's been times in their teaching career that they probably wanted to give up or they've been so frustrated, I mean you're human and kids need to realize that you are human".

TC: "Do you think that Art is relaxing for students? If so, in what ways?"

MH: "I think Art is just a very important subject matter that all kids should have all through school because you are allowing that creative side of that student to come through. I've had so many disciplines in it that teach you hand-eye coordination, they stimulate the brain, working together with other people, thinking...

Anybody who says that Art is not important is an idiot. How could you think that? I mean, they just do not know. Art is a part of human nature and it is very important. TC: "In what ways have you seen the Arts improve a students life and self esteem? MH: "Oh I think kids that thought that they could not draw a straight line or that they had no creative juices find out "my gosh, look what I can do!" I' seen athletes come in and build things with their hands in ceramics and they are just totally amazed that they can do that, because they've got this hand-eye coordination. I've seen kids that are special education students, or anybody come in and realize that they can create a nice design...it is very much a self esteem builder".

TC: "How have the disciplines in the Arts developed problem solving strategies and critical thinking methods within the students?"

MH: "Oh I think that most people think that Art is just something that you play at, you just throw things together, and I don't think that they realize that you have to understand the spatial, the color, the texture. I mean there are so many things involved in Art, and I just think that kids learn to start seeing things differently...they start to analyze things. I think it is a very important part of critical thinking and usually you will find out that when kids have had an Art experience that they will probably do better in other academic classes.

TC: "How do the Arts teach us about our own culture and the culture's of others'?"

TC: "Art and Music."

MH: "Mm-hmm".

somehow".

MH: "I think the thing about Art that is so neat is that Art is involved in every single culture and it's interesting to see how Art has influenced every culture. It's a good way to learn about people around the world. There is just no one way of doing Art". TC: "In what ways do the Arts prepare students for the work place?"

MH: "Oh I think that you can go to a faculty meeting and you have an administrator that puts an overhead up. I think it's really interesting that you get an administrator that knows Art and they have visuals and just the way they present that to make it so much more effective then... "Oh read this"... Art is a way of communicating. It is a visual way of communication and I think it helps people get ready for the workplace because it doesn't matter what profession you are in, you are going to be using Art

TC: "You mentioned to me earlier this year that Art teaches people how to color outside the boxes, meaning it teaches them creative methods to solving problems..."

MH: "Well I think that everybody is creative. Everybody can draw, and I think too many times people think that Art is nothing but drawing. What they don't realize is that it's analyzing things and it's how to put things down in an interesting way to make it communicate an idea. I think that when people have an Art experience it helps them understand that they can communicate in very creative ways besides "here's the paragraph, here's the paragraph". And yes, you learn to do things besides just the one way".

TC: "What does learning-by-doing mean to the Art's?"

MH: "Oh I think that learning-by-doing means that you actually are involved in doing the project. You don't just sit and look at it. You have to get in there, you have to create something by using the different things that you have laid out".

TC: "Arts' based instruction is one of the best ways to engage all seven forms of the intelligence's. The teaching skills inherent in the Arts' disciplines teach students how the parts of a work of art fit together, how to create works of art using disparate materials and ideas, and how to judge the quality of a finished product, their own and those of others (Artsednet.getty.edu). Do you agree with this statement?"

MH: "I do because I think the biggest thing that you have to do being an Art teacher ... you know I think sometimes that you know that you have to teach them something, and every project has something to do, but sometimes you have to just let kids create to create. I think it's important that when you are doing the assignment you need to know why are you doing the assignment, what is it that you want them to get out of

doing the assignment, and I think it's very important for students to learn to critique their work good and bad".

TC: "What have been some of your highest experiences teaching?"

MH: "Oh gosh, I've had a lot of them. I think sometimes that it can be just seeing a kid take another class from you because they feel comfortable with you or seeing a kid when they get a project back and they say "oh, I took it home and my mom framed it" or "it's on the refrigerator". It can be when a kid finishes a project and you ask when what they think about it and they say "gosh, I really like it, I think it looks good". When you get senior pictures. When you've got a kid who's real quiet, never says much and then they give you a senior picture and they tell you how much they have enjoyed your class and that they just think that you're a dynamite teacher and that your energy is very catching. Things like that that you would never think that child was even thinking about. That just makes you feel good. Things like when you say good bye to them on Friday and tell them to have a good weekend and they shout back "you too Mrs. Harris! Have a good weekend and we'll see ya Monday". That's what teachings' all about".

TC: "What was one of your lowest experiences teaching?"

MH: "Oh...gosh....really, I think that there are just those times when you can get the classroom from hell. I've had some of those. When I first started teaching, for about the first twelve years it seemed that every three years or so I'd get a group of kids that really did seem like the classroom from hell. They didn't care, they were rude, they were obnoxious and there were times that you just thought you would just never make it through but there's always that one kid that makes you happy that you are there. I

had a class from hell about two years ago, and I was in my twenty-second year of teaching. I honestly feel that if I would not have been an experienced teacher that I would have given up because I thought "holy moley is this what it's all about?" It didn't matter what I did; they did not give a rip. I think that's the hardest thing about teaching. We have a thing in our district that states that all kids will learn. All kids will not learn. I mean you want them all to learn but I think that when you get to the high school level that self-initiative, wanting to make something of yourself has to kick in. You cannot spoon feed someone their whole life. They've got to take the initiative to want to learn".

TC: "What do you say to a student that just has a terrible attitude?"

MH: "You know, I think that what you have to try to do is that when you give an assignment and they say, "this sucks" you just have to say "well, I'm sorry that you feel that way, but I know you can do it. I know that you can do a better job". You know, there are just some kids that all you can do when you get to that point is you just keep trying and you just hope that maybe sometime, something that they had from that time with you will kick in. Whether it be that "oh, here's a lady that never gave up on me, she was always nice, she still made me feel like I was important even though my attitude sucked" and a lot of times you'll see these people later in life when they are adults and they'll say "hey Mrs. Harris!!" and I think that's important. It makes me feel really good. I went in and picked up a pizza one time and here were a whole group of x-students that oh, probably graduated about ten years ago and they were like "oh Mrs. Harris, Mrs. Harris!!" and it was so much fun to go over there and just talk to them and see what they were doing and it was just like being back in the

classroom with them again. That makes you feel good, and some of them were not my students. They weren't, you know? But they were good kids Attitudes? You know I think the thing with that is that as I get older and longer I teach is to see how so many people with that attitude that they just don't care, it's sad because they have to at some point in time start caring about something. Some of them never do, we see that in our adult world. There are people out there, they don't give a rip, but we just have to try our best'.

\* End of Interview One.

Interview Two: June 24, 1999, 12:00 PM-1:00 PM.

TC: "What is your most positive experience that you can remember with a parent?" MH: "Oh ... I don't know... I've had lots of positive experiences with parents. But I would probably say this year in my twenty-fourth year of teaching I had a young man who had attention deficit, but a good kid. At parent conference his mother came up to me and said how happy she was that he was in my class because I was the first teacher in all of his years (he was a senior) to give him something positive for a comment on his report card. That just really got me because he was a darn good kid. You know I can see that maybe in some academic classes he might be low in reading and maybe he acts up but in my class he was finding success. That just baffled me because I thought how sad that someone hasn't taken the time to say 'this is a darn good kid". That was so nice to hear from a parent. But it was so sad, I couldn't believe it".

TC: "What was your worst experience with a parent?"

MH: "Well I think the hardest thing for me is when a parent...I've had parents come to me and I tell them that their child is doing a good job in my classroom or he's doing okay. He might be doing C work; he might be doing B work, or A work.

Whatever, but to have a parent just put their kid down. "Oh my kids not that bright".

That bothers me, and I've had to several times just kind of stop the parent and say, "you know, I don't know what you think of your kid, but in my classroom he's a darn good kid. He's doing his work and I'm very happy with his success". I think that's the most negative experience I have had with a parent is when the parent themselves downgrading the kid. Then you can really see why the kid is the way he is. I've had

parents come up and say "I don't know what to do with this kid" It might be that you don't know what to do with the kid either, and it's like "oh my goodness, the parent doesn't know what do and they are expecting me to know what to do". I just think a lot of times it's just the negativity of the parents. I've had some parents that didn't think that Art was worth a hill of beans, and I have just said, "well, I'm sorry you feel that way". Yes so I've dealt with a few rude parents but once again it's kind of like having a kid in the classroom, you have to realize that it is their problem, not yours. And they're missing out".

TC: "How do you feel about politics within the public school system? Do you see that at all?

MH: "Oh gosh yah. There's always politics in anything and politics is ridiculous. They'll always have it no matter what. I think the time when the politics are bad is when you've got a weak administration. When they play the political ballgames and don't support the teachers. That's when it's very frustrating. It's everywhere. I don't like... I think the thing that bugs me is that they keep saying that the teachers who do more will get paid more. There are the teachers that are the quiet ones that don't go blow their own horns and those people are working night and day. Then there are those teachers who like to blow their horns and show off and then they get all of the recognition. I think you have to be really careful about that type of thing and that's when politics can come in. I've worked at Wenatchee for twenty-two years and I've seen very good teachers that may not be the most popular teacher but those kids will remember something from that classroom. I've seen those teachers that like to blow their horns and they almost want to make you throw up because the administration

just "oh -oh their so wonderful, their this, their that" and I think most people, or the colleagues know.

TC: "Have you felt support from your administration for the Arts Department at Wenatchee High School?"

MH: "I have so far. I don't know what it is going to be like with the change in administration. You know I've worked before with administrators that didn't understand Art and that is really hard. We've been very fortunate here in Wenatchee. Mr. Harum was good, Joan Wright was good, Dr. Jackson is fine, of course if he wasn't I'm sure I'd be down at his door. He sees me coming sometimes and it's like "oh my god, what's she gonna say now?"(Laughs). Then I've worked with teachers (other colleagues) that were very supportive of the Arts and when you get three strong people together that believe in something, and it's kind of hard to ignore it.

TC: "What are some changes you would make in the art department, in other words where would you like to see the department go?"

MH: "Well, what we need in Wenatchee is Art in the elementary schools. Ever since I've been here we have tried to get that. There is something political they're that is really hard. We have a strong music group here only because we've got parents involved and parents have got to start realizing the importance of Art and there are some out there but there again we have top administration that just doesn't quite see that. They're willing to see it but not willing to do anything about it. Here we have reading specialists, we have PE specialists and we need Art specialists. I've been places where they have a strong elementary Art curriculum and it shows by the time they get to high school. That's what this district needs. Were doing okay at the high

school, there's some things that we need to revamp, we need a few more upper division classes, we need to make sure that when a kid signs up for an elective class that that is the class they get. But we definitely need elementary Art and we need the middle schools to get some better Art because they are slowly filtering that away".

TC: "What are some strategies that you would use to get the students sold on a project?"

MH: "I think it's your enthusiasm as a teacher. It's that first day that they come in there; it's that first week that they are in your class. They need to know that it is not just recess time. I think they need to know that you expect the best out of them and that you have rules to follow. You have a curriculum that you are going to teach. And I think that as you introduce assignments and stuff that they need to know that it's not always going to come easy, it isn't always going to be a piece of cake and there are going to be times that it is going to be frustrating. They need to know that if they stick with it the final outcome is going to be something that is good".

TC: "At first introductions projects can often seem overwhelming to students but once they get going on them and assume ownership on them they really get into what it is they are working on. Have you seen this?"

MH: "Oh yah. You've seen that. I think that once they start feeling successful and they start seeing that they are creating something that is interesting you get them hooked. But I've seen the opposite with some other kids that artistically are good students, they'll start a project, and there is that process and sometimes in that middle stage you'll hear them say "oh I hate this, this sucks, why are we doing this?" And you just have to keep telling them "you have to keep going, you have to follow it

through" and I've seen even good students want to give up on a project but you've just got to make sure that they see the importance of following it through. Anything you do. Sometimes you start out and it's wonderful and all of the sudden "oh my god, I don't like what's going on". But that's life in general. You have to follow through. If you quit you'll never know what the outcome is going to be".

TC: "What are some methods that you have used in creating a safe environment for your students where they are not afraid to make mistakes?"

MH: "Well I think that comes back to the student feeling comfortable and feeling respected. I think you have to be real careful that ... I don't know. I guess that I use a sense of humor in my classroom. I like to compliment students on their work. I probably could be a little bit stiffer on grading but I think it is just really important for them to feel confident that they can do things. I think once they realize that they can do things that maybe you can be a little bit stiffer in grading. I don't want them to throw slop together. They need to know that quality is important. I think with your sense of humor and stuff, they need to realize that they are going to make mistakes. Making mistakes is a part of life. My goodness, if you make a mistake in math class what do you do? You erase it for gosh sakes! If you make a mistake in Art, you don't like what you have, and then you start it again. I mean you never are going to do something one time and say, "this is my masterpiece". This is why it is important for the kids to realize that they need to put down more than just one idea. Thumbnail sketches are a real good thing for them to do where they start out by sketching several ideas for a project. They should sketch out several ideas. That way if you don't like

this you can try that. It's easy to make mistakes. My goodness I've made mistakes. I've waded up lots of papers.

TC: "So making mistakes are a part of the process?"

MH: "Oh I think so. Art is a skill to be learned. I think the more you practice it the better you will get, the more you will learn, the different techniques, the better you will get. I mean yes, some people seem to be born with this natural god given gift talent. Like a genius in math or the sciences. Yes, there are those but for the average normal person it is a skill that you can learn".

TC: "I have learned from being in your classroom for a year that you are extremely talented at motivating the kids. Have you always been this way?"

MH: "Oh...I guess. I like kids. I absolutely love high school kids. I always figure that I am never going to be an old lady sitting in a mall watching these kids go by with body parts pierced and weird hair and go "oh my god, look at these kids!" because I know that there's more to kids than how they dress or how they act. I don't know...I just, I love art, I love life, I like kids and I like people. It doesn't mean that I'm the nicest person in the world. I get grouchy just like everybody else. I guess it's just something that I've always kind of been. I have always been a positive person. I know that no matter what comes my way that I am going to make it through and I guess I realize that with young people, they need to know that they can create. That they have abilities and this is a place that you can come and learn and the teacher's not going to crucify you".

TC: "You have several different types of learning styles in your classroom, some that are gifted, some that are slow, some that are verbal, some visual... How do teach to the multiple intelligence's?"

MH: "Well I think that art is an easy way to deal with different intelligence's. You can do a hand out that has the directions, you can put something on the overhead and leave it up there, you can show examples of work both good and bad, walk around the room, talk to them, give them suggestions. I think in art you have both the verbal and the visual".

TC: "In what ways can the aesthetic environment effect learning?"

MH: "Well for us, the biggest thing that I do not like about Wenatchee High School and the art department is that our rooms have no windows. We don't get any natural light in. I just feel like we are in prison and I just think that's a very poor design because I know that I get a lot of ideas just looking out the window at nature. It's amazing the ideas I get for a drawing project or a design project. I just think it is so sad that we do not have nature to look at when we are in a classroom. I don't care if you're doing a cartooning lesson, I don't care if you're doing a design lesson, there is something about the beauty of nature that can stimulate creative juices. I think it's sad that we aren't able to see the sun or the rain clouds coming in. In our situation where we have no windows, it is important that we have lots of art work, examples and still lives set up so that when the students come into the room they feel like "man, I am coming into a creative place, there's things to look at. I can't imagine what it would be like to come into a classroom where there is nothing up. You need to stimulate your students, and when they are looking around the room they can look at this still

life, or this poster, or this piece of artwork, things that stimulate their creative juices. Things that make them think when they look at it. They're going to have to analyze it. Maybe ponder "why did they use green in there, is that trees? That does look like a group of white birch trees". I think it's very important to have a classroom that makes a kid feel like this is a warm and creative place to be, "I like being here". But I just wish that Wenatchee High School had windows...it drives me nuts".

TC: "When students have reading and writing problems, do you think that they are more likely to offend than those who don't have literacy problems?"

MH: "Well, I think most of the problems of kids that I have in the classroom are kids that are say lower achievers. Maybe some of those that can't read or are at a lower level, they're either going to act up because they feel stupid or they're super quiet because they feel stupid. Most of the part in what I have seen with kids over twenty-four years of teaching, it's those that are the low achievers that maybe have problems with reading or are several grades behind that are the ones that do act up".

TC: "How have you learned to be so patient with your students?"

MH: "Oh there's days I'm not. There are days I'm not. I don't know I just think it is something that you learn with experience or it's just the type of person that you are. There are days when I haven't had patience and I've been kind of sharp with a kid and then that kid walks away and I think "oh my gosh". But I think that an early experience helped me realize the importance of patience and this is probably my fourth year of teaching. I had taught a year in California at a children's receiving home for abused and neglected kids, and you really have to have patience with that and I think that that helped me. But it was in my fourth year in teaching and my first

year at Wenatchee that I ever experience losing a student. I was home sick one day and I don't miss much school, but for some reason I was home sick that day and I got a phone call from my substitute and two of my students that I had in the classroom had gone over to one students house and they were going to go shooting birds. And this one student accidentally, I don't know what happened with the gun, accidentally shot and killed this other student and I will always remember this kid. He was a short kid. He had dark hair. He was real cute and friendly. I can remember one time I was setting up a showcase and he was one of those kids who always hung around, just a real likable kid. And I can remember him saying "ya know Miss Marquess (because this is before I was married) I may not be tall, dark and handsome but I'm short, dark and handsome" and I made the remark "yes, you are". Just a real likable kid and I can remember having to come back to school the next day and face this class that had this student in it. Plus it had the student in it who had accidentally shot the other student. I can remember walking in there and looking at these kid's faces and I was just devastated because I had never lost a student. I think that experience taught me that when you say goodbye to these kids for the weekend, you really don't know if you are going to see them the next Monday. Over the years I have lost a lot of students, and I don't know, I think you just, I don't know...patience is...I've always been a very patient person, there's times that I haven't been patient. You learn it with time but sometimes you never learn it. I think it's just my make up. I'm a person that has always believed in myself, I've always had confidence that no matter what situation comes my way I am going to make it through. I don't know. I was a very

loved child. I had a family that loved me very much and I knew that so yes, I guess it's just my make up".

TC: "Why do you feel that portfolios are so successful in school?"

MH: "I think in the art area that I found that portfolios are successful because I got really tired of passing back papers and projects and seeing kids just throw them in the garbage can. "Oh yah I got a B, oh yah I got a C, oh got an A". And I thought you know we need to do something a little bit different. We need to take a look at their work all at the end. It was a good thing for me to do because you know you grade a paper, put it in their portfolio, and when it came time to do grading or at midterm or whatever, and the kids could see their grades and say "Mrs. Harris I turned in that assignment". And every once in a while you will, you will miss an assignment in your grade book. I could go straight to their portfolio and by god, there it is! It was kind of like a second check for me also but it was also neat to see the kids look over all their art work, pick out the one that they felt was most successful, the one they liked the best, or the one they didn't feel was successful. It's really fun to watch the kids go through their work. Even the kids that don't do the best work, they're looking, they're analyzing. Plus it's nice when you watch them take it home. I know this year for the first time I had the parents do an evaluation of their kid's work and that was really fun for me to have the parents look through their child's artwork. Here they are high school kids, a senior, sophomore, junior or freshman and the parent's write back what they think of their child's work and that was fun. Plus it's fun to have a kid write down their feelings and what they think about their art. They might also have an evaluation with different questions, did they meet deadlines, how well did they

cooperate with the teacher, this and that and you know it's amazing. Most kids are very honest. If they were uncooperative, I mean they put that they were uncooperative. It's also evaluating me as a teacher. I think that's important to know what kids think and feel and it was really fun to hear what parents had to say".

TC: "What do you think are some keys in being prepared to teach?"

MH: "Well, I can remember starting out and a lot of the times I'd be one step ahead of the kids in an assignment. I think that you need to know what you want to teach them. If you are developing an art program, what areas do you want to teach, in each area what do you want to teach. That's probably the biggest thing. You need to break it down. Art can go on and on and on forever and what you need to do is figure what are the most important things that they need to get from this class that will help them understand the subject matter, feel successful, and learn about art. I think with high school art your giving them a taste of something. You want to give them an appreciation of it when they come out of it. "Oh man this is neat, I appreciate art, I have learned something". I think that you have to realize that you are not going to make an impact on every kid. Therefore you have to decide what do you want to teach them, what do you want them to get out of it? You know you are going to get the ones that get hooked on it, are creative, and they are going to go for it great guns. Your going to get the ones that don't give a rip but you need to be prepared as far as what it is you want to teach and the outcome you want to have. What happens if you don't achieve that outcome? So it's always reevaluating. I find that even after teaching for twenty-four years if I'm teaching a design class, I don't teach the same assignments every semester. My god, I'd go nuts. And you learn. You learn which

assignments are not good. I had one assignment that I did for years and I thought why am I doing this because it ended up they just did not think this thing through. It was me who was thinking it through for them. Finally I said this is not working. So I had to come up with something else in the area of shapes and forms".

TC: "What are some things that you have found that they like to work with? Like mediums?"

MH: "Well I think in design class they love the person in line. They really like lines. That's a successful assignment for me. You study lines, you learn about the different types of lines and that assignment is really fun. I found out with ninth graders that they like painting. They like to work in different mediums. They'll get all excited about an assignment and get into it and you know they like it".

TC: "Do you think that it's really important to establish a routine in your classroom?" MH: "I'm still working on it after twenty-four years, I mean I still don't have it down. I still catch myself setting up deadlines and then what do you do with the kids that don't get done? What do you do with the ones who get done earlier? It's always an ongoing thing. I still struggle with things in the classroom".

TC: "What are some things you have done to juggle your busy family schedule with your job?"

MH: "I think that the one question that is always asked of me is "Mrs. Harris, do you ever do any artwork?" and no I don't. I don't have the time raising a family to do any artwork on my own. I always figure that when I retire I'll be like a grandma Moses.

My family is very important to me. I am going to do the very best job that I can in the classroom, make my students feel like they are important. A lot of times I feel like I

am their mother. I mean my goodness; I'm older than a lot of their moms now. There is sacrifice. By the time that you have a career, by the time you have a family, of course we have the orchard, the orchard work. My kid's are very involved in their sports. I don't get to join a lot of things, well I could do it if I wanted to but I don't do a lot with clubs locally because I choose my family over my outside interests. I get stimulated enough with things that I read and my students. I mean I see these people that are off and they're doing so much but my family is very important to me and my kids are here for a very short time. I had time before I got married to be just for me and then I got involved in my career and my family. My classroom teaching and my family...those are the important things. A lot of times for me though just having the summers off and being able to putter in my yard... that's my rejuvenation. I need to be outside with the sunshine working in my yard. Sitting out on my patio with my dogs in the evening, that's my rejuvenation. Some people like going to conferences, they need to stay busy. I just need to be outside with nature. That's how I get rejuvenated".

TC: "I think it would really help if we had a building with windows".

MH: "Oh heavens yes. In the wintertime when you enter the building it's dark and when you leave the building it's dark. If I can see the outside, I'm happy. I would pray to god that I'd never do anything to be sent to prison because I'd go nuts. I'd absolutely go nuts. I'm happiest when the sun is shining. I'm a much happier person when I am outside. That's why the summer is very, very important to me. I don't know if I could do year around school".

TC: "Regarding the staff meetings, do you feel that they have been effective this year?"

MH: "I hate staff meetings. I've been at schools where the staff meetings are after school at 3:30 and they will go until 5:00. I used to get very irritated because I thought that's violating my private time. No, I think our staff meetings are a total waste of time. I think that most of that stuff could be handed out on paper. No, I hate them. There are some things that yes, they need to be talked about but at our school those issues are never talked about. They don't want we teachers to sit down and let it all out'.

TC: "They don't want that?"

MH: "No, no, it's a control thing".

TC: "If you heard that a staff member was treating a student unfairly how would you handle that?"

MH: "Well you have to be careful on that. I could not do that outside of our department. Unless it involved my own child in the classroom or if a student came up to me and was telling me something about another staff member, and you know kids do that. A lot of times once you talk it out with them and you ask them are you sure that you are not challenging the teacher or acting a certain way? Once they find out you're not going to follow that song and dance usually they straighten up. But if it is one of my colleagues in my own area... I know that our other colleague that I worked with for fourteen years retired ...there would be times in the office area that we would talk. You know when you work with people day in and day out a lot of times your friends and you can sit down and you can talk things over with each other. I

think that's nicest thing about being a small department. We've been very fortunate that we've all been good friends and we respect each other as artists and colleagues and we've been able to say things to each other. When we talk about students sometimes someone will say "well why don't you try this or try that" and you know, it helps".

TC: "If abuse of power happened against you from administration or another staff member how would you handle it?"

MH: "I've always been a person that is not afraid to say what I think. I probably would go right to the jugular with the principal. I pretty much will stand up for myself. I've never been one to let anyone walk all over me. I'm very open and honest and say it like it is and if I thought there were some problem, believe me I would be right down there getting it ironed out.

TC: "How do you feel about the sports programs? Do you feel that sometimes they are more important to people than academics?"

MH: "I come from a very athletic family. My boys are very athletic so I know the importance of sports. I don't think it's just sports. I think there are a lot of programs that take kids out of the classroom. Sports have a lot of good things that teach kids how to work together. I think the most important thing is that you can't lose sight of the fact that you still have to make up the homework. We've been very fortunate. The coaches that we have had have been very supportive of academics. If we've had a kid that's misbehaving or something you go talk to the coaches and they are very supportive. I know that with one of the teachers that we had that just retired he kind of had a hard time dealing with different people and situations and sometimes he

would talk to one of the coaches about this and the coach would kind of laugh him off. But I've never had that problem".

TC: "Do you feel that sports teach them team oriented skills?"

MH: "Oh yah. You have to learn to get along with people. What do you do when you are losing? You have to learn to be positive you can't be negative. You can't downgrade people on your team; it's a team effort. No, that's hard for me you see I understand when you have academic teachers that say "oh blah blah blah sports" but you see I come from a sports family. I've seen how people grow. I've also seen the athletes in the classroom that think they're God's gift to the world. They think that they don't have to (follow the rules). But I think that we have had a real strong change over the last twelve years or so that you know it's not like back when I was in high school and the big dumb jock gets the scholarship. Now with the way sports are all over the nation, you better have the grades. And I think that that's what kids find out. You might be the best athlete in this town, but when you're thrown out there with all that's out there, you find out that you're not the best. If you don't have the grades that go with it...so I think that grades are being stressed now, which is important". TC: "As far as parents being involved with their children's career in school, what has been your experience with that? Are parent's involved or are they not or...?" MH: "You know I think that you always have the group of parents that are involved with their kids and then you always have that large group that isn't. Like at parent conferences for example, the parent that I need to see, I never see. You know I never see them. The kid that is struggling or getting a D or an F or even sometimes a C, those parents don't come. Probably because they've heard it so many times that their

kid's a pain in the butt, their kid isn't doing the work and da da...you get tired. Plus you get a lot of these parents that are working darn hard and they figure "you know well hey, the kid's on his own". Yah, the ones that you really need to see, you don't see and that's the sad part. You know and then you get the parents that are very dedicated and stuff, but that's with anything. But I think parents, for the most part there are a lot of parent's that are involved with their kids but there are a lot of parents that aren't and probably because their parents weren't involved with them. They probably weren't the better students when they were in school and therefore blah blah blah..."

TC: "What do you think that your role is as a teacher?"

MH: "Well, my role as a teacher...lordy lordy. First off, I love art and so I want my students to have an appreciation of what art is all about. I think secondly that it is very important for everybody to realize that they are creative and that they can do art in some form. I think that as a teacher of high school arts that it is important for me to establish a self confidence in my students that they can do the work, that they do have a creative side. I don't know... I guess at forty-nine and being a mother myself that a lot of times I look at these kids as my own kids. I just, I feel like their mother. That sounds so weird but I think that I care about these people. Not only do I want them to learn about art and develop an appreciation for it but also I want them to know that they are artistic and I want them to feel good about themselves. I want them to feel that there's any time of the day...out of the whole school day no matter what their experience is I hope that when they come to my class that they feel comfortable, they like being there, they feel safe being there. You know "oh Mrs. Harris, she cares

about me as a person". I don't know, I guess it's just the mother in me. You know I look at high school, and high school is just a holding ground, it really is. I mean, I think back and if we were all judged by how we were in high school, and never had the opportunity to be judged any different, we'd all be up a crick without a paddle. So many people can bloom after high school. You know, you've got those kids that are so smart in school and they're popular and all of that and then you've got the average normal Joe Bloe and he just gets by and then you've got the special education kids. Most people, most young people nowadays when they finish high school whether they are going to college or a skills center or they're a mechanic or they work at a grocery store...most people, they turn out fine. They turn out fine...and I don't know I just think that teaching is so much more than just teaching the subject. You know, it's teaching the person. To feel good about themselves, to realize that they can do more than just what they think they can and I guess I've always taken teaching as giving somebody the confidence to believe in themselves, about something and I just think that's important. I guess that's my philosophy... I mean I am always learning but I'm comfortable with who I am, I'm comfortable with how I teach, I mean I still am changing and trying to make things better, I'm trying to make assignments more exciting, and how can I get them to meet deadlines better and how can I get them to understand art is part of all life out there no matter what career they go into..." TC: "One of the things that was neat for me to learn from you this year is that when students were hurtful to you, you'd come back the next day and be able to be so friendly to that same student who had treated you so poorly. As a new teacher (I'm

not even teaching yet) this was hard for me. I would tend to get my feelings hurt. Will you talk about this?"

MH: "Well I think it's real important that when something happens in the classroom, whether the kid speaks out or he is rude, you have a confrontation or a kid swears at you...once that's dealt with, it's over with and done. You cannot judge a kid, I mean you cannot hold a grudge. If a kid is nasty to you one day, the next day they come to class that kid could come with a whole different mood. You can't hold that against them. You've got to let it go. Once it's over with it's gone. You know because you don't know what that kids going through, maybe he just flunked a test that he had studied for all night and he's in a bad mood. The thing about education and with the kids is that once a situation's over with let it go because it's a whole different ballgame after that. The thing about teaching is it's always changing. It never stays the same. Every day is different and I think when you deal with the kids you can't judge a kid by the first time you see them. If you do you're screwed. You'll set yourself up for more confrontations than you can imagine. You just kill them with kindness and after a while... if you get a real snotty kid you just continue to be polite to him. I'm not saying that you put up with rude behavior or anything but you'd be surprise that once they realize that they can't get to you and that you don't hold grudges, you usually win the kid over".

<sup>\*</sup>End of Interview Two.

#### CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECCOMENDATIONS

The purpose of this project was to search for meaning in the socially constructed and constantly changing environment and practical knowledge of a Fine Arts Instructor. The researcher wanted the teacher to possibly gain new insights on the subject of self, instruction, subject matter, role as teacher, role as colleague, curriculum development and the lives of students. A yearlong internship was conducted in which the researcher took on the role of observer and then of participant-observer. A journal of field notes was chronicled throughout the internship. From this journal, interview questions were developed and two interviews were conducted. The goal was to learn from another's life experiences within the world of teaching through ethnographic methods. It was found that lessons most critical to life are often those gained only through one's experiences and that in order to be a successful teacher, one must consider the well-being of students above all other factors in teaching and learning.

## Conclusions

As a result of conducting this study the researcher feels compelled to stress the significance of experiential knowledge. The researcher gained new insight on important aspects of the teacher's practical and experiential knowledge. Major points discussed were things such as the importance of caring for students, mutual respect between teachers and students, classroom management and discipline, developing patience, creating a nurturing environment for students, parental involvement and

relations, working well with staff members and the politics involved with education.

It was found that the most essential factor to becoming a teacher is caring about the students. The teacher expressed that if a person is significantly concerned about the welfare and self-esteem of students, they can and will be a successful teacher.

The review of literature, research, and the ethnographic study that the researcher experienced, more than validate the use of personal, practical knowledge in the form of narrative and storytelling as a valid method of research.

#### Recommendations

As the notion of personal, practical knowledge as valid content for research is rather recent, it still warrants considerable recognition. Irwin (1995), Clandinin and Connelly (1988,1989,1994, 1996) and Cavanagh and Dellar (1997,1998) recognize the power of ethnographic study, narrative, and story in practice and research. People learn most adequately from partaking in life's experiences. Personal, practical knowledge is something that can be obtained only by doing and through life experience. Life experience is something that takes time (usually a considerable amount), and consists of a certain reality that cannot be obtained through any college education, but only through living itself.

The researcher feels compelled to share some information learned from the study to new teachers about to begin student teaching. Remember that:

- Developing skills, routines and effective teacher praxis take time.
- Establishing an effective classroom management system takes time and practice.

- Developing patience with students takes time.
- Developing an effective curriculum that is flexible, interesting, and beneficial to students' lives takes time.
- Students will learn at many different styles and levels.
- All students are creative.
- There is trial and error in teaching.
- Human beings are a continually developing process.
- A persons strengths should be recognized and capitalized while their weaknesses allowed to improve (Biedert 1998).
- We are people first, and students and teachers second (Biedert 1998).

As a result of conducting this study, it is the researcher's recommendation that personal, practical knowledge through narrative and story telling be suggested as a contender for method of study in future graduate projects.

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APPENDIX A

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

# \*Derived by use of field journal/Internship

- 1: Can you know too much about a student?
- 2: How important is it to respect your students?
- 3: How important is it that they respect you?
- 4: Why is it important that they respect other students?
- 5: WHS has a large and quickly growing Hispanic population. What are some ways that this has had an impact on the school system?
- 6: How have your teaching experiences taught you to handle the class with authority and assertiveness?
- 7: What advice would you give to a new teacher as far as being assertive with the class?
- 8: Do you feel that WHS is too crowded? If so, what are some things you would suggest remedying this problem?
- 9: Why do you think that some students seem so unmotivated when it comes to school?
- 10: How much can we help a student whom is being abused at home?
- 11: What can we do if a child is being singled out and ridiculed at school? We can't make students like another student, but there is a way to lessen the harm.
- 12: We have several Hispanic students that make it obvious that they are discussing you right in front of you, how do you deal with this?
- 13: When a student is hurtful to you, how do you remain unemotional about it?
- 14: How do you discipline and be assertive without showing emotion?

- 15: When a student is being somehow harmed, how do you stay emotionally afar from the situation?
- 16: What are some good ways to allow the students to like you, but to also understand that you are not "buddies"?
- 17: Some of the students today are dressing somewhat offensive or promiscuous. How do you deal with this new trend, and what are some of the effects you've witnessed on campus of this?
- 18: What do you do when you observe promiscuous behavior on school grounds?
- 19: If you come across a fight on school grounds, what might be some appropriate actions to take?
- 20: If there is a situation in a class where something is missing either of yours, or another students, how is this handled?
- 21: When you're exhausted, you have students coming at you with questions in all different directions all at the same time, and it all gets to be too much, what are some things you do to stay sane?
- 22: Do you feel art is relaxing for the students? If so, in what ways?
- 23: When a student is lying you to and you know it, how do you handle it?
- 24: When abuse of leniency happens in the classroom, in what ways do you make adjustments to curb it?
- 25: As a staff member, if abuse of power happened against you from the administration, how would you handle it?

- 26: If you knew that another staff member was treating another staff member unfairly how would you handle it?
- 27: If you were aware of a person in the office-excusing students from class for inappropriate reasons, what would you do?
- 28: If students were picking on another student in your class, what would you do?
- 29: If a student looks right at you and yells profanity at you, what would you do?
- 30: If you suspected a student or students of doing drugs in school, how would you approach it?
- 31: If you suspected that another staff member was treating a student unfairly how would you handle it?
- 32: If someone were to tell you that a teacher was involved with a student, what would you do?
- 33: How would you handle a situation where a group of students asked you to purchase alcohol?
- 34: Being in art, how do you feel is appropriate for art instructors to dress?
- 35: How does it make you feel when your students give back to you (In any way)?
- 36: What have been some of your highest experiences teaching?
- 37: What have been some of your lowest experiences teaching? How did you deal with them?
- 38: Do you feel sports are sometimes more important to students and faculty than academics?
- 39: Do you think favors are sometimes given to those students successful in sports?

- 40: If a student has not constitutionally done anything wrong, but just overall has an awful attitude, what are some things you might say to him/her?
- 41: What are some words to use when speaking to a parent about a troubled student in school?
- 42: What have been some of your positive experiences with parents?
- 43: What have been some of your negative experiences with parents?
- 44: How did you handle them?
- 45: How do you feel about politics within the school system?
- 46: What advice would you give a new teacher about politics in the school?
- 47: What are some things that you have learned about interviewing, getting the job, or not getting the job?
- 48: What are some strategies that you have used in order to juggle your busy family schedule with your job?
- 49: As a parent of a student yourself, how is it that you remain objective in class?
- 50: What are some issues that the staff meetings covered this year?
- 51: Do you feel that the staff meetings are effective?
- 52: What is not effective about them?
- 53: Do you feel support from your administration for the art program at WHS?
- 54: How do you handle yourself when you don't feel any support from the administration?
- 55: What are some changes you would make in order to improve the strength of the arts at WHS?
- 56: How do we get parents involved with their children's careers at school?