

**TEACHERS' ASSUMPTIONS, BELIEFS AND VALUES
ABOUT TEACHING SPELLING:
A STUDY OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT**

by

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TEACHERS' ASSUMPTIONS, BELIEFS AND VALUES ABOUT TEACHING SPELLING:

A STUDY OF TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis was to uncover teachers' assumptions, beliefs and values about the teaching of spelling and about how students learn to spell in primary classrooms. A secondary, but critical purpose was to allow teachers the opportunity, through self-inquiry and reflection, to engage in a deliberate process of teacher development. This thesis seeks to answer the following four questions:

- 1) What is each teacher's current educational understanding and practical knowledge in the area of spelling?
- 2) Where did these views and internalized beliefs come from?
- 3) To what extent does the personal background and professional history of an individual teacher relate to his/her professional practice?
- 4) To what extent do the methods of collaborative autobiography, interview, and discussion (used in this study for the purpose of collecting data) contribute in and of themselves to teacher development?

The study was completed during a three month period, April to June, 1992, with a volunteer group of six primary teachers in School District # 43 in British Columbia. One of the methods used in this study was collaborative autobiography and for this procedure to work satisfactorily in a short time span, a sense of rapport is necessary amongst the group, therefore the teachers involved in this thesis were all close colleagues from the same school.

The study used three kinds of research. Data were collected through collaborative autobiography sessions, individual interviews, and follow-up discussions. Most of the collaborative autobiography work was tape-recorded. Collaborative autobiography served as a catalyst for the teachers to draft, redraft and finally write their autobiographies in completed form. All methods provided teachers with time to reflect personally and professionally. Interviews and follow-up discussions were taped and transcribed. The data were then carefully reviewed and interpreted.

Although it is difficult to generalize from this select group of primary teachers to other groups of teachers in other schools, the information gathered does reveal the need to investigate further the potential of providing school staffs with time

at the beginning of a school year for collaborative autobiography, as a possible arena for establishing a collegial school culture. It is also important that this type of work take place at the beginning of the year so that teachers, through self-inquiry and discovery, are able to decrease the gap between philosophy and actual practice in their current classrooms.

The data underline the usefulness of teacher development through self-inquiry methods that promote reflection. More specifically the data point to the need for teachers to understand that student spelling errors should be viewed as opportunities to analyze the cueing systems and the students' current stage of development . Teachers should also be sensitive to and aware of a student's preferred learning style. From the analysis of student spelling mistakes and from observation of a student's dominant learning style, a teacher can help the student individually and plan instruction that is appropriate to both the student's needs and the student's inherent learning style.

During the examination of the data some questions emerged that warrant further examination in the area of reflective processes and in the understanding of how students learn to spell and how teachers can best assist this process.

**I wish to dedicate this thesis to life-long learning
and
teacher development.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Reasearch Questions	5
Purpose of the Thesis and Theoretical Foundations	5
Defintions of Terms	8
CHAPTER TWO	11
The Methods Employed, Organization and Philosophy of the Thesis	11
CHAPTER THREE	17
The Interpretation of the Collaborative Autobiography Sessions	17
Individual Profiles of the Four Phases of Autobiography	22
Analysis of the Four Phases	44
CHAPTER FOUR	49
Descriptions and Interpretations of the Interviews and Follow-up Discussions	49
CHAPTER FIVE	71
General Conclusions Regarding the Nature of the Thesis	71
Specific Conclusions	73
a) The Teaching of Spelling and How Students Learn to Spell	73
b) Collaborative Autobiography	86
Final Conclusions	99

APPENDICES	104
I	University Ethics Committee Approval 104
	Sample Informed Consent by Subjects 105
	Sample Subject Consent for the Reproduction of Data Gathering Documents 106
II.	Sample of How to Write Your Autobiography 107
	Sample of Interview Questions 108
III	Teacher Autobiographies, Interviews and Follow-up Discussions: (listed below) 109
	Part 1: Ken 109
	Part 2: Rachael 126
	Part 3: Sheila 150
	Part 4: Margaret 178
	Part 5: Sally 195
	Part 6: Paul 213
LIST OF REFERENCES	231

Chapter 1

Introduction

I will begin this thesis with a brief, but appropriate story about why I decided to inquire about how my colleagues teach spelling and how they believe students learn to spell.

A few years ago, I was amazed by the varying ways that the primary teachers on staff at Beach View Elementary School approached spelling. At the time all of us were involved in process writing, a program based on the assumption that learning to write is a developmental process, much like learning to talk. Our school was recognized in the district as a writing school, and our staff hosted district workshops on writing.

One day I was standing in line waiting to use the photocopier when I noticed that a colleague of mine was running off a spelling list, and a spelling test form in the shape of an umbrella. I asked her where she got her spelling list from, and she told me it was from the Ves Thomas series. I asked her if she gave spelling tests regularly. She replied that in her grade two class, she gave a spelling test every Friday before her students were allowed to participate in more enjoyable Friday activities. I realized then that our beliefs about spelling were radically different. She was basing the practice of weekly spelling lists on theories and /or underlying values that were different from mine. As I thought about this apparent contradiction in her practice, I became increasingly perplexed. How could she on the one hand promote the writing process and on the other hand fall back on the traditional weekly spelling test which is a predetermined set list of words for all her children. A traditional approach to teaching spelling does not account for individual learning differences and it also encourages a leveling of achievement to what may be a standard of mediocrity (Buchanan, 1989). The writing process is a wholistic approach to learning; spelling is a natural occurrence within this context and learning the correct spelling of words takes place during daily writing experiences. The giving of traditional spelling tests takes words out of context and requires students to memorize them. Through my own observation I have noticed that many of these newly memorized words do not appear in student writing. During the introduction of her text Buchanan (1989) argues that traditional spelling lists and drills are a waste of time as few words transfer back into writing and states, "Learning to spell and indeed the act of spelling is a mental process of predicting, confirming, or disconfirming and integrating or relating prior

knowledge." I believe children develop their own strategies for spelling as they increase their knowledge base and build on experiences during reading, writing, speaking and listening. I view spelling as a complex developmental process, not an exercise in memorization. Early writers, like primary grade students, use three different cueing systems to help predict spellings: phonetics, grapho-phonics and orthographics (Cochrane et al. 1985). After students work through these three stages, they then usually concern themselves with both syntax and semantics cues to help them spell (Cochrane et al. 1985).

As I became more puzzled over this obvious difference in our philosophies, that is the wholistic approach versus the traditional method, I began to ask other colleagues how they were handling spelling in their classrooms. Some used traditional spelling lists; one did an individual self-select method, and others, (like myself), ignored spelling as a separate entity. We concerned ourselves with the developmental stages of the spelling process as outlined by Gentry (1987) Precommunicative spelling is where the alphabet symbols are used to represent words but there is no match between the letters and sounds therefore the message is not readable; Semi-phonetic spelling is where letters represent words but many sounds are omitted; Phonetic spelling is where the words are spelled the way they sound to the child; Transitional spelling occurs when the child combines a phonetic system with visual memory and relies less on how the words sound and concentrates more on how they look; Mature spelling is when the visual memory, with time and experience, is more fully developed, but even at this stage people invent spellings.

I firmly believe the teacher's role is to be aware of the spelling cueing systems (phonetics, grapho-phonics, orthographic, syntactic-semantic) that students predominantly use while engaged in writing, so that the teacher can nurture the spelling process of each individual. Misspellings are opportunities for teachers to find out which cueing systems a particular student is using during writing to predict his/her spellings. In the traditional approach errors are not usually analyzed, they are marked right or wrong and Cochrane et al. (1985) warns teachers not to think of errors as being wrong and standard spelling as being right but rather suggests teachers analyze misspellings with the idea of understanding the student's developmental stage of spelling. During proof-reading conferences the teacher's responsibility is to help his/her students relate the knowledge they have of how words are spelled to other

words of similar patterns. Buchanan (1989) outlines practical instructional strategies for each of the developmental stages of spelling.

It was my strong belief that if I provided an abundant writing program, rich in a variety of activities, my students would naturally learn to spell. I also felt that too much emphasis placed on correct spelling too soon would actually inhibit the developmental process of writing and stifle creativity. Several books confirmed my opinions including the works of Forester and Rheinart (1989), Graves (1984 & 1985), Newman (1985) and Cochrane et al. (1985). These authors supported the premise that standard spelling would naturally occur if students were motivated and thoroughly engaged in a writing program that promoted risk-taking.

The incident at the photocopier, together with three other events, made me begin to question my beliefs and educational bias. First, I began to take a closer look at students' spelling once they had reached the fluent stage of writing. I wondered if I should be doing more to encourage standard spelling at this stage. It appeared to me that student spelling plateaued at this level and their writing pieces contained the same words. My students were not challenging themselves with new words during their daily writing. Secondly, I was the primary department head for several years at Beach View Elementary School and more than once I heard intermediate teachers say that their students could not spell and what were we doing in the primary grades? The third critical incident centered on a grade one boy I taught who did not fit the mold of the developmental writing stages described in the Primary Program-Foundation Document (1990, p. 206-213). This particular student would only spell words in standard form as he felt invented spelling was silly.

Through self evaluation and reflection, I decided to pursue more effective ways, other than the traditional approach, to enhance standard spelling at the fluent level of writing. Over time, through reading Sitton (1990), Tarasoff (1990), Gentry (1987), Bean and Bouffler (1987), and Buchanan (1989) and through attending workshops, my knowledge about spelling and my understanding of how students learn to spell, changed. I began to use my classroom as an environment to try out and experiment with new ideas. Through close observations, and student feedback I became convinced that the action research I was conducting in my class was worthwhile. Though Gentry (1987) believes spelling is a cognitive developmental process, he maintains that not all children will learn to spell well. Gentry (1987, p. 26) states that

"expert spellers develop a memory capacity for visual images of words" and confirms that teachers should plan instructional activities to help all students acquire the skill of visual memory. By incorporating some fun visual memory activities, games and by making my class word aware at the fluent level, my students improved in their ability to spell in standard form. I was supplementing what my students were learning naturally about spelling through their reading and writing. My goal was to empower my students by teaching spelling strategies at the fluent stage of writing. I then noticed over the next three months that as spelling competency improved, my students began to write with greater ease and communicate ideas with increased prowess as they were not attending to the mechanics of spelling (Graves, 1984).

The new Primary Program (1990) emphasizes an integrated curriculum to accommodate the needs of all individual children, and my action research partially opposed this view in terms of spelling. I believe there is a place for formal spelling activities within the Primary Program. Tarasoff (1990) clearly defines 'formal instruction' as meaning a more structured approach to the teaching of spelling. Tarasoff (1990) makes it clear that the teacher sets appropriate goals, decides on an activity, and guides the class or group through the lesson. This is different from a 'traditional method' where all students in a class are required to study spelling lists that are predetermined for the whole year. The traditional approach does not consider the children's specific and individual needs. In traditional practice, words appearing on word lists do not relate to the students' reading and writing activities. As primary students become fluent writers their need to know how to spell more words increases. I maintain that children's word knowledge grows as they are exposed to and are actively involved in word activities. Tarasoff (1990, pp.30-31) outlines fourteen examples of activities that a teacher could use to help students improve their spelling. By incorporating creative, visual memory spelling activities at the fluent writing stage students become word enthusiasts while improving their skills of visual memory. Since not all students are naturally good spellers, visual memory skills must be taught so that children have the opportunity to practice these skills. When children are beginning to write, functional spelling is natural. However, if students are introduced to a variety of formal spelling activities aimed at improving standard spelling at the fluent level of writing, this could enhance the fluidity of their writing and not in any way impede their creative ability to communicate.

The conclusion I drew from my own action research is based on observation and is limited to the range of abilities and peculiarities of the students within my particular class. Although it is difficult to generalize from one class to another, it is my belief that by improving standard spelling at the fluent level of writing the quality of writing improves, therefore "Teaching a student to write is, in the final analysis the same thing as teaching him to think" (Murray, 1986, p. 215). If students are able to correctly spell many of the words they use in their daily writing they will be able to, as Sitton (1990) states, focus on the content of their message, not on the mechanics of spelling, thus enhancing writing fluidity.

Having shared my story I feel compelled to understand how other teachers deal with the issue of spelling. My story is significant because it is my hope that by listening to colleagues' stories in collaborative autobiography sessions, interviews and discussions, I will come to understand the basis on which different teachers engage in educational practice.

Research Questions

This thesis seeks to answer the following four questions:

- 1). What is each teacher's current educational understanding and practical knowledge in the area of spelling?
- 2). Where did these views and internalized beliefs come from?
- 3). To what extent does the personal background and professional history of an individual teacher relate to his/her professional practice?
- 4). To what extent do the methods of collaborative autobiography, interview, and discussion (used in this study for the purpose of collecting data) contribute in and of themselves to teacher development?

Purpose of the Thesis and Theoretical Foundations

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the underlying values and beliefs that primary teachers hold regarding the teaching of spelling and how their students learn

to spell. A secondary purpose was to afford teachers the opportunity to participate in a continuous process of teacher development. By engaging in collaborative autobiography, focussed interviews and discussion with six primary teachers, in different career phases and different grade levels the intention of the study was to determine the unique as well as the shared assumptions and common beliefs that exist within this group. Goodson (1991) maintains that the study of teachers' lives is central to the study of curriculum and schooling.

My intention was to understand colleagues' practices, but in no way attempt to effect change in their practices. Change must come from the individual when s/he begins to notice (through reflection) a dissonance between beliefs and actual practice. This philosophy of educational change stems from the assumption that teachers grow professionally when they begin to question their existing classroom practices and beliefs about how children learn (Reimer and Warshaw, 1989). For example Paley (1990) insists that until she had her own questions to ask, her own set of events to watch and her own ways of combining all of these with teaching, she did not learn very much at all. Before teachers can change, they must understand more fully who they are and how they became who they are today. "This present self can be discerned through a journey back in time, a journey that threads the past selves, like beads on a string, forming a necklace of existence, a present complex self" (Cooper, 1991, pp. 97 & 98). This can be accomplished with the collaborative autobiographical approach. As Butt (1989, p. 151) states, "Biographical enquiry may overcome blocks to educational change." All methods used in this thesis promote reflection. Therefore a possible outcome from this study may involve a change in practice by one or more members of the group being researched. Butt (1989) maintains that the autobiographical approach allows teachers to examine their thoughts and actions as professionals and this furthers their self-initiated professional development. Carr and Kemmis (1986, pp. 166-167) concur with this when they state the following, "From the role of critical informant helping an 'outsider' researcher, it is but a short step for the practitioner to become a self-critical researcher into her or his practice."

Studying the lives of teachers will improve our understanding of their purposes, practices, and motives, essentially their craft knowledge. Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992) make this clearer when they state, "The study of teachers' lives is undertaken to understand the socializing influence of the full range of life experiences on classroom practice, the context in which teachers formulate their craft knowledge "(p. 21). This

type of research is phenomenological as it honors the spontaneity, complexity, and ambiguity of human experience (Grumet, 1991). Schon (1983) discusses the indeterminate zones of practice and it is through the development of craft knowledge that a professional is able to operate within these zones. Schon (1983) argues that technical rationality does not encompass these zones due to the uncertainty, uniqueness and value conflicts present in problematic situations, therefore this thesis emphasizes the value in humanistic research and places an importance on multiplistic standpoints for knowing (Hale, 1991).

During this research teachers were not just studied in an effort to learn about them, they were be invited to share in the creation of knowledge (Schubert, 1991). Florio-Ruane (1991) emphasizes the importance of involving teachers in research so as not to lose sight of the insiders' perspective. This thesis concerned itself with having teachers take part in the expressive phase of the study. Teacher involvement enhances the usefulness of educational research and abolishes the division of labor so often found between teachers and researchers. My intention was to describe teachers' craft knowledge authentically, accurately, honestly and frankly (Butt, 1989). The relationship between current pedagogy and biographical incidents was studied in an attempt to identify the most potent influences from the past (Butt et al. 1992). Paley (1990, p. 142) maintains, "Everyone in every endeavor will continue to use techniques from the past in order to understand and work out ways to live securely in the future". The autobiographical approach is an important mode of inquiry into the nature of how teachers' think and act in the classroom (Butt, Raymond & Ray 1986).

This thesis stresses the value of teachers' voices, making sure their voice is heard, heard loudly, heard articulately (Goodson, 1991). Butt (1989, 151-152) lists five arguments for the use of autobiographical enquiry:

"A first argument involves the issue of the relationship between knowledge and power. The image of teachers as semi-professionals who lack control over their own work and as persons who do not contribute to the creation of knowledge has permeated education (Elbaz, 1983; Lather, 1984). These views limit teachers' opportunities to exhibit, communicate and develop their practical wisdom which 'remains a largely untapped source of insights for the improvement of teachers' (Feiman-Nemser and Floden, 1986). A second argument stems from the recent public concern with the quality of teaching.

Accountability measures such as standardized achievement tests, often ignore the critical role that personal and situation-specific knowledge plays in teaching. Day-to-day curriculum decisions and interactions are grounded in complex criteria that are not well known. These phenomena, if studied developmentally within their natural contexts, may shed new light on the issue of teacher accountability. A third argument may be drawn from the field of professional development. Current staff development practices need to incorporate views of the teacher as an active adult learner (Guskey, 1985; Invirson and Grenway, 1981) involved in life-long learning and development. This position needs to be enriched through careful accounts of teachers evolving practical knowledge from teachers' perspectives. A fourth argument is related to the need for expanded views of curriculum development and implementation. Instead of only using perspectives of persons outside classrooms, we need to examine directly the central role of teachers' intentions and expertise in effecting significant classroom change (Aoki, 1983; Butt and Olson, 1983; Clandinin, 1985; Elbaz, 1983; Werner, 1982). A fifth argument is grounded in basic theoretical assumptions about research on teaching. In teaching, as in other human interactions, people act in the light of their interpretations of the meanings of their surroundings (Erickson, 1986, pp. 126-127). Applied to the study of teachers' knowledge, this implies that the teacher's knowledge is not a fixed or immovable entity; rather, it is shaped by personal and professional history and by the ecological circumstances of action in which a teacher finds herself." Like Goodson, Butt (1989, p. 152) also affirms that this type of research "carries the teacher's voice; it also supports a more active and self initiated role for the teacher in working with outsiders."

Both the interview and follow-up discussion were included in this study to stimulate the power of vocalizing, affirming and articulating an aspect of current practice. The interviews and discussions provided a sympathetic and engaged listener to whom the participants could talk, argue, convince and claim authority (Tappan and Brown, 1991) over their beliefs and philosophy regarding the teaching of spelling and how students learn to spell.

Definition of terms

Collaborative Autobiography

Raymond (1991) describes collaborative autobiography as a process of gathering teachers' stories for the purpose of research and teacher development. The researcher and client together engage in story telling which perpetuates the bond of trust and furthers the idea of everyone being equal experts. "Through our converse we create each other" (Zola, 1991, p. 13). From the stance that we all are learners, we can share our stories, issues and beliefs in a kind of communal venturing (Aoki, 1984). Paley's (1990) remarks affirm this notion when she states, "You must invent your own literature if you are to connect your ideas to the ideas of others" (p. 18). Collaborative autobiography is a technique that involves unconditional acceptance of each other, trust, confidentiality and the personal right at any time to control the level of privacy. Collaborative autobiography invites experienced teachers to understand how they think and act within the realities of their teaching contexts (Butt, 1989).

Reflection

Although there are many genres of reflection, for this study reflection is the process by which teachers make sense of the phenomena of experience that puzzle or perplex them (Grimmett, Erickson, MacKinnon, & Riecken, 1990). Grumet (1991, pp. 69) explains reflection further when she quotes Schutz (cited in Chamberlin, 1974, p. 131) as stating, " Meaning does not lie in experience. Rather, those experiences are meaningful which are grasped reflectively."

Discussion and or Dialogue

Discussion and/ or Dialogue in this study is a predominant schema used for understanding the uniqueness of personal life and present teaching practice. Brody et al. quotes Shore and Frere (1987, pp. 98-99) to describe dialogue,

"Dialogue is the moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make it and remake it . It is the quintessential human act, the social moment wherein we establish ties, and where we have authentic recognition of the other."

It is this definition which captures the meaning that is used in this thesis.

Craft Knowledge

Craft knowledge as described by Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992, p. 44) is "essentially the accumulated wisdom derived from teachers and practice-oriented researchers' understandings of the meanings ascribed to the many dilemmas inherent in teaching." Craft Knowledge is intuitive and stems from experience. It entails the tacit know-how to solve problems in practice contexts.

Collegiality

Collegiality is purposeful communication that leads to purposeful professional movement. Little (1981, cited in Barth, 1990) makes the concept of collegiality clear when she describes collegiality as how craft knowledge is revealed, articulated and shared. She also points out that collegiality is dependent on the presence of four specific behaviors of adults in schools. They talk about practice, observe practice, share work on curriculum and teach one another about what they know about their craft.

Teacher Development

Teacher development focuses on the questions, controversies and dilemmas that are pertinent to teachers and their instructional practices. This is a teacher-centered approach to professional development. This is different from supervision or staff development as these functions are based on two inappropriate assumptions described by Grimmett (1990). The first assumption is that teachers require outside professional personnel who are removed from the classroom to assist them in making changes in their current classroom practices. The second assumption is that these outside experts have access to a body of knowledge beyond the realm of the regular classroom teacher. Teacher Development concerns itself with the humanistic and professional lives of teachers and looks at their context and school culture and is not driven by top-down directives. According to Grimmett (1990), teacher development values and taps into the vast repertoire of experience, ability, and practical knowledge teachers possess and is key in bringing about educational change.

Chapter 2 Methods . Organization and Philosophy

The teachers who were part of this thesis were asked to draft their autobiography in five to ten pages as a general 'stream of consciousness,' with special reference to and consideration of the events or turning points they judged significant in shaping them as a person, and a professional. Rosen (1989, p. 25) states, "Writing is a way of reflecting on experience and ideas". This portion of their autobiography was titled Part 1. For Part 2, teachers were encouraged to follow Butt's (1992, pp. 62-63) outline on how to write an autobiography in four phases as described,

" a depiction of the context of their current working reality, a description of their current pedagogy and curriculum-in-use, an account of their reflections on their past personal and professional lives insofar as they might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions and finally, a projection into their preferred personal/professional futures as related to a personal critical appraisal of the previous three accounts."

While writing their autobiographies participants were asked to seek the answers to the following four questions that correlate with the above phases (Townsend, Butt, and Engel, 1991, p. 1): "What is the nature of my working reality? How do I think and act in the classroom? How did I come to be the way I am? What do I want to do about it?"

The importance of identifying and expressing their feelings during these accounts was also stressed. Feelings provide fruitful routes to attitudes, values, thoughts and actions and through exploring how a person came to feel the way s/he does one can follow a trail back to the incident with which it is associated (Butt, 1989).

After a few days, each teacher was encouraged to rewrite his/her autobiography by adding or deleting details, as they saw fit. Time allowed the teachers to use the autobiographical approach to begin to understand themselves and their practice, as this process deliberately focusses participants on what is personal, pertinent, practical and professional (Butt, 1989). As the participants completed this task, I arranged a meeting time and place convenient with this group of teachers to begin the process of collaborative autobiography and share Part 1 of their autobiographies.

For this study collaborative autobiography was chosen for its potential to stimulate and enhance the continuous process of teacher development. It is a method of teacher-initiated research. Teacher development focusses itself on the concerns and controversies important to teachers. It has been shown that many attempts at educational reform involving curriculum and pedagogy have often failed and/or have had limited impact on educational practice (Fullan, 1982), because the teachers' perspectives and beliefs have been overlooked within the proposed educational change and within the process of implementation. Teachers must feel empowered and in charge of their professional lives and be given the opportunity to determine their own course of action if change is to take place at the classroom level and benefit the learning environment of students. There are many outside, verticle or top-down initiatives facing and/or coerecing teachers into making superficial changes that often do not consider classroom reality and the effects upon the learners. The continued failure of educational reform calls for the creation of new approaches to research into understanding the phenomena of the classroom, better ways of generating professional knowledge useful to the practice and improvement of teaching, and successful approaches to educational change (Butt, Raymond, Yamagishi, 1988). Collaborative autobiography looks at the interaction of person and context over time, and is a fresh way of of inquiring into teachers' craft knowledge and its formation (Butt,Raymond, Yamagishi, 1988). Butt (1990) succinctly argues that in order for authentic educational change to take place, that is self-initiated professional development or teacher development, it is essential for teachers to know themselves as explicitly as possible and through collaborative autobiography this goal can be accomplished.

Collaborative autobiography is a social and collegial process. It was stressed that what is divulged during collaborative sessions is completely confidential and will remain private within the confines of the group, unless agreed otherwise. The teachers were cautioned to share stories only within their comfort zone. They were told that for the purpose of this study they would be referred to through pseudonyms in order to protect their personal rights and confidentiality.

I actively participated in the process of collaborative autobiography and began the first meeting by presenting experiences of my life to help promote a collegial, supportive, and trusting atmosphere. Participants were encouraged to think of creative ways to share important aspects of their lives, including role plays, pictorial or graphic representations, simulations, poems, and songs (Townsend et al. 1991).

As each individual teacher told his/her story and highlights of the events that stood out over time, the other participants and I looked for patterns within each teachers life, while at the same time enquiring collectively regarding apparent commonalities across all the teachers' lives (Butt, 1989).

I posed and modelled sample questions paraphrased from Belenky et al. (1986, Appendix A.) to assist with the process of collaborative autobiography, discussion and reflection: How would you describe yourself? What was the most important learning experience of your life? What events do you perceive served as catalysts for change? Were their occurrences in your life that you perceive impeded your growth?

Participants were encouraged to attempt to understand the perspective, feelings and reality of the presenter, by listening in a non-judgmental manner and by asking questions for clarification (Butt, 1989). As a colleague, I took part in the group discussion. I also suggested the teachers record notes of any comments or questions made by the participants that aroused thoughts regarding current or past concerns, as the notes may assist in the writing of their own autobiographies.

After the first collaborative autobiography session, participants were encouraged to rewrite, add detail and amend their autobiographies using the ideas stimulated by sharing within the group. Subsequent sessions occurred until all members of the group had enough time to share and read Part 2 of their autobiographies: their personal accounts of the four phases outlined above. Grumet (1991, p. 73) states, "The autobiographical act is not complete until the writer of the story becomes its reader and the temporal fissure that has opened between the writing and the reading invites negation as well as affirmation." This will ensure that each autobiographer has a major role in the interpretation process (Butt et al., 1992). Following each session, participants were encouraged to continue to make changes to their autobiographies by drafting and redrafting. (Completed Autobiographies are located in the Appendix III)

I explained beforehand, that as a researcher I believe that writing and telling of personal stories allows meaning from experiences to be extracted and this in turn helps develop individual voices. Cooper (1991, p. 99) states, "it is through telling our own stories that we learn who we are and what we need." Connelly and Clandinin (1988, p. 11) further affirm the use of narrative and its process when they argue, "The more we

understand ourselves and can articulate reasons why we are what we are, do what we do, and are headed where we have chosen, the more meaningful our curriculum will be. The process of making sense and meaning of our curriculum, that is, of the narratives of our experience, is both difficult and rewarding." Lampert's (1985, p. 72) comments are also highly pertinent when she states, "Conflicts in the way teachers view themselves and their work will only emerge as they present themselves in the stories they tell about their work to different people and in different settings."

Chapter three includes the interpretations of the personal comments made by individuals and the discussion and dialogue that was generated in all three collaborative autobiography sessions. Interpretive profiles of the six teachers involved in this study emerge, as the four phases are examined. These profiles are descriptive accounts of the personal and professional lives of the teachers involved in this study. Each phase is analyzed according to common themes and generalizations generated from within this group and the unique differences are also commented upon.

After all collaborative autobiography sessions were completed, taped interviews were scheduled with each individual teacher. Before beginning the formal interview I asked each participant to comment on their participation in the collaborative autobiography sessions. I asked for both positive and negative feedback. Their personal responses were taped and transcribed and are located in chapter five. The formal interviews focussed directly on their current teaching practice in the area of spelling. The interviews delicately probed at uncovering the person's own sense of self and attempted to elicit underlying beliefs and values regarding spelling. Schubert (1991, p. 222) maintains that, "teachers interviewed constitute a very rich source of insights about the praxis embedded in teaching." The following is the list of questions that were asked during the interviews:

What made you become a teacher?

Describe a typical teaching day.

When you teach language arts how do you encourage expressive writing?

To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

What connection, if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the students writing?

**Is there anything else you do to encourage standard spelling?
What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?
In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?
What do the parents of your class say to you about spelling?
What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and knowledge?
How do you think students learn to spell?
How would you characterize the process of learning to spell; a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?
Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form?
If so, why?; if not, why not?**

Certain information elicited from each interview was of particular interest to my study. This specific information from the interview allowed me to design follow-up discussion questions pertinent and specific to each individual. I then engaged each teacher separately in discussion on these points of interest by using clarifying responses such as the following: Am I understanding correctly that you believe...? Let's talk further about..... Can you give me an instance of this? Is there something being assumed here? Is this something everyone should believe? When did you first begin to believe in this idea? In what ways do you act upon this belief?

Both the interview and follow-up discussion gave the teachers the opportunity to thoroughly concentrate on their beliefs and philosophy in the area of spelling. By having a specific focus, the teachers were able to understand better the dimension of perspectives, values, and experiential knowledge that gives meaning, direction and understanding to their reflective action or praxis (Schubert, 1991).

Chapter four includes the interpretation of the interviews and follow-up discussions. Each individual teacher's underlying values and beliefs regarding the teaching of spelling and how students learn to spell is examined. (Transcripts of the interviews and follow-up discussions are located in Appendix III.)

In the concluding chapter, by using three different but connected forms of data (collaborative autobiography, focussed interviews and discussion) a synthesis of all data is made, qualified comments and inferences are deduced and conclusions are drawn. From the premise that a teacher's "deeply held substantial view of self" (Nias,

1984, p. 268) is tightly enclosed in everyday teaching practice, the tapes of the collaborative autobiography sessions, the completed autobiographies and the transcripts of the interviews and discussions were carefully analyzed and interpreted. Finally, the readers of this thesis are free to draw their own conclusions and derive their own insights.

Chapter 3

The Interpretation of the Collaborative Autobiography Sessions

It is necessary at this point to describe the collaborative autobiography sessions in detail, as these sessions are crucial when looking at self-initiated professional growth, that is, teacher development. Through this type of personal/professional enquiry teachers are first encouraged to understand their experiences individually. Secondly, through collaboration they automatically begin to discuss collectively the commonalities that exist amongst their lives. The process is one of documentation, reflection and interpretation of experience allowing teachers to think about where they are, where they have been and where they wish to go (Butt, 1989).

Background

On April 6, 1992, I met with my group of volunteer teachers to thoroughly discuss my research thesis, answer questions and have subject consent forms signed. I chose this group of teachers because I had been the primary department head at Beach View Elementary for six years prior to this research and I knew everyone for at least one year or more. I felt if collaborative autobiography was going to be successful it should be done with a group of people that were working together and due to the short time span I also believed I should have some rapport with the participants in my study. My previous position as primary department head may have influenced their decision to participate. At this meeting I gave an introductory talk from the following points:

1). My hope is that in the long run you will find the entire process of collaborative autobiography, interview and discussion beneficial to you personally and professionally.

2). In order for the process of collaborative autobiography to be successful and facilitate a high quality of personal reflection, sharing and collaboration, certain conditions are essential:

Use "I" statements when presenting your story and responding to others.

Describe your feelings openly and honestly.

All participants should listen attentively to each other in a non-critical manner and attempt to get a deeper understanding of each presenter and assist each presenter in clarifying his/her own understandings by asking appropriate questions or by contributing a common experience or story.

You may interrupt the presenter to share points of similarity and differences but remember to respect who the presenter is.

- 3). You personally have complete control over the level of disclosure in both your oral and written story. What is shared during our collaborative autobiography sessions is completely confidential unless negotiated.
- 5). It is important to keep notes of anything that triggers a thought, a memory or a concern that you would like to include in your autobiography or bring out during discussion.
- 6). The experience of collaborative autobiography has the possibility of manifesting itself on many levels: with a colleague or a friend, within your classroom and school and with your own personal and professional growth and development.
- 7). After the collaborative autobiography sessions are complete I will arrange an interview and follow-up discussion with each of you.

During this initial meeting, concerns were raised regarding the personal nature of the research. I restated and reassured participants that they had complete control over what they shared during the collaborative autobiography sessions and control over their level of privacy in the written product as well. The teachers also needed more clarification on why we needed to do autobiography in collaboration. I explained that collaborative autobiography is a social learning process and by listening to others they would remember experiences and memories perhaps forgotten. I also explained that they would gain a great deal of insight about each other and this could have far reaching effects, long after the collaborative autobiography sessions were completed. During this meeting I gave each teacher a direction sheet , "How to Write Your Autobiography", reproduced in Appendix II.

Paul agreed to be the liaison person between the group and me so that meetings could be arranged and coordinated according to everyone's calendar. I stressed that for the first meeting, only a very rough draft of the teachers' autobiographies was necessary and to let their talking during our sessions help with their writing. In other words, I did not want the teachers to come to our first meeting with a fixed copy of their autobiography. I emphasized the importance of letting their autobiography remain in a fluid state during all sessions and when the sessions were completed they could take time to formalize their autobiographies before handing them into me.

General Overview of all the Collaborative Autobiography Sessions

We began our group meetings on April 14, 1992 and met three times within a two week period. Each session was over three hours in length and charged with emotion and energy. Paul volunteered his condominium for all our meetings which allowed us to gather privately in a cozy living room, free from interruptions. The first two meetings were arranged for 4:30 p.m. and the last session took place at 7:30 p.m. The atmosphere during all sessions was relaxed, social and congenial. Everyone felt comfortable to share their life stories openly and honestly. Had we met in the school we might not have been able to create an environment to allow everyone the freedom to relate, listen and respond with ease. All participants listened to presenters with intensity and showed genuine caring, support and empathy towards each other. Participants commented, with amazement, at how listening to others triggered their own memories. I was impressed with the dedication, and enthusiasm this particular group demonstrated toward the project. At the beginning of each meeting I asked what everyone's time line was like, as I was sensitive to the participants' busy life schedules and other responsibilities. We stayed on task very well considering the type of work we were undertaking. At all three meetings it was I who suggested when we end the sessions, when I sensed people were getting tired, but because of the emotional nature of the work, the participants were more than willing to keep going.

I did not tape the first session as Paul, the liaison, informed me the day ahead of the first meeting that people were feeling a little worried and apprehensive. Knowing that the teachers were nervous and had some concerns I felt that it would have been inappropriate to tape our group work before establishing a rapport and setting the tone for a relaxed, and collegial atmosphere. Most importantly, I needed to create a climate of trust and demonstrate for them the process of collaborative autobiography. After the first meeting I wrote my impressions of the session and was, with the participants permission, able to tape the subsequent meetings.

For the first meeting we agreed ahead to concentrate on Part 1 of the autobiography entitled "A General Stream of Consciousness". Participants were asked to consider the events or turning points in their lives that they felt had the most impact on their personal professional lives. They were to note carefully the feelings attached to these events and to jot these experiences in point form ready to discuss during the first session. I also asked that they bring photographs or momentos that

would help them tell their stories. I began the meeting by sharing my personal experiences from early childhood through to present life, using photographs to help clarify my story. I was relaxed and honest and the response was positive. An informal discussion ensued from comments about and comparisons between my experiences and theirs. When I first began my presentation the room was quiet, tentative and apprehensive, but as I completed my life story and took the necessary risk to share my personal and professional vignettes, participants became thoroughly engaged in dialogue. Paul volunteered to go next, as the discussion generated from my presentation led into his story. Rachael, Margaret, Ken, Sheila and Sally followed. The stories were revealing and forthright. Both Rachael and Sheila cried during the relating of their stories. Others were receptive and empathetic. During the course of the evening several emotions were touched upon--sadness, anger, happiness, depression and joyfulness. At the end of the meeting I sensed a closeness developing amongst us. In one evening we had become what Barth (1991) terms a community of learners. At this point I would like to caution readers of this document that establishing a collegial atmosphere as quickly as we did may not always be possible. Because I had a previous history with this group of teachers as their primary department head, it was easier for me to create a non-threatening environment which encouraged risk-taking. It would appear that the power still attached to my having been their department head worked productively in this case and as the leader and facilitator I was able to influence positively the development of a collegial and warm atmosphere. Three of the teachers I had known for six years, one for two years and two for one year prior to this research.

I found out by talking to members of the group the following week, that at school the day after the first collaborative session they had related to each other in a more compassionate manner. The participants said they had difficulty sleeping after the first session because of the memories and emotions that were evoked within the group. Paul's comments summarized the group's feelings, "I needed to stay up and think and process the information I had heard." All participants felt they understood their colleagues better and were surprised at how little they knew about each other before the first meeting.

Before we formally began the second session, I told the group how I valued their honesty during the first session and hoped that they also found it worthwhile. I was

amazed and pleased with the positive comments the participants made after my opening talk.

" I found it very therapeutic. I gained so much insight into everyone's lives. "

" I felt part of a select group."

" It was great to hear everyone's stories and the avenues into teaching."

Participants discussed how difficult it was to revive forgotten memories. Sheila spoke a great deal about this, because she felt embarrassed for crying during the telling of her life story at the first collaborative session. Sheila maintained that we all get so busy in our lives that we just carry on with our daily routines while we suppress feelings attached to our life experiences. "It's as if we skip over events and shut out our innermost feelings to keep our present lives under control. In the meantime these experiences are still very much a part of our lives but we fear to acknowledge them in many cases as it often is too painful to relive." The rest of the group listened to Sheila and agreed with her assessment. Everyone felt the first session provided them with the opportunity to take time to reflect on past positive and negative events. They also commented on how time changed their perspective about these events. Some of the things they accepted as children they now found horrifying by today's standards and other things they thought were traumatic they now feel were trivial. However, there were other experiences, as Sheila described, where the pain or joy was still as intense as the moment they lived it.

I asked the participants if they noticed any commonalities within our life stories from the first collaborative autobiography session. They shared the following:

- 1). Perfectionism was part of everyone's personality.
- 2). Within our group, fear of failure was seen as a motivating factor and all of us were success oriented.
- 3). All of us had nurturing personalities and many had assumed nurturing roles as children.
- 4). Many had triumphed over some adversity and the career of teaching seemed to be an answer.

During the second session, on April 23, 1992, we focussed our discussions on Part 2, based on Butt et al's. (1992) four phases. In phase one each participant took turns describing and discussing the context of their current working reality. The group felt energetic enough to go on to phase two, a description of their current

pedagogy and curriculum-in-use. On April 27th, we met for our third and final collaborative autobiography session to discuss the third and fourth phases of 'How to Write Your Autobiography.' Phase three was a description of past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions. Phase four was a description of personal/professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.

The following is a general description of Beach View Elementary which is the common context of the group's current working reality. Beach View Elementary is located in a low social/economical area of Coquitlam school district and the student body is composed of a large percentage of learning and behavior problems due to social, and economic reasons. The teachers describe the school as being like an inner city school with the exception of less multicultural students. The administration is democratic and the staff is cooperative and progressive.

Individual Profiles of the Four Phases of Autobiography Based on the Taped Sessions and Written Autobiographies

Ken

Phase 1 'Description of Ken's current working context.'

Ken has had nearly two years of teaching experience. While describing his working reality, he quickly expressed to us his frustration with his primary four class of twenty-five students. Ken feels that it is important to stress responsibility but finds the majority of his class unable to handle the amount of responsibility he wants them to undertake. "I have very few that are totally responsible for their work and their behavior." Ken maintains his students rely too heavily on their parents for everything including bringing requested items to school. "My Mom didn't do this or pack my homework so it doesn't happen." Ken is trying to teach his class that they must learn to be responsible for their own things and homework, not their parents. Ken also says he expects little from the students in his class whose parents don't show any support. He believes there are students in his room he could keep to five o'clock at night and the parents would not call to find out where they were. Ken is frustrated because he is unable to accomplish what he wants to do in terms of curriculum because his students

do not stay on task and do not take school seriously enough. He worries about what the next year's teacher is going to say about the students he has taught.

Ken discussed his working reality in terms of the type of students that are enrolled in his class. He described his class as being extremely social with a diverse range of academic ability. The composition is almost half boys and half girls. Ken discussed the dilemma of not wanting to be negative with his students but at the same time wanting to motivate them somehow into being more responsible for their work and learning. At this point, he has yet to figure out how to make the majority of his students focus more intently on their work and become more responsible for their own learning and behavior.

Physically, Ken arranges his class in working groups of four and one group of five. Although he prefers groups, he feels he has to give up the control over student behavior that he maintains when he seats his students in rows.

Phase 2 'Description of Ken's current teaching style and the curriculum he uses'

Ken sees himself as both a nurturer and facilitator and maintains his number one goal is to make sure every student feels unique and special. Ken believes that the most important thing he can do for his students is to listen to their stories in a genuine and empathetic manner, although at times he feels rushed by the press of daily routines and responsibilities. "I try to be compassionate as much as I can and I hope they don't see through it when I'm bluffing when I'm too busy to really listen." Ken fears, in many cases, he might be the only adult in their life that takes the time to interact on this level.

Ken works hard to create a positive environment where student growth is facilitated. Ken encourages his students to express themselves both orally and in written form and allows them to interact with one another. With this freedom comes responsibility and Ken feels some students are not ready for this responsibility, therefore he believes one of his mandates is to try and teach that freedom requires responsibility. He also tries to help students see the connection between their behavior and the consequences of behavior in both positive and negative situations.

Ken also maintains that his role is to make sure all students attain a certain level of success. Ken uses a variety of teaching strategies, and feels that what works for one

student may not necessarily work for another, therefore he constantly strives to find a way to reach all students. He strongly feels his duty is to teach everyone and if a student isn't learning, he feels he has failed at his job. Ken admits he is motivated by the realization that he is accountable to the parents, other teachers, and the administration.

Ken uses humor in his teaching to make light of situations which could get tense. He tries to create a good rapport with all of his students and wants them to know he is approachable.

Phase 3 Description of any reflections of Ken's past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of his present professional thoughts and actions.

Ken was born in the Netherlands in 1963 and came to B.C. in 1967, where he was raised. He is a middle child with an older sister and younger brother. He had a very secure childhood and strong parental support. His parents allowed him the freedom to make his own decisions and learn from his mistakes. This influence has transferred into his teaching as he tries to allow a certain amount of student choice and works at creating a supportive, caring and safe environment. Ken feels sad for many of his students, as they come from single parent families and they need the kind of security which they are not, in many cases, receiving from home. He also believes that he became a rational and analytical thinker from having the freedom to make his own choices. In his classroom he tries to help his students see the connection between their choices and the results of their choices. This he hopes will make his students better thinkers. He describes himself as never being a 'go getter' and is carefree by nature.

His memories from elementary school are negative. He was pigeon-holed as a young student and made to feel like the "underdog" and no matter what he did he was never good enough for one particular teacher. Although this was a negative experience and he constantly tried to prove this teacher wrong, he learned never to judge students and slot them into groups. Ken believes students make cognitive and behavioral leaps and do not remain stagnant. Ken states he wants all students "to succeed and to feel like somebody." Ken is empathetic towards the students who struggle in their work, due to factors he maintains are often out of their control.

During his teaching practicum Ken became acutely aware of the need for people to "go with what you've got." Ken was so busy trying to please others he lost himself and as a result had difficulty during his Professional Development Program "My struggle with trying to please others and not being myself has led me to see that we are all different and our differences should be accepted." Ken believes that students should be given the freedom to be comfortable with their individuality and be made to feel worthwhile.

During his practice teaching he became accutely aware of the pressure teachers are under and for a time this affected his creativity. Now that Ken has his own classroom, he is able to relax, be creative and foster a learning environment where his students can also be creative. "I want to nurture their creativity."

Ken spent nearly two years as a substitute teacher and learned some practical lessons from this experience, such as the importance of being prepared and organized.

Phase 4 'Description of Ken's personal/professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.'

Ken sees himself as a life-long learner and states, "I never want to think of myself as the ultimate teacher." Ken maintains he is always open and willing to try new ideas. "As a professional it is my responsiblity to continue to grow and keep current, therefore giving the students the best that can be offered." Comparing himself to other teachers, in his school and in the district, motivates him to strive to learn, be creative and better himself professionally.

Ken feels that being forced to reflect has made him think clearly about what he really believes about teaching children and is looking forward to September to establish and try new ideas with his next year's class.

Personally, at this point, he doesn't know what else he wants to do with his life.

Rachael

Phase 1' Description of Rachael's current working context.'

Rachael has taught for a year and a half and described her working reality as being child centered. "The classroom should reflect their ideas and their interests." Her classroom operates on democratic principles and her students usually initiate most of the ideas for the activities they pursue both individually and cooperatively. Rachael has her students vote about themes, activities, issues, problems, etc.

Rachael is proud of the fact that her children love to come to school, but being a new teacher she feels her lack of experience is a problem, as she isn't comfortable with the different ability levels within her class. She wants to increase her knowledge and understand better the developmental levels of young children and the curriculum she feels she should be teaching to her class. Rachael commented about how thankful she was that one professional day during this year was devoted to creating signposts for Reading, Writing and Spelling. Although Rachael feels her students are learning, she worries that her class never properly completes what they set out to do and that the goals and objectives of the primary program are not being met. "Sometimes I feel there is a lack of control on my part and so far I don't think anything we've planned has ever worked out as we go off on other tangents altogether." Rachael feels pressure because parents want to know where their children will be the following year and she really doesn't know and admits she needs the principal's help in determining their placements for September 1992. She also expressed concern about what the next year's teacher will think about her students academically.

Rachael's class is unique in its make-up as she enrolls eighteen dual entry children from the January 1991 entrants and one first year primary native Indian child who participates in a full day program.

Rachael arranges her room in centres and is an extremely enthusiastic teacher, but has already learned to streamline her program. She has gone from thirteen centres to five centres during the course of this year, as she wants to make sure her students are really getting something out of the centres.

Phase 2 'Description of Rachael's current teaching style and the curriculum she uses.'

Rachael's teaching style is based on the philosophy of the New Primary Program (1990). She sees herself as a positive, enthusiastic and nurturing teacher. She believes her role is to facilitate the growth and learning of the 'whole child' by providing a wide range of activities that allow for creativity and individual learning rates, interests, abilities and styles. Rachael strives to create a safe and family-like atmosphere so that students are happy, experience success and are able to communicate all feelings openly and honestly.

Rachael uses an integrative centres approach to teaching and promotes emergent writing and booklet making.

Phase 3 'Description of any reflections of Rachael's past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions.'

Rachael was born in 1964 as a middle child and although she has many happy memories, her father was killed in a car accident when she was eight years old. This incident and tragic loss has had lasting effects on her life. Her father idolized her and she admired him. Since his death she has continued to strive to be just like him, which was a workaholic business man. To this day she is an over-achiever, always on the go, seeking new challenges and thrives on being involved in many activities. Rachael believes that children should also experience a wide range of activities therefore she provides ever changing centres and varying opportunities for learning for her class.

Rachael has an older brother and a younger sister and soon after her father's death she became the caregiver and nurturer of the family. She made the lunches, did the dishes etc. and took on the worries of keeping the family together. She also became her mother's confidante. Rachael tried to be everything to everybody. From this point on her home life became extremely stressful and unstable while her mother remarried, divorced, became an alcoholic and moved the family several times.

She also thinks that her elementary school experience, which was very authoritarian and sterile, made her realize the importance of creating a positive, safe and happy environment for her class. Rachael told us a story about a time in elementary school which she maintains makes her value open communication in her

classroom. " As a child in school I was always quiet and I remember in grade two we had a substitute teacher and at the end of the day the substitute gave everyone a detention except me because I didn't say anything all day. I don't think a child should be put through that. Everyone should feel safe enough to speak."

Although Rachael describes herself as being academically successful in elementary school, she was extremely shy socially, which has made her value the importance of developing the 'whole child' by providing many opportunities where children are able to play, work and cooperate with each other.

Rachael's first couple of years at university were also personally and academically turbulent. She was failing in 'Business Administration' and was dealing with her own pregnancy and abortion. Her low self-esteem would not allow her to break up with the man who impregnated her. As a result of many pressures she married him at a young age, for all the wrong reasons and led an unhappy life for several years. Having divorced her husband a year ago and upon reflection she feels that stability in her own life is vitally important. This belief in the importance of stability has transferred into her classroom as she states strongly "I do believe children can learn best when they are secure." She also maintains that from her experiences she has learned the importance of concentrating on the positive aspects of children's learning and focus on what they can do and build everyone's self-esteem.

Her love for learning and reading, which she inherited from her father, she believes serves as a positive role model to her class.

Phase 4 'Description of Rachael's personal/professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.'

Rachael wants to be better equipped to meet the challenge of teaching the 'whole child'. She plans on taking specific courses and workshops such as 'Math Their Way' that will help her, in a practical sense, in the classroom. Although she says she loves teaching and finds it exciting, she would like to feel a bit more comfortable with the new Primary Program.

Rachael sees herself as a life-long learner and eventually she wants to obtain her masters degree and work towards administration. At the moment she is trying to enjoy life, be content as a classroom teacher and learn new things in a comfortable

way. She is trying to slow down, relax with herself and not race to the top of her profession.

She is currently involved in an individual therapy program to help her heal the many traumas of childhood experiences. She also plans on spending more quality time with her family and friends.

Rachael is an active person who enjoys outdoor activities. She has a cycling trip planned in England this summer and wants to take scuba lessons in the near future. She also wants to take time to read more literature classics. Rachael also expressed in the group session that some day, not now, she hopes to remarry and raise a family.

Sheila

Phase 1 'Description of Sheila's current working context.'

Sheila is a special education teacher with seventeen years of teaching experience, which includes her work as a speech pathologist. Currently she enrolls a special language class which is composed of nine boys and one girl. The students in her class have been screened through the district and supposedly their primary problem is language disabilities, however, in reality Sheila maintains behavior and social problems far outweigh their language difficulties. Sheila has determined that there are many contributing factors to her students' learning problems. Two of her students are mentally handicapped, two are autistic, four are social management behavior problems, one has apraxia and one has language disabilities. Sheila has been working in the area of language throughout her career and knows a variety of approaches to deal with different language needs, but is frustrated as she feels she is so busy dealing with behavior problems she is unable to use her knowledge of language skills to teach her students. In the past her classes have had some behavior problems, which according to Sheila, often go hand in hand with language problems, but this class is different. For the first time in her career she has a class where nothing seems to work and describes them as follows, " I've never had kids ever, even when I was a speech pathologist, talk or do some of the things I'm dealing with this year- so out of control, so self-centred and coming in telling me what they are going to do and talking back and the language they use and the swearing." Even with her experience, Sheila has felt ineffective many times this year. As a result she called in the district behavior

consultant. Although the consultant offered some suggestions her ideas were not as practical as Sheila had hoped for. An example Sheila cited was the use of behavior modification techniques which requires strict consistency and what Sheila found was that she would begin working on one student and another would take over in misbehaving. Behavior modification requires monitoring and without the help of an aide she found it impossible to follow through on these procedures.

Another factor which Sheila strongly believes is a problem in trying to reach these students is that all her aide time goes to integrating her students into regular classroom programs. In other words, her aide travels with the student being integrated and Sheila is left for most of the time on her own with the rest of her class. Ten years ago she used to teach her own Music and Art etc. and through the language activities she taught these subjects, but now she spends her time making sure her students are being integrated. With this district and ministry thrust towards integration she is frustrated that there isn't enough support to properly assist with this emphasis. Sheila feels she must be on top of her students all the time or else they lose control. Sheila believes the entire focus of her language class is on behavior and social skills. She is trying to teach language skills through the teaching of social skills, but is finding it a real struggle.

Sheila tried arranging her class in rows, then in groups, but finally found the students were most content with a semi-circle seating plan. This arrangement allows them all to feel part of the group, while at the same time each student only has to cope with one or two other people beside them. The actual physical space of the room is too small for the needs of her students. The room is half the size of a regular classroom and her students, in particular, need more room to move.

Phase 2 'Description of Sheila's current teaching style and the curriculum she uses.'

Sheila's style is teacher directed while valuing student input. She has class meetings and stresses the importance of discussing problems honestly and fairly and the importance of listening to each other. Sheila is extremely patient and models cooperation and respect.

Sheila believes that if a teacher can make students eager to come to school then half the job is already accomplished. Sheila's class is structured and predictable as her

students, with special learning problems, cope better when they know what to expect and when the routines are clearly established. Since the majority of Sheila's students have come from negative experiences she finds most of her parents are at first quite defensive. As a result she employs a team approach and stresses to her parents that all of them must work together to benefit the child.

Part 3 ' Description of any reflections of Sheila's past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions.'

Sheila, a middle child, born in 1950, grew up in a small town in the state of Washington. As a child she remembers having many chores and responsibilities that other kids her age didn't seem to have. Sheila's mother was a teacher and spent several summers out of town attending university to finish her degree. Sheila and her sisters took care of the home and their Dad while she was away. Because her mom was a working mother, which was unusual for that time, Sheila and her sisters also had many household responsibilities during the teaching year. Sheila feels this taught her to be giving, caring and patient, which are attributes she carries into the classroom.

In high school Sheila was involved in many extra curricular activities and always knew that, just like her mother, she would attend university. Sheila moved away from home to complete her Bachelor of Arts degree. Although she was homesick and depressed, the fear of failure kept her goal in the forefront. She also completed graduate degree school and took her first job in Coquitlam as a speech pathologist. The move to British Columbia was triggered by two car accidents that Sheila believes were signs for her to begin her life with Kwenu, her husband to be. Her strong work ethic and her fear of failure makes Sheila continually try new ideas and approaches with her class. She has had to search and work extremely hard to keep this year's class under control to accomplish anything in the area of language and to save herself from feeling like a failure.

Sheila maintains she has always been attracted to the minority. She remembers that on her first practicum there was a boy who was constantly misbehaving and the teacher was always apologizing for his behavior, but Sheila wanted to know why he behaved the way he did. She knew at this point she wanted to work with children that had special problems. Her need to understand and make a difference with those who are different is also demonstrated in her choice of a life-long partner, Kwenu, who is

from a Third World country. Many of Sheila's life decisions come from the heart. Sheila lets her instincts and feelings guide her.

Sheila feels that her mother, a successful teacher and mother, was a strong role model. "I'm sure her success as a mother, student, teacher and strong, hardworking person was something I felt I had to compare myself to. I always wanted to please my parents, but recognition from her was especially important." Sheila's mother passed away nearly two years ago and Sheila misses the support and encouragement her mother provided. Sheila finds her life very full, juggling teaching, being a mother and wife, as well as caring for her father on her holidays and long weekends. At times Sheila feels she spreads herself so thin she doesn't feel she is doing anything very well. This is where her mother would tell her that all was well and that she was doing a great job. Sheila looked to her mother as a source of inspiration and even though she can no longer talk to her mother she finds comfort in knowing the strength her mother possessed, which in turn makes her strong. Because of so many demands on her time Sheila finds she has become extremely efficient in the classroom. She fears losing control over any area of her life so she works hard to make sure all is organized and operating smoothly.

As Sheila watched her own children grow she was fascinated with their acquisition of language. She learned a great deal from them. "I was fascinated by their development and used their language development experiences to enrich my knowledge and experience in teaching my students who had language delays or disorders."

Phase 4 'Description of Sheila's personal/ professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.'

Sheila's immediate professional future involves a change from special education into a regular primary class. She is looking forward to having more fun with her students and creating a more child-centered environment. Sheila feels the time has come for this change, as she expressed the need to be more spontaneous and less controlling in the classroom. Next year she wants to set up centres and have students make choices and try out a multitude of ideas that she has been unable to do in special education.

She plans on taking university courses about autism as she feels she will never lose her desire to understand those who are different. Sheila is very interested in writing children's books and in video technology and hopes to pursue these interests when she finds the time.

Personally, her own two children, which are now in high school, are still a major part of her life. As a family they may all move back to the states or eventually move to Ghana.

Margaret

Phase 1 'Description of Margaret's current working context.'

Margaret is an experienced teacher of seventeen years and has mainly taught kindergarten and grade one. Currently she enrolls a class of twenty-five second year primary students who vary greatly in their academic abilities and are very social. She describes her class as being composed of six very low students, one of which is an English as a Second Language student, one is mentally disturbed and one is from a French immersion program and three who appear not developmentally ready for second year primary. The Educatable Mentally Handicapped child needs individual help with everything and Margaret receives no assistance with this child. The rest of her students she categorizes as being middle and/or top group. She feels the top students are excellent role models and has these students peer tutoring wherever possible and has organized a buddy system within the class as well as with an intermediate class. Also a large portion of her class are from single parent families and for Margaret this has posed some difficulties within her room and she describes the problem as follows, "Lots of them come from single parents and they all happen to live in that one complex, so there is a lot of fighting going on at home that carries over into the school- -there's this fighting and tattling going on all the time." She feels many of students are in need of attention which explains their misbehavior. Margaret strongly maintains that having anymore than one grade at a time at Beach View Elementary is too complicated, due to the type of clientele that make up the school population.

Margaret seats her students in groups of six and one group of seven and feels that anymore than twenty-four children becomes unmanageable physically.

Phase 2 ' Description of Margaret's current teaching style and the curriculum she uses.'

Margaret sets limitations and states she is a strict teacher with high expectations and through conferencing she lets each individual know what she expects and lets them know that she truly cares for them and for their progress. "I think the children learn quickly that I'm fair, friendly, helpful, kind, humorous and considerate as long as they are productive." She believes that she has a mother's perspective which has made her realize what is important and what is not important and maintains that she is more forgiving and understanding from having been a mother. "A whole other perspective on things that really matter. The things that really matter have come out from the Year 2,000 document. Before when they sat in rows they were just part of one of the three groups and that is so wrong. The individual is respected and his/her personal worth is maintained and they all learn from and teach each other. There 's none of ' I'm from the top group stuff."

Margaret uses a thematic approach to teaching which is open ended to allow individuals to study their own particular interests. Margaret uses a variety of teaching strategies--direct instruction, whole group instruction, and conferencing. She uses whole language, and uses some of McCrackens, work and the Chime-In program and phonics. Margaret has different centers that children like to go to and she provides a corner for privacy and a time out spot for those students having difficulty staying on task.

Margaret works on whole class cooperation and cooperative group strategies. Margaret stresses to her students the importance of being responsible for their own supplies, and gym clothes. She also has her students check with three other students before seeking her for assistance and she believes this has helped them "learn to collaborate." Margaret also gives her students the chance of voicing their opinion on some issues.

Although she feels parents can take up too much time she is approachable and wants them to communicate openly and honestly with her.

Phase 3 ' Description of any reflections of Margaret's past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions.'

Margaret was a middle child born in 1944 and raised in Victoria. For a long time she had to take care of her weak older sister but she also wanted to be praised by her parents for her efforts in school and at home, just like the younger brother, who according to Margaret could do no wrong. As a family they all had chores and responsibilities. Margaret recalls being involved in many sports and, although she lettered in sports when she graduated, her Dad was critical and never praised her. As a middle child she remembers putting on a happy facade to ease the tension in a home where her older sister was sickly and money went to pay her medical bills and where her younger brother was spoiled by her father.

She remembers in both high school and university being extremely success oriented and was afraid of failure and always set to prove she could do anything she put her mind to. One teacher in particular told her in high school that she wouldn't be able to make it as a teacher and this negative remark only made her more determined.

Margaret feels it was difficult growing up in Victoria as she was always around rich kids that made her feel inferior, as she had to work on weekends to pay for all her own clothes and save money for university fees. After completing teachers' training Margaret applied to Vancouver, to spite her Dad, and got her first job and met her husband to be. Eventually they both transferred to Coquitlam district. She married and had two children and began her new life in Coquitlam. When her father died of a heart condition Margaret was consumed with guilt over making her life in Coquitlam when the rest of her family lived in Victoria. This continues to bother her and she states " I wasn't sure if I'd ever done the right thing." On the other hand Margaret is proud of the fact that both her children graduated with honors in Coquitlam.

During her first year of teaching Margaret encountered a child who had been sexually abused and a child that had been physically abused. These children made her aware of the importance of listening carefully and empathetically to children when they bound into school. She maintains, " children just want to know you care for them."

Margaret found reflecting very difficult, but it was evident that a major influence on the teacher she is today was from being a mother. After staying home with her son and daughter for several years, she returned to teaching on a part time basis and became very efficient and organized. She felt the need to maintain a balance in her life while juggling her career, her family as well as looking after her aging mother. Teaching, according to Margaret, is only one aspect of her full and busy life. At times she believes that teaching gave her another focus and helped her get through some difficult periods, such as the illness of her daughter. While she was teaching part time she learned about 'Direct Instruction' and 'Assertive Discipline' which are two principles she uses in her classroom today.

Having her own children taught her to approach all students in a positive manner and to respect the individuality of each student. *Do your best!* or *You can do it!* were mottos Margaret instilled in her own children which she has carried into her classroom. Margaret maintains that by telling her students these mottos over and over, she fosters a sense of pride in her class. Margaret works hard to reach all students so that they all meet with a certain level of success academically. She states, "I have a real fear of failure and if a student isn't achieving I feel like I haven't done my job." Margaret sets high expectations for her class and has conferences to discuss these expectations with each individual. As a parent she gets discouraged and upset when she finds her students' parents copping out on their children. "If they would just talk to their kid and work with him a bit he could do so much better."

Margaret chronically suffers with allergies, migraines, and arthritis. Margaret hit her head when she was five years old when she fell off her first two wheel bicycle and attributes her migrains to this accident. These ailments have made her realize the importance of a sense of humor. Although she is serious about the work she does with children, she feels teaching should also be fun and the staffroom atmosphere should be light, therefore she tries to incorporate wittiness into her school life.

Phase 4 ' Description of Margaret's personal/professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.'

Margaret is working on completing her Bachelors degree in Education so that she can earn more money, but does admit she always learns something new in every course for the classroom. During the discussion of this phase she again emphasized the

importance of maintaining balance in her life and although she loves teaching she wants to devote time to her twenty-one year old son who is a hockey player and time to her daughter who has just graduated. Her frail mother lives in Victoria and Margaret wants to be with her as often as possible. She also talked about the importance of being with her friends as well as her family.

Although she enjoys trying new ideas she again mentioned the importance of being realistic. In her classroom she wants to try harder to remember the 'whole child' while creating a challenging environment where her students take risks and learn from their mistakes and grow in confidence.

Personally, Margaret wants to do as much travelling as possible while her and her husband are young and healthy enough to enjoy it. She is excited about her life and is extremely happy to travel to her son's hockey games.

Sally

Phase 1' Description of Sally's current working context.'

Sally is one year away from retirement and has had thirty-nine years of teaching experience. Currently she enrolls a morning and an afternoon first year primary class. The morning class is composed of twenty children which she describes as being above average, very busy and in need of enrichment. The afternoon class is made up of seventeen students of which many have severe social problems, but Sally feels she has taught them to be a cooperative group. Sally described her working reality within the larger setting of a democratically run school which is located in a low social-economic area. Sally maintains that the area influences the make-up of her class. "I teach in an area where the general standard of readiness is not high. There are more than the usual number of children with learning problems due to social situations, lack of experience, undiagnosed or untreated problems."

Sally describes her classroom as being physically small but well equipped for first year primary students. She arranges her students in mixed ability groups and provides a variety of centers for activity time.

She also discusses her working reality in terms of the extra work she does such as being the school's Art representative for district meetings.

Phase 2- ' Description of Sally's current teaching style and the curriculum she uses.'

Sally uses an eclectic mix of teaching methods within a verbal-cognitive context. When a child completes a task the child explains it to her and/or shares his /her knowledge with the class. Sally uses this verbal- cognitive approach for evaluation and is able to assist the child to the next step by listening carefully to what the child says. She provides a wealth of experiences and choices for her students and she says, "I expect positive learning to happen." Sally concerns herself with the personal dignity of each child and believes children should be allowed to progress at their own rate within an enthusiastic and cooperative atmosphere. She pays more attention to the ' whole child' and emphasizes things that work for cooperation and social development.

Sally also believes that because she is now a grandmother she indulges her students more than she used to. Sally maintains that Kindergarten serves "as a foundation for learning, attitudes and coping mechanisms."

Phase 3 ' Description of any reflections of Sally's past personal life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions.

Sally was born on Easter Sunday 1928, to very young parents. She was eventually abandoned by them when she was near a year old and was raised by her strict paternal grandparents. Her grandparents were extremely organized and business-like and treated her as one more problem to deal with in their already busy schedules. Her natural parents were never welcome to visit Sally while she lived with her grandparents. Although her grandparents owned a fifteen acre estate and were very well off, she was made to do unreasonable amounts of chores. She grew up in a highly structured, religious environment where she was punished, beaten and indoctrinated into believing she was a burden. Sally maintains that through all of this she learned important skills for teaching, such as coping mechanisms, organization, caregiving and leadership. She feels the need to teach young children coping mechanisms such as humour.

From her grandfather she received the gift of music, which she uses a great deal in her classroom. Her grandmother taught her cooking, herbology, and writing. Her grandmother died when she was ten, but she continued to live with her grandfather, although her caregivers became an aunt and uncle. Her aunt, a teacher and wonderful role model was kind and taught her about community work. Her uncle taught her about having a sense of humour, self-respect and a love for nature. In her classroom Sally reflects these learnings as she nurtures children's self-esteem and instills in them a love for science and nature.

In high school Sally was nicknamed 'teachers pet ' by her classmates. Sally couldn't understand her peers and feels she never related very well to them and as a result made only a few life-long friendships. Sally devoted a great deal of her time to writing, sports, art, drama and music during her high school years. Her family believed these activities to be immoral, so after graduation she decided to become a teacher so that she could use her creative abilities and continue to be accepted by her family. Teaching was a way for Sally to pursue her love for art, music, drama and sports.

Sally married before attending normal school in 1948. This marriage was unhappy, but in those days it was considered a disgrace to give up and after raising a son and daughter it finally ended in divorce. After the divorce she went into what she describes as her "butterfly stage". She became herself and felt free to ski, play tennis and travel. Sally remarried during this phase, took a leave from teaching and travelled with her new husband for a year.

In spite of the many problems she has encountered during her life journey Sally remains an optimist and radiates a positive disposition within her classroom. Sally states that because of her background she has "empathy for others, coping mechanisms, sense of balance and a creative approach." Sally believes she is strong because of her experiences and has learned to rely heavily on her instincts for teaching and is proud of her organizational skills in the classroom. Sally also maintains she learned to be patient when she was very ill for a long time, while she was raising her young family. Patience, she believes is a virtue necessary for any kindergarten teacher.

Phase 4 'Description of Sally's personal/ professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.'

Retirement is in the near future and Sally is planning on travelling a great deal with her husband and says she " doesn't want to settle down until she is really, really ancient!" Throughout her life, Sally's passion for writing has helped her deal with many of her life experiences. She has had some of her work published, while other pieces she plans to complete.

She is looking forward to the idea of being a senior so that she can continue to take courses at different universities, in Fine Arts and Music composition, for " next to nothing." She has also been asked to help write some musicals and looks forward to having more time to work on such projects.

Sally also wants to spend extra time with her grandchildren and she will continue to buy and sell antiques.

Although she admits she will miss teaching, she says she is happy to leave while she still enjoys the children and respects her colleagues. Sally maintains that because she has always pursued other interests in her life she is excited about the near future when she will have more time to devote to these activities.

Paul

Phase 1' Description of Paul's current working context.

Paul is in his third year of teaching and he promotes a democratic classroom. He currently enrolls a class of twenty-three third and fourth year primary students and is amazed at the difference between his students in terms of reading ability. The third year primary group receives resource room attention as these children barely read while his fourth year students are reading novels. During this year he has worked a bit on the philosophy of multiage groupings but finds the gap between the students too great, as there is no middle ground for him to teach to and has therefore decided to call his group a 'split class.' Due to this abyss in reading ability Paul learned to incorporate "oral reporting, artistic expression, story drama, partner and cooperative work into

his Language lessons." He has learned that a teacher cannot force cooperation but rather must model it.

Paul spends a great deal of time and effort in making his class a cohesive group. In January he received a new student with severe behavior problems and feels if his class wasn't a strong group this one student would have destroyed the whole atmosphere of his class. "If my class wasn't solid to begin with, this one guy would have turned my class upside down. They are not perfect but they are democratic and diplomatic."

Paul maintains his classroom is casual and homey. He has his students organized in four groups-third year primary girls, third year primary boys, fourth year primary girls and fourth year primary boys.

Phase 2 ' Description of Paul's current teaching style and the curriculum he uses.'

Paul's teaching style and curriculum is strongly linked to the Year 2,000 document and the New Primary Program (1990). He sees himself as paternalistic and nurturing and states, " I try to provide an atmosphere that makes the students feel safe, respected, important and happy." He believes that schools should teach children how to teach themselves. He also feels that students should learn to make their own decisions so that they feel empowered and in control.

Paul provides his class with a variety of open-ended, success oriented activities that allow for experimentation, creativity and individual progress. Paul uses himself as a positive role model to foster a love and curiosity in a number of academic areas that he enjoys but maintains that teaching the academics is only a small part of his job. Paul believes cooperation and a sense of humor are important aspects to instill in students, as well as a sense of appreciation for other people's work.

Phase 3 ' Description of any reflections of Paul's past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present professional thoughts and actions.'

Paul was born in Alberta in 1963 and was the youngest of two children. Paul has an older sister that has always had to prove herself and was raised more strictly

because she was the first child of the family. Paul led a very indulged childhood and according to Paul this was because he was the baby of the family and was male. He was self-absorbed and doesn't recall being very giving to anyone.

In elementary school he maintains he was very slow at completing assignments and learned little academically compared to the changes he incurred socially and emotionally. He was a small, shy child and was the only non-Caucasian (Japanese) in his school. Paul says he has spent his life learning about self-reliance and self-esteem. His philosophy as a teacher is based directly on these two personal foci.

"To be self-reliant is to be able to teach oneself; to learn from mistakes; to be an independent thinker while monitoring the world; to build on knowledge based on one's preformed perception of reality; to be aware of oneself and everything included in one's life; to be responsible for oneself; to problem solve and make decisions for oneself; to take care of oneself; etc. Self-esteem is to be confident, to accept oneself; to appreciate the uniqueness of oneself; to appreciate one's privacy, but not to isolate oneself; to like oneself; etc."

Paul feels that if he could teach these two things to his students, he could accelerate their progress in these areas of their lives. Since his classroom is based on these two aspects it is also democratic and Paul promotes student choices; discipline is consequence oriented and students are involved in self-assessment activities.

In high school Paul realized he had a perfectionist attitude about his appearance and his marks and as a result developed an ulcer. This health problem forced him relax a bit more with himself and although his grades dropped he feels this is when he truly began to know and like himself. The concept of developing a healthy self-esteem was well rooted during this time and is now evident in his approach with his students.

After high school Paul attended the University of British Columbia to become an engineer like his father and found this three year experience to be a nightmare. He was lonely, unmotivated and depressed and his marks were suffering. Looking back on this, Paul feels he just went to U.B.C. and assumed he would do what his Dad did without really thinking about his future and without really understanding the life of an engineer. When he failed at this endeavor he felt he had lost his identity but upon reflection he realizes this is where his life truly began. For the first time he assumed responsibility for himself and became self-reliant. He took on many non-career jobs

during the following year which allowed him time to figure out what he wanted to do with his life. He saved his own money and attended Douglas College and then Simon Fraser University. During his last semester at S.F.U. he took an education course where the instructor encouraged him to become a teacher. His Professional Development year turned out to be a happy and successful experience and he knew teaching was the career for him.

At the same time he was rejected by a girl he was in love with and although this was a blow to his ego and self-esteem he learned to handle it and began to see life from a perspective that incorporated humor. This sense of humor has carried forward into his classroom where he is able to deflate many situations to a reasonable perspective.

Phase 4 'Description of Paul's personal /professional future after analyzing the three previous phases.

For Paul there are many unresolved dichotomies facing him in his professional life. "It's fairly easy to keep children happy about themselves and their learning if they are successful, but what about those children with severe learning difficulties and disabilities?" He worries about letting children progress at their own rate versus the need for teacher intervention. Paul claims he learned through failure but then met success and feels he was able to build his self-esteem and carry on, but worries about the students that are never successful. Paul states, "Challenge is positive if one meets some success or if hope is in sight, but it can lead to frustration and failure if one feels hopeless or stagnant."

Even though Paul reflected and thought a great deal during this process he maintains that clearly his professional mandate is to teach his students how to learn and feel good about themselves.

Personally he is happy with his new condominium and hopes one day to meet the right lady.

Analysis of the Four Phases

Analysis of phase 1- Description of current working context.

During the collaborative autobiography sessions all teachers commented on the underlying pressure of passing students onto the next year teacher. Everyone worried about their own reputation and what others would say if it appeared that they hadn't taught their students anything. This discussion was generated from Ken's description of his class and the frustrations he was feeling.

Academic development and achievement was by far the strongest element discussed by all teachers with the exception of Sheila and Paul. Secondly, all teachers spoke of the importance of socialization, cooperative skills, and the concept of teaching the 'whole child.'

All teachers talked about their classes in terms of grades and felt that split classes are too complicated for the type of student clientele found at Beach View Elementary. According to these teachers, the student population in a single grade classroom widely ranges in academic abilities, has diverse learning styles and behavior problems. All teachers attributed the large amount of student problems to the low social/economic area in which their school is located.

None of the teachers articulated the philosophy of multiage groupings and ungradedness in regard to continuous progress and the new primary program. Paul initially spoke of multiage groupings but organized his class into graded groupings. Some teachers used the terms first or second year primary while others still used the word grade. Either language focussed the attention on a certain content to be covered within a ten month period.

Paul, Rachael and Margaret voiced the concept of the democratic classroom. Sheila and Ken discussed the importance of student input. Sally, the most experienced teacher did not mention these types of ideas.

Physically, all teachers arranged their students in groups of four or six to enhance the possibility of cooperation, with the exception of Sheila who arranged her

students in a semi-circle seating arrangement. None of these six teachers put their students in rows.

All teachers were feeling frustrated for one reason or another. Frustration stemmed from the following reasons:

- 1). Lack of teaching experience.
- 2). Not being to teach their mandate and cover the curriculum, due to student behavior problems and lack of personnel and parent support.
- 3). Class sizes are too large.
- 4). The varying academic abilities within each class makes 'whole class' teaching difficult.
- 5). Severe learning problems with little district support services.
- 6). The social/economic area influencing the make-up of the student clientele

Analysis of phase 2-Description of current teaching style and the curriculum being used.

In all cases, during this phase, a personal philosophy emerged toward teaching, rather than specific curriculum programs, except in Margaret's case where she named some of her programs in amongst her philosophy. Ken spoke of the importance of listening carefully to student stories. Sheila discussed the importance of the teacher, parent and child working as a team. Margaret uses a thematic approach to create open ended assignments. Sally works within a verbal-cognitive context and Paul believes the most important job of schooling is to teach students how to teach themselves. Rachael stresses the importance of the curriculum and classroom being child-centered.

All teachers discussed the importance of individuality and respect for each and every child. The Year 2000 document directly influenced this discussion and in Margaret's case she also maintains she came to this realization through motherhood. All of these teachers agreed that a child's sense of self-worth is the most important aspect of schooling and yet academic achievement was discussed most prominently in the description of their working context. As the researcher I sensed a dissonance in many cases between philosophy and reality regarding the importance of academic achievement versus the development of the 'whole child.'

All teachers spoke of the importance of making sure their students know that they are truly cared for and supported by them. The idea of having all students meet with success was clearly a common theme amongst this group of teachers.

Beginning teachers linked themselves, their teaching style and the curriculum of their practice directly to the Year 2000 document and the New Primary Program (1990). These teachers see themselves as nurturers and facilitators. The more experienced teachers have developed, over time, a more eclectic approach. They are careful to include in their program things from past experience they know help students learn, as well as up dated teaching methods and strategies. Margaret, Sheila and Sally in one way or another discussed the importance of maintaining balance in their lives and felt that teaching, although very satisfying, was only one aspect of their diverse and full lives.

All teachers mentioned the importance of creating a tone, atmosphere, or environment where students could communicate honestly, teach and learn from each other and progress at their own pace, without the fear of failure.

With the exception of Sheila, humor was mentioned by all participants. Sheila makes reference to loosening up with her next year's class and perhaps this will include the element of humor. For everyone else humor was seen as a way of coping and making of light of situations that could get tense.

Analysis of phase 3- Description of reflections of past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of present practice.

Present classroom practice, in all cases has been affected by life experience. For some, their experiences taught them never to act in a certain way. For others, experiences transferred directly into the classroom. All teachers expressed an underlying philosophy, which is the main focus or base from which they approach teaching. This philosophy seemed to build over time from a summary of life experiences which pointed them in a certain direction.

Fear of failure plays an important part of each participants life. Ken, Rachael and Paul all discuss their experiences with failure during their first attempt at post secondary education. Failure, in all three cases, made them strive and survive and

eventually enter the profession of teaching. Sally was indoctrinated by her grandparents never to allow herself to become a failure like her natural parents were. Sheila and Margaret both expressed a fear of failure which stems back to high school and university. It was this fear that made them work even harder to complete their goals. Sheila, Margaret and Ken talk about their fear of failure as a motivational force in the classroom in terms of helping students learn. They continually seek new ways to reach all students and fear that someone may not be learning.

Nurturing was another common theme within this group. Sally, Rachael, Margaret and Sheila were expected as young children to care for and nurture other family members. Ken and Paul were nurtured by their families and mention this in their autobiographies. It is interesting to note that both the males from this study were nurtured while the females were the nurturers during childhood. All teachers, during discussion, in one way or another mentioned nurturing as being part of their teaching style.

Sally and Sheila are the only two that mention letting their instincts and intuition guide them in their teaching. I feel certain that others do as well, but they did not express this for perhaps they haven't learned to value such knowledge or fear others will not value their intuitive understandings of life in the classroom.

Analysis of phase 4- Description of personal/professional future.

All teachers were able to express clearly and articulate their particular teaching philosophy. Most of them, through this process, started to ask themselves professional questions. Through reflection all agreed that the strong emphasis placed on academic achievement in our society and school system isn't necessarily appropriate and perhaps educators should rethink this attitude in order to preserve the self-esteem of those less capable in the academic realm.

Some of the teachers realized the need for more practical ideas, while others were content with the job they were doing and were enjoying the benefits of maintaining balance in their lives.

Rachael and Ken committed themselves to continue to learn as they were not yet comfortable with curriculum issues and the concept of providing for the 'whole child'.

Sheila, Paul, and Margaret expressed the notion that they had many ideas that they wanted to improve and continue to work with as they enrolled different classes of children. Paul was struck by the many dichotomies that exist in current educational practice and for him they remain unanswered. Sally, on the other hand, was proud of her career accomplishments and spoke of the future and her retirement with optimism.

Chapter 4

Description and Interpretation of Interviews and Follow-up Discussions

Description Ken

Although teaching was not his first career choice, Ken became a teacher because he enjoyed working with children and found he was successful in a college course teaching soccer to a group of children.

A typical day in Ken's room begins with Math, followed by Language Arts, which takes place before recess. Ken time-tables two days a week for novel studies and three days for writing. After recess he insists that the students read silently for at least twenty minutes, then they are allowed to read in partners, and discuss what they are reading. Cursive writing activities, or listening activities or journal entries complete the morning. In the afternoon after Science /Social Studies or Computers or Music he tends to things like "adjectives, nouns, spelling, Language Arts Basics, homonyms, and capitals, punctuation and all that kind of stuff." He ends the day twice a week with Art or with a formal period of spelling. Spelling lessons include a pre-test, corrections and study period. On Friday the class is given a formal spelling test and Ken encourages his class to take their books home on a Thursday to memorize the word list in preparation for this test.

Ken follows the stages of the writing process but admits that he takes on the majority of the editing and proof-reading himself. He is appalled to find words that they studied in their spelling lists during the week misspelled in students' writing. When Ken is editing and proof-reading student writing he underlines their spelling mistakes and has them correct their mistakes using a dictionary or by referring to the spelling lists on the overhead projector. Ken has different expectations for different students. Some students he knows are just being lazy and will expect them to locate and correct all their errors, others he helps to correct their mistakes.

When I asked him what connection, if any, he saw between the writing process and standard spelling he said, "Actually I'm not sure I see much of a connection... A lot of kids will ask me words that we have just finished studying so, and in that respect I don't really see it and a lot of them are still at the inventive stage, sounding it out and coming up with very strange looking words."

Ken feels that 'spelling' as a separate subject is a very important activity in his classroom. He maintains that learning to spell is directly related to the students' desire to read. He also states that listening helps students learn to spell. "I know it is from listening 'cause some kids the way kids say words, they try to spell them, they come out the same, other times, so I think it becomes an auditory thing." Ken believes that repetition is a factor which influences standard spelling because students form a mental picture of the word over time. For Ken, spelling is both a developmental process as well as a product of memorization. During the follow-up discussion it was apparent to Ken that he contradicted himself when he said that giving weekly spelling tests is an important activity, yet he does not discuss spelling on reports cards. His explanation for this phenomenon is that some kids get help from their parents to memorize words, while others don't. Even those who spell all words correctly on the Friday test tend to forget the correct spelling the very next day. Ken says he doesn't want to report a student is doing well in spelling when there is no apparent transfer to written work. At this point Ken began to question why he devotes any time at all to weekly spelling lists.

Ken believes learning to spell in standard form is important for the age group he teaches. He qualifies that statement by pointing out inventive spelling is great in the earlier grades, but sooner or later they have to learn to spell correctly. Ken is concerned for his professional reputation and feels pressure to pass students along to grade four with appropriate spelling skills.

Ken doesn't believe there is a relationship between standard spelling and intelligence. Ken maintains it would be an assumption to say that someone intelligent would necessarily have to be a good speller.

Interpretation Ken

Ken is in his second year of teaching and it is evident that he has not completely reconciled his current practices with his philosophy. Clearly, he feels that learning to spell in standard form is important, but he is not sure how to get students to spell correctly when writing. The time he invests in weekly spelling tests does not result in correct spelling in writing activities. However, he has not changed the method he learned in his practicum because he has not been shown alternatives.

Even though Ken takes time in the weekly routine to work on spelling lists he does not want to report to parents on the outcomes of weekly spelling tests, as the studied words do not transfer into the students writing activities.

Ken worries about the following year and passing students into grade four that cannot spell in standard form. This pressure, combined with past ideas keep him locked into the practice of giving traditional weekly spelling tests. By the end of the follow-up discussion Ken began to talk about a discrepancy he was feeling between what he actually believes to be true about the nature of learning to spell developmentally and how he teaches spelling as a memorizational task and separate subject. Ken maintains that the ability to read and listen combined with the repetition of the same words are factors which influence a student in learning to spell in standard form. Having said that, he did not reach the conclusion that weekly spelling lists have little impact on learning to spell in standard form.

Ken appeared not to know that visual memory is a skill that must, for many students, be practiced. Sitton (1990, p. 21) states,

"The ability to use mental imagery can be learned. Some students readily create mind pictures as part of their thinking process. Other students find it very difficult. However, all students can benefit from structured activities that develop the ability to form and retain visual images in the mind."

Ken was also unaware of the many formal spelling activities that could be incorporated into his program, as alternatives to the traditional practice of giving weekly spelling lists, that are designed to help promote standard spelling within the context of writing. It's important to stress to students that spelling is for writing, not for a spelling test, which is a goal Sitton (1990) maintains is key when teaching students to spell.

Taking time to think about this dissonance often promotes teacher development and, in Ken's case he definitely felt the need to rethink his practice of giving weekly spelling tests. "I am going to have to go back and question why I am doing spelling, I guess. I do think it is important, but now I'm not sure that the way I'm doing it is the right way." Ken was unaware of emphasizing the mastery of the high-use writing words (Sitton, 1990) as a way to improve standard spelling within the context of writing.

Description Rachael

Although Rachael loves children she always thought that she'd become a business woman. She took an 'interest inventory' test in 1987 which indicated she should be involved with teaching and at that point made a decision to enter the profession. Rachael is also creative and finds she enjoys involving that side of her personality into her work.

A typical teaching day in Rachael's room is very multileveled and busy. The children begin with a journal entry while visiting and chatting with classmates. They then read what they have written and choose a centre of their choice to work in while everyone finishes journals. Before recess they meet as a class to share journals and practice being the presenter or part of the audience. Rachael then reads a story to the class which is followed by a news period. After recess children are involved in book time and are allowed to read books of their choice. Book time is followed by an activity in Math or thinking strategies or Art. After lunch Rachael has scheduled special activities such as P.E., Music, Library, cooking, buddies and class meetings.

Rachael encourages expressive writing by providing time for daily journal entries and teaching frame sentences. Over the last year, Rachael has developed a generalization while observing her students from what she describes as stable and unstable home environments. She feels that students who do not come from supportive home environments are more reluctant to invent spelling and tend to cling to the frames. She thinks this is because they have never been encouraged to take risks.

Rachael maintains that students learn to become standard spellers through the process of writing and that children learn to spell developmentally. She maintains that, at first, children scribble as a form of spelling then they progress by seeing and using print. She sees her role as guiding children through the developmental stages. Rachael does not believe spelling to be a memorization task.

Rachael feels strongly that the act of reading what they have written helps students in understanding the idea of spelling. Rachael builds on the positive parts of spelling in writing samples and tends to tell her students " you're really thinking today, you have lots of sounds in that work, but you just left out one little one, one short 'e'

over here." Rachael only works on one or two words from their expressive journal entries during a day.

Rachael emphasizes conventional spelling within the context of the writing process and within student reading. Rachael sees spelling as intertwined within writing and reading and has abandoned the McCracken's spelling program. She doesn't believe that spelling should be taught in whole class lessons as learning to spell is individualistic. Her own memory of learning to spell in school is negative, as she was made to rewrite a word twenty times if she misspelled it on a weekly test. Rachael reports to parents about spelling within the context of writing and discusses the student's spelling progress in terms of his/her emergent writing stage.

Rachael indirectly encourages standard spelling by having signs and charts posted throughout her room. As a class, they spend time daily on activities like writing charts, posters and lists. The signs and charts are references for the children and Rachael finds the children copying from them all the time. During secret message time she incorporates phonics lessons as the children try to figure out the message she has on the board. "Yesterday we are doing words that ended in 'ay 'and in the secret message I left out all the 'ay sounds." Rachael also encourages her students to help each other with words and sounds.

Rachel is in her second year of teaching and worries that her students won't spell as well as children at the same age level from other classes. "I am quite concerned about the children learning standard spelling. I want to send them off to the next teacher knowing as much as the kids coming from other classes."

Rachael maintains that children have an inborn desire to know how to spell correctly like the people who write books. She maintains that children are curious and if a safe environment is provided they will naturally try to spell the words they need. This belief stems from her professional development year and is confirmed through her own observations during the last year and a half.

Rachael doesn't see any relationship between standard spelling and intelligence. She thinks the ideas her students generate are brilliant and just because they can't spell these ideas in standard form does not mean they are not intelligent.

Rachael strongly maintains that it is more important to nurture creativity and imagination than it is to concentrate on spelling. She fears that if too much emphasis is placed on spelling, then the real life issues a child writes about will be ignored.

Interpretation Rachael

Although Rachael was unable to name the developmental stages of spelling (writing) she was able to express clearly what she meant when she discussed spelling in terms of these stages. Rachael's philosophy of creating a nurturing and safe environment is consistent with her view of how children learn to spell conventionally. She feels strongly that if the environment encourages risk taking, is friendly, open and fosters a variety of writing experiences, a natural outcome for students will be learning to spell in standard form.

Although she abandoned the McCracken spelling program that she used at the beginning of the year because it didn't seem to fit with her general philosophy, she maintains that at least some children, through this program, were beginning to make the connection between the sounds and emergent spelling. Rachael was unsure if she would reschedule this spelling program into her daily routine because of the apparent discrepancy with her philosophy and the limited benefit to her students. Rachael did not articulate at this time that an eclectic approach may be an alternative in providing for all learning styles in her room.

Rachael has only taught for a year and a half and feels a little insecure about passing her students to the next year teacher. She worries her students won't be able to spell as well as other students the same age. This pressure keeps Rachael moving her students along the developmental stages and may also be a motivating factor in a decision to reintroduce the McCracken's spelling program.

Her own school experience of learning to spell by memorizing weekly word lists proved to be a negative experience and of little value to her personally, thereby precluding the practice in her classroom. Rachael believes strongly that learning to spell is secondary to learning to express thoughts and ideas. Buchanan (1989, p. 6) also emphasizes this belief when she claims,

" As a general rule the teacher may help the student with some frequently misspelled or special words after he or she has completed

the writing, but the teacher does little to intervene during the writing except when a student requests help, or seems at a loss as to what to do next."

Since Rachael teaches first and second year primary children she has given little thought to students who become fluent writers without improving in their spelling skills. She did not express any knowledge of specific activities teachers could incorporate into their program to enhance standard spelling without stifling creativity.

Rachael maintains that spelling is a very individualistic learning process and that the teacher should, through conferencing, help each individual learn appropriate spelling rules when the student is ready. Buchanan (1989) concurs with Rachael when she states that teachers should provide the necessary support and allow children to achieve according to their individual background knowledge, interests, abilities, and stages of development. Rachael strongly maintains that teachers shouldn't teach whole class spelling lessons as many rules wouldn't make sense to students who are not ready. Tarasoff (1990, p. 8) also agrees with Rachael's point of view when she suggests, "teaching should be based on the needs of the students receiving the instruction and the appropriateness as determined by the students improvement in spelling." As she discussed this belief she realized she wasn't taking the necessary time for conferencing. "I haven't really made time for it in the day, not enough planned time. Something to do for next year." This apparent contradiction in what she believes and what she is actually doing made Rachael rethink her priorities.

Description Sheila

Sheila entered the teaching profession because of a childhood dream of being a teacher just like her mother.

Sheila begins the day welcoming her students and listening to their stories in an effort to ease the transition from home to school Her morning is mainly devoted to Language Arts activities; three mornings on spelling and two mornings on phonics. During the morning the children read, respond to reading, write and take part in listening activities. Sheila also schedules most of her Math program before lunch amongst her students being integrated into regular classrooms. The afternoons are

usually less structured with P.E., Health and Life Skills, Art and another expressive Writing period. Sheila ends the day with 'show and tell' and story time.

Sheila encourages expressive writing by having her students make daily journal entries as well as writing responses to the literature she reads them. She follows the stages of the writing process but finds her class frustrated if they have to redo something during proof-reading and editing. Sheila claims that during proof-reading she has her students look for spelling errors but has found that children with learning disabilities have difficulty in breaking the habit of sounding out words and have difficulty realizing there is both 'functional spelling' as well as 'conventional spelling'. Sheila is beginning to think that she should introduce her students to standard spelling at the beginning of the writing process and not at the end, because in many cases waiting for the final stage is too late.

Sheila looks at spelling mistakes in student writing during conferencing and approaches each individual differently. For example she states, "Because there are kids also in there who maybe aren't saying the words correctly anyway, so if the words and the language from them is not correct, then I can't expect them to spell it correctly." Often Sheila finds correcting spelling with her students becomes an oral language lesson.

Sheila formally devotes three periods a week to spelling lessons as language disabilities requires a great deal of oral work. Sheila makes sure her students are able to articulate the words she dictates. The lesson also has a visual component attached to the auditory so that the students can see what she is dictating. She also has the students use the words she dictates in their own sentence. Sheila claims spelling words must be within a meaningful context. She divides her class of ten students into three groups to provide the help they require. Her teaching assistant works with one group, she works with another, while the youngest group works on readiness activities on their own. She maintains that she stresses the importance of spelling as a separate subject because of the nature of teaching language disability students. She finds language disability students inflexible and claims it is better to teach the correct way from the beginning rather than try to go back and correct mistakes. If she allows them to sound spell and then correct their work their sense of failure rises.

Sheila maintains that if the teacher is dedicated to standard spelling and models using a dictionary students will think correct spelling is important. She feels students need to realize that learning to spell is a life-long endeavor. Although she doesn't want to be 'picky' she does want her students to develop an interest in correct spelling and realize that spelling in standard form is appropriate practice in our society. Another factor Sheila believes influences a student's ability to learn to spell in standard form is the home and early exposure to books and print. Students who come from supportive and literary rich environments are usually very interested in words and their correct spelling.

Sheila reports to the parents on spelling in terms of oral language and expresses the importance of the connection between spelling to writing, reading, listening and speaking. She feels it is important to let parents know that standard spelling is valued.

Sheila maintains that the process of learning to spell is a developmental process as is the entire process of language development and acquisition. She has learned this from experience and by watching her own two children. Sheila states, "a lot of kids come in here and they are ready and then other kids come in and I guess because they are not ready, they haven't been ready to take these arbitrary symbols and suddenly put meaning to them." Sheila feels the teacher's responsibility is to determine where each child 'is' and provide opportunities that promote development. Memorization, she maintains, comes after a student has had the chance to play with letters, sounds and language.

Interpretation Sheila

Sheila has worked in the area of speech and language for seventeen years and has developed strong beliefs regarding the teaching of spelling and the differing needs of the individuals within her class.

Sheila emphasizes the importance of conventional spelling because she feels that many of her students would be content to rely on functional spelling forever. Buchanan (1989, p. 5) concurs with Sheila when she states " Teachers must take a new approach to teaching spelling based on knowledge of the stages of spelling development and a repertoire of instructional strategies that promote spelling growth." Sheila maintains, that when students begin to learn to spell it is a

developmental process but later memorization and visual memory take on a larger role. She worries that some of her students would never progress if they weren't pushed, " I think to wait for them naturally might not ever happen." I believe, as Buchanan (1989) maintains, that students must be told that there are two kinds of spelling, standard and funtional, and that each kind has a different value, purpose and status Sheila also maintains that some children are curious and want to know the correct spelling, while others are content with sound spelling and never seem to want to move away from that point.

Sheila thought about how she will approach the teaching of spelling next year in a regular primary class. She clearly states that she will continue to devote time to spelling as a separate subject because of the strong connection that spelling has to reading, writing speaking and listening.

" I think it's important because most of the kids in the primary years are still really developing language, that I think it's just a really strong hook for the kids to use. That once they can make sense of the words that they are hearing- they can see it, they can write it, I think it becomes more meaningful and they are more likely to be able to expand and grow from that."

Tarasoff (1990) also supports Sheila's claim that the process of learning to spell is part of language and is interrelated with all aspects of language development. Tarasoff (1990, p.17) gives an example of what she means when she states,

" Developing wide listening and speaking vocabularies helps later with recognition of the sounds of words that need to be spelled or read. It also provides a store of words that may be accessed for writing purposes...Reading can help with learning to spell if the reader becomes aware of spellings and makes a mental note of new spellings. Writing provides practical experience which helps develop spelling processes and knowledge."

Sheila doesn't want to be too 'picky' about the correct spelling of all words in student writing, but believes giving students the correct spelling of desired words might enhance student writing not impede it. Sheila feels if she is open to giving her students the words they want, their writing will improve in creativity and quality. She expresses this clearly when she states, " I think they might pick easier words 'cause they know they can spell it." I feel strongly that teachers cannot expect students to

spell all words correctly in their daily writing and if a teacher insists on correcting ever mistake students will soon write very little. I also maintain however, that teachers should concentrate on introducing words to their students that they use most frequently in their writing. Sitton (1990, p. 36) supports this view and states, "It follows then that conscientious spelling instruction must emphasize mastery in writing of the high-use writing words. By carefully selecting high-use writing words for spelling instruction, we bond spelling with writing."

During the interview and discussion Sheila did not discuss any formal spelling activities that she could incorporate into her program that would enhance standard spelling at the fluent level of writing while practicing visual memory skills. She mentioned two specific spelling programs that two groups of children were working on. McCracken's promotes the use of phonics and the Sixth Spell program has the students use the vocabulary in a variety of activities. Although she talks about learning to spell as an individual developmental process she continues to group her children by their age and by their ability for spelling instruction. I believe Sheila is nurturing the growth and improvement of spelling with her students to the best of her ability.

Description Margaret

Margaret always knew that she wanted to become a teacher. "There was no doubt in my mind, I knew from early in my life that I was going to be a teacher."

In the morning students begin their day by writing in their journals. After everyone is settled Margaret begins conferencing with the children. During this conferencing period Margaret listens to individuals read and she views and discusses their writing. After they complete their journal entry, children choose books to read. They may read individually or with a classmate or in a small group. Margaret follows the writing, reading and conferencing period with a Language Arts Lesson. She uses a variety of teaching strategies in Language Arts such as Chime-In, story strategies, brainstorming, webbing, and phonics lessons. After the lesson students are given an assignment to complete. If time permits she has the children share their journals and their reading selections in front of the class. After recess she has the grade seven buddies come to listen to her students read for twenty minutes. When the buddies leave, students work on incompleated projects and spend time reading to volunteer parents. After lunch Margaret gathers everyone together for a sharing period before

Math begins. The rest of the afternoon is devoted to P.E., Music, Art , Health and Life Skills, Science or Social Studies.

At the beginning of the year, Margaret encourages expressive writing by teaching a frame sentence and making a class chart using the particular frame. She also encourages sound spelling and tells her students they may come to her for special words and teaches them how to use picture dictionaries to assist with their spelling. Throughout the year she fosters a love for writing by making positive comments about every accomplishment no matter how small. She also encourages her students to learn from each other. Margaret promotes an interest in words and provides a print rich environment for her students. She feels the combination of these factors helps students learn to spell naturally and eventually in standard form without making spelling an issue. "It's not important to me now that they spell right, because it will come as they get a better understanding of the letters." When students are in early primary Margaret doesn't feel conventional spelling is as important as building on what the children know and creating an excitement about words. In later years she maintains that students should correct their spelling during the proof-reading stage of the writing process. Margaret developed her philosophy on spelling about ten years ago as a result of attending workshops on whole language and the writing process. She also maintains that by watching her own children she came to realize which things were important and which things weren't. She used to stress spelling but now believes that it is not a priority in the early primary program. "They are beginning to put down the printed word and feeling a great deal of success and that helps build their self concept, and that's what's important."

In student journals she uses a blue pencil and prints the standard spelling above the child's sound spelling. She maintains this promotes standard spelling as she has observed her students looking back through their journals for the correct spelling of words. Margaret does not make spelling a big issue in her classroom, rather she corrects the words in an unobtrusive manner and the child is free to choose to correct the words. She is more interested in students writing their ideas and expressing their thoughts than insisting they spell correctly. She believes that if a child is able to read what s/he has written the child will be motivated to write more.

Margaret indirectly encourages standard spelling by having a spelling chart where the class can add special words. She encourages a buddy system where they help

each other to spell correctly. In this way spelling is addressed within the context of writing. When her class is studying something new they always make a chart of the words that are pertinent to the topic.

Margaret views student writing continuously to assess and evaluate student development in spelling. She looks at each individual's work to determine their needs and teaches accordingly during conferences. "And some children that don't have a good English background or haven't done a lot of spoken language or have a deficiency in it, they need a lot of help. And they need to be taught some of the standard rules. And I do teach phonetic spelling, but I also teach sight words, and I teach dictionary skills to find words and do a lot of things that are using the alphabet, really early in the year." Reporting to parents reflects her philosophy about writing and the development of spelling within this context. In her comments she discusses the developmental writing stage of the individual. Margaret strongly maintains that many parents still need to be educated about the importance of the relationship of writing to the development of spelling. She thinks that parents could be helping their children a lot more by encouraging them to sound spell and by speaking carefully and clearly to them.

Margaret is aware of the developmental stages of spelling and through conferencing guides students to the next step in their writing. She also determines common mistakes and teaches whole class lessons on specific phonetic and spelling rules. She believes that children learn to spell by listening to the sounds the letters make and she realizes a child that has a speech problem has a lot of trouble learning to spell naturally because they don't hear or say the sounds properly. Margaret maintains that learning to spell is a developmental process and some children require a great deal of time before they are ready even to sound spell. Later primary children, according to Margaret, have to memorize." I think as they get older there's more words they have to memorize, but in the beginning, it's developmental. And I think it should be developmental if they are going to be a good speller."

She doesn't believe there is a relationship between being able to spell in standard form and intelligence. She does note that some children seem to have an almost intuitive sense about which letters to use when spelling words. "But with top kids they seem to know almost intuitively that it's either the one letter or the other, and if they'll come and ask you which one it is. Its interesting."

Interpretation Margaret

Over the last ten years, by attending workshops and by observing her own children, Margaret has developed a strong philosophy about the nature of how children learn to spell and how to teach spelling. Clearly Margaret maintains that students gain in self confidence as they begin to write and read what they've written. Although unstated, I am sure Margaret also realizes how excited students become when the teacher can read their writing to them or when another student is able to read what his/her classmate has written. Margaret maintains that success builds on success and before long the students are inventing their own spelling and beginning to use some standard words more frequently. Margaret maintains a print rich environment, combined with an open buddy system and many opportunities for daily writing and reading foster the growth in the developmental stages of spelling.

Margaret also maintains that learning to spell is an individual activity and children require different kinds of help as they become ready.

"I feel very strongly about spelling, but I think that spelling should come from what they want to learn. Because if they don't want to learn it, you are flogging a dead horse, because it is just something that you want them to learn. It has to mean something to them and so much of a spelling lesson is incidental. It comes up from what their interest is."

Margaret mentions in the interview her concern for students, that do not progress developmentally in spelling. "They just can't get it. And they don't even understand what letters are really. What do you do for kids like that, those kinds of problems. You just do the best you can." Margaret continues to strive to help these particular students meet success. Where intervention is necessary she diagnoses the needs to the best of her ability and works from there. Buchanan (1990, p. 3) supports Margaret's claim and maintains, "that the student will move from approximations of spelling to standard form when the environment is conducive to risk-taking and when the child's patterns of misspellings are used as the bases of instruction in the context of the child's own writing."

Margaret maintains that emphasizing standard spelling in early primary is not as important as making students excited about words and building self-confidence. She

does, however, believe that in later primary, students should learn to correct their spelling at the proof-reading stage.

During the interview and follow-up discussion Margaret does not express any ideas about formal activities that she could incorporate into her program to improve standard spelling at the fluent writing stage. Nor does she mention the idea that visual memory is a skill worth practicing in the primary classroom. She also believes that top students have an intuitive sense about how to spell words but states that she does not believe there is a connection between intelligence and being able to spell in standard form. As the researcher I observed a contradiction between her belief that learning to spell is individualistic and not related to intelligence and her continual reference to her students belonging to the top, middle or bottom group. This discrepancy was not noted by Margaret. An explanation for this may be that Margaret's experience and observation of the many children taught throughout her career has led her to hold onto this view despite her understanding that learning to spell is an individual process.

Description Sally

Sally became a teacher for several reasons but particularly because she felt that the teaching profession could provide her with the opportunity to fulfill many of her creative abilities. She was also drawn to the security of a job that respected tenure and paid relatively well. She particularly wanted to work with young children and believed that in Kindergarten she would have the greatest opportunity to make a difference.

Sally compares the kindergarten experience to a kaleidoscope. " It is always changing all the time, and with every child it's different, so that there is just a rainbow of colors in your spectrum." Sally's class begins their day with three quarters of an hour of playtime. Then the children meet to discuss what they have been doing and in a sense learn to self-evaluate. Sally strongly believes that through discussion and sharing young learners can begin to expand and develop their knowledge. Sally calls this approach 'verbal- cognitive' and bases a lot of her program on this philosophy. The discussion period is followed by a short musical or physical activity and then snack time. After the snack the children have a library period and share books with one another and with her. Next the children either go to the gym or have a formal music period followed by a work time. The work period, which is about twenty

minutes in length, alternately includes activities from Art, Math and Language Arts. Once again the children meet to discuss their work and learn to ask appropriate questions of one another. Sally ends the day with a story or a poem.

In her Kindergarten class Sally encourages expressive writing by helping her students develop their ability to speak. She also has her students dictate sentences to explain their paintings. By the end of October Sally begins teaching sight words that deal with emotions such as, happy, sad, mad etc. Sally labels pictures with these particular sight words and these words are then located in various places in the classroom. As she teaches frame sentences such as ' I am...or I see...' she has her students use the sight words to fill in the blanks. By the end of the year most students are able to compose two or three sentences using taught sight words and frame sentences. She believes that when children have some sight words in their memory this enhances their ability to write. " It's a key to writing to have a few words of your own." Sally sees these sight words connecting to the writing process and standard spelling. This belief Sally formulated years ago while reading the works of Sylvia Ashton Warner and her ideas about key vocabulary.

Sally maintains that some of the stages of the writing process are too advanced for the Kindergarten level but promotes brainstorming and other pre-writing activities. By the end of the year some of the children in Sally's class are able to proof-read their own work. This activity requires many group examples where everybody attempts to read one person's sentence to see if a word is left out or if a period is forgotten. The children are also encouraged to present their writing and share it in front of the class. Some students put their work in book form and Sally and her students consider this to be publishing.

Sally strongly believes that at the Kindergarten level mentioning the correct standard spelling to a student attempting to invent spelling would be detrimental to his/her progress. " I don't mention spelling mistakes because I don't want to discourage them." Sally sees the process of learning to spell as being interconnected with writing. Writing experiences combined with positive feedback for their efforts eventually influences students in learning to spell in standard form.

In early primary Sally thinks that helping students to write is more important than teaching spelling in standard form. Sally expresses this belief clearly when she

says, "Inventive spelling allows them to get on with writing, just like baby talk allows them to get on with talking." Sally believes that if writing is encouraged from the beginning of a student's school career then children will "take it for granted, just like they breathe." Sally maintains the students in her room all believe that they can write. She believes that as they gain in fluency writing will become "second nature" to these children. Sally also believes that if teachers draw positive attention to student writing this will directly influence learning to spell. She maintains that learning to spell in standard form will be a natural outcome from this approach.

Sally encourages inventive spelling and introduces sight words and name cards early in the year. Sally believes that the name cards are a beginning step for her students in understanding the concept that there is something exact about words. At the Kindergarten level Sally expects her students to spell their names correctly. She feels that in later primary there is a place for concentrating on spelling to a certain extent. Sally believes that older students should try to make their writing more acceptable to those trying to read it. Sally also maintains that if spelling is specifically taught at later levels students will pay more attention to it and she also mentions that "some people seem to have a visual memory that allows them to see around the words, see the shape of the word and memorize it."

According to Sally learning to spell in conventional form is not a function of intelligence but rather it has to do with memory, hearing and the ability to persist and learn. She believes that learning to spell is both a developmental process connected to the writing process and a task of memorization.

Interpretation Sally

Sally compares the process of learning to spell and write to both the processes of learning to talk and walk. When a child is beginning to talk and walk adults don't discourage the child's initial attempts, therefore she strongly believes that teachers shouldn't discourage a child's first creations of words. Sally maintains that motivating students by positively reinforcing their early attempts at writing is key in promoting the developmental process of spelling. She also expresses in the follow-up discussion that students shouldn't be made to feel inferior or ashamed of their work just because it is not spelled in completely conventional form, as the writing of ideas is what really counts, not the spelling.

When Sally first began teaching she worked with E.S.L. students and in her readings she learned about the concept of key vocabulary and quickly realized the need children have to be able to access words. She believes that first year primary children are similar to E.S.L. students in that the printed word is like learning a whole new language. Providing a print rich environment gives students words they may want to know for their writing. When Sally first started teaching thirty-seven years ago, spelling was taught as a separate subject and the students who couldn't spell were not considered to be very intelligent. She talks about the shortcomings of teaching spelling using a rote method. "And I wouldn't be the least bit surprised, now looking back, if those children who did not get them all right hated spelling. And the ones that did get them all right may have easily forgotten them in a short time." Sally says she gradually evolved and realized that spelling is not an end in itself, as children can be great writers and readers and not necessarily good spellers. Sally's experience with E.S.L. students made her come the realization that memorizing traditional spelling lists was not productive.

Although Sally believes that the teaching of spelling has its place with older children, she was unable to suggest alternative spelling activities to the traditional method that could promote standard spelling. Since Sally has been teaching first year primary for a long time and deals with children at the emergent level of writing she has had no reason to speculate about the need for spelling activities that help children practice the skill of visual memory and promote word awareness at the fluent level.

Description Paul

Paul entered the profession of teaching by accident. After failing at a career in Engineering and trying to follow in his father's footsteps, he decided to take an Education course to fill some credits. Paul found he really enjoyed this particular Education course and began to think about the many things he could do in teaching. Soon he decided to become a teacher like his mother.

Paul's daily routine begins with Language Arts. The third year primary students go to the resource room for reading while the fourth year primary children begin their journals, handwriting, spelling or work on other theme related Language activities. When the third year primary students return they begin their journals and

complete a language activity. As everyone finishes the assigned tasks they move into a reading activity and share books. After recess Paul schedules Social Studies, P.E. and Art. His students begin their afternoon with a show and tell session, followed by a story that Paul reads to his class. Paul uses thought provoking stories to stimulate discussion. Math is next and he ends the day with a short music period.

Paul encourages expressive writing by presenting an idea that motivates the students into webbing individually. Paul believes his job is to inspire his students and allow them to be individually creative. Journal entries are also made daily by the third year primary students, but the fourth year students alternate between handwriting, spelling and journals. Paul follows the stages of the writing process but does not have his students publish all their writing pieces as he feels its more important that they learn to edit and proof-read their work. Paul has his students work with at least two other students during the editing and proof-reading stage, before he conferences with individuals. Paul believes a draft is where students can express their ideas without the worry of thinking about standard spelling. However, during the proof-reading stage, he wants his students to correct their errors so that readers can understand the exact meaning of their writing. Paul developed this belief during his practice teaching. During his three years of teaching he has developed the idea further by telling his class that standard spelling makes the writing piece look good and more appealing to the reader. He has his students focus their attention on the audience more than on themselves.

When Paul works individually with his students he circles spelling errors and asks them to find the mistakes and correct them by using a dictionary or refer back to previously taught spelling words. He also encourages standard spelling by presenting his class with weekly spelling lists. Paul claims he uses the weekly lists to concentrate on language skills such as the rules for suffixes, prefixes. He finds that the teaching of the skill helps his students learn the words but is not entirely convinced that the studied words transfer into their writing. Although he teaches weekly lists he does not consider spelling as a separate subject because he teaches the words within the context of language skills. He also tries to make a game out of spelling and is trying to "de-emphasize spelling itself."

Paul also observes that when students work with each other during the writing stages of proof-reading and editing they make comments to each other about how they

cannot read their writing because of the spelling mistakes. Paul claims this peer pressure influences and motivates students in learning to spell in standard form. Paul also maintains, "there are just some students that just can't spell, that have great language skills except for that, and I don't think there is anybody who can figure why that is." These particular students Paul says he pushes to capacity but does not want to make them frustrated by insisting that every error be corrected. Paul believes that learning to spell is different for each student. "Some students learn by phonetics and sound out words, some students learn to spell by absolute memorization, and sometimes that is the only way you can do it, 'cause there are so many exceptions and inconsistencies with the English language."

Paul does not believe there is a correlation between being able to spell in standard form and intelligence. "And take for example Jane, she's a terrible speller, but a brilliant lady. And I know a lot of people who are great spellers who can't express themselves any other way, they can memorize but ask them to come up with a thought on one thing and they can't do it."

In reporting Paul only mentions spelling in his comments to parents if the parents are concerned about spelling and/or he notes a huge improvement in a particular student's spelling.

Paul believes it is important that primary children learn to spell in standard form because society is built on convention. He maintains that children sense that even at an early age, they can tell they are not quite in step with everyone else. "They do want to do it the right way. It is also frustrating for them to create something, a sentence, and not have other people understand their meaning 'cause they have worked so hard at creating this thing. And for other people not to see it the same way they do, is sometimes devastating for them."

Interpretation Paul

Paul expresses clearly his belief that learning to spell in standard form is important in terms of society's standards and maintains that, "if you can't spell there is that other stigma from outside, from society." In other words Paul says that there is a need to produce written work in conventional form to be able to communicate and to

need to produce written work in conventional form to be able to communicate and to be understood clearly. He believes that many brilliant people are overlooked because of the spelling mistakes they make.

Although Paul talked about spelling as an evolving process he appeared not to view that learning to spell as a developmental process for which teachers should be thoroughly acquainted with the stages and able to recognize the indicators of each stage. The teacher's responsibility then would be to diagnose the consistent errors and provide the necessary teaching to assist the individual during conferencing and have the student work on specific skills related to the particular type of error s/he is making.

I could also sense that Paul was frustrated with the students that were unable to learn to spell conventionally. " But lots of kids slip through my door and I don't understand why they are not getting the word right. Especially seeing as they have gone over, over and over and they will consistently make the same mistake, even though we have gone over that over and over." Paul seems unaware of the concept that some people have a better visual memory capacity for words than others and that the capacity for many students only develops with practice. Paul was not cognizant of the fact that there are many visual memory activities that could be incorporated into his program that would perhaps partially assist those students who have difficulty with learning to spell. He does state that one of his E.S.L. students is having difficulty because she has a speech impediment and is unable to say the words correctly. However, he realizes that this does not account for other students who are not learning to spell.

Paul continues to use weekly spelling lists as a form of practicing language skills but doesn't believe the words studied completely transfer into student writing. "It's 50-50. I find that sometimes, I'll be surprised in the journals later, months and months later, these are challenging words. And, but on the other hand, lots of times they ask me how to spell words that are up on the board. So that's why I'm frustrated, that's why I'm interested in doing it." Paul's views on teaching spelling lists are gradually changing as he is trying to de-emphasize it as a separate subject. However, at the same time he wants to hold onto the practice as it is a routine and one more way to approach spelling. During the follow-up discussion it was evident that Paul recognized a dissonance between what he said he believed about spelling, to be part of a larger

language context, and his current practice of giving traditional weekly lists. " Word lists I do, this is terrible." He also voiced that the spelling lists really don't test spelling and he doesn't report on the results of the tests, so in fact the giving of these tests is purposeless. It was interesting to note that at this point in our discussion, Paul was tentative and unable to talk for a few moments obviously deep in thought.

Chapter 5

General Conclusions Regarding the Nature of the Thesis.

This study is an example of an attempt to understand how classrooms operate by viewing six teachers' current practices and beliefs. By listening to six peoples' stories and by helping them reflect on their experiences, researcher and teachers together engaged in a process of understanding each person / professional as a unique being, and uncovered a collective perspective as well. An observation by Zola (1991, p. 2) is pertinent, "It is my deeply held belief that the shortest distance between truth and a human being is a story."

The intuitive, practical knowledge, that is, the craft knowledge that resides in all teachers can be discovered through personal narratives, interviews and discussion. This type of investigation represents an important genre of research for understanding why some teachers generate craft knowledge in a manner consistent with progressive and radical traditions and why others construct an essentially conservative appreciation of their craft (Grimmett & MacKinnon, 1992). Values and assumptions that are deeply rooted within teaching strategies, materials and programs can thus be analyzed. The practice of teaching spelling in a traditional manner versus a more wholistic approach was the focus of this study. My prime intent was to understand through collaborative autobiography, focussed interviews, and follow-up discussions the nature and the development of the knowledge about spelling instruction that teachers know and use (Butt & Raymond, 1989). However, as the study progressed and I worked with the six teachers, the secondary purpose of my study, teacher development, became more prominent.

Collaborative autobiography enabled the stories (narratives) to be told, while reflection upon the experiences allowed meaning and new understandings to unfold, for both the story teller and the listener. "The process is one of documentation, reflection and interpretation of experience so that we may think about where we are, where we have been, and where we wish to go" (Butt, 1989, p. 154). Connelly and Clandinin maintain that "reflection on our narratives of experience helps us make meaning of our lives as teachers" (p. xv.). This type of study is termed 'life course' research as it focuses on teachers' perspectives on the evolution of their own professional dispositions over time (Butt & Raymond, 1989). An inquiry of this type

into the nature of teaching, according to Butt & Raymond (1989), is relatively new in the field of educational research.

The interviews and discussions served as processes that probed at uncovering teachers' deeply held values and beliefs about spelling, by asking questions about their current practice, teaching methods, strategies and programs. Interviews and discussions provided each teacher with the opportunity to enter a dialogue about his/her present practice, philosophies and educational theories. Through discussion, teachers confirmed or negated what it is they believe about certain procedures and practices that they currently display in their classrooms. My intent was to understand the knowledge teachers possess in the unique way that the individual teacher understands his/her practice vis-à-vis the teaching of spelling. However, as the teachers became involved in a dialogue about their practice and perhaps from having already been involved in collaborative autobiography, I found that they reflected and thought about their teaching style and how it effected the learners in their classrooms.

Without collaborative autobiography, interviews and discussions the reflection which took place in this study on teachers' craft knowledge, beliefs and assumptions would likely not occur because of the daily pressure from the acts and processes of teaching. There seems to be a need for some sort of catalyst to stimulate the reflective process. Through reflection and discussion, the teachers in this study found they were able to clearly articulate a general philosophy about their teaching practice and about how they believe children learn. This philosophy became the base from which they continued to generate their thoughts and ideas about teaching and the learners perspectives. It was at this point that many teachers realized there was either a dissonance between what they believed and what was truly happening in their classrooms or they felt the need to study more or take courses in a certain areas. Teachers' reflection took place during the collaborative autobiography sessions, between the collaborative autobiography sessions, during the writing of their autobiographies, during the interview and follow-up discussion.

Specific Conclusions

a) The Teaching of Spelling and How Students Learn to Spell

The main purpose of the interview and follow-up discussion was to uncover each teacher's current understanding and practical knowledge of how they believe students learn to spell and how they approach the teaching of spelling. I was also attempting to understand where their current beliefs and teaching practices came from as well as determining if the processes of interview and discussion encouraged teacher development.

During the course of this study common themes emerged regarding the teaching of spelling and what the six teachers believed and valued about how students learn to spell in primary classrooms. The common categories were as follows:

- 1) Spelling is a complex cognitive and developmental process
- 2) The traditional method of teaching spelling
- 3) Students who experience difficulty in learning to spell
- 4) Spelling in whole language classrooms
- 5) Analyzing student spelling errors
- 6) The importance of teachers as role models and creating safe environments
- 7) The influence of the home environment
- 8) Differences between the early and later primary teachers
- 9) The connection between intelligence and conventional spelling
- 10) The connection of learning to spell in standard form with the development of other language processes
- 11) Peer pressure and society's norms
- 12) The influence of past experience and preservice training and current knowledge
- 13) Teacher Development

1) Spelling is a complex cognitive and developmental process

Spelling is a complex cognitive process and a constructive developmental process not a simple task of memorization (Gentry, 1987). All teachers, except Rachael, believed learning to spell was a developmental process and eventually a task of memorization. Rachael maintains it is strictly a developmental process of stages that children work their way through. None of the teachers expressed the complexity of the process involved in learning to spell. When the teachers spoke of the eventual need to memorize words only Sally and Margaret articulated the concept of visual memory being a capacity that perhaps good spellers were born with. Ken expressed the belief that repetition helps students gain a mental picture of a word over time. However, none of the teachers seemed to realize that visual memory is a skill that could be practiced, and improved through specific classroom activities. Sitton's (1991) research confirms that the ability to use mental imagery can be learned and different propensities for learning to spell are the result of a range of abilities to visualize which Sitton believes could be enhanced with visual memory tasks.

Sally was the only teacher who compared learning to spell with the developmental stages of learning to speak and walk. Gentry (1987) compares in detail that learning to spell is similar to the developmental stages of learning to speak. First there is "babbling, first words, two words utterances, and later mature speech" (p. 19). Gentry (1987) goes on to say that spelling follows a similar sequence from simple strategies to more complex developmental levels. Although most teachers mentioned and partially described the stages of spelling development, no one put specific names on the stages. Regardless of being able to name the developmental stages of spelling teachers should understand the writing behaviours involved during each stage. If teachers do not recognize the indicators of the developmental stages and the cues the students use dominantly during a phase of time it would be unlikely that even during conferencing they would be able to intervene and assist students appropriately. Knowing fully about the spelling stages assists teachers in observing growth in spelling through the students spelling mistakes. Teachers will also begin to understand and appreciate that errors are not random but rather patterns of misspellings that can be analyzed to assist with individual instruction.

Margaret and Rachael spoke of learning to spell as an individual process, therefore they both chose to teach their students about spelling during conferences.

2) The traditional method of teaching spelling

The teachers who gave weekly spelling lists were unable to articulate clearly reasons why spelling words from studied word lists were not being spelled correctly in student work. None of these teachers concluded that the words being studied were not transferring into student writing because they were being taught out of context and that they needed to be integrated into the writing process.

There was also no discussion about the appropriateness of words being studied in weekly lists. It also appeared that the six teachers were unaware of core high frequency words that children use in writing that could be studied in formal activities.

None of the teachers mentioned the teaching method itself. There seemed to be no understanding of other strategies for helping students study words other than by copying them off the overhead and memorizing them at home the night before the test. An example of a spelling strategy helpful for students is "See the Word, Say the Word, Cover the Word, Write the Word, Check the Word" (Sitton, 1990, p. 102). Peer tutoring and cooperative groups could also be of assistance with children and spelling.

No one expressed an understanding of alternate word activities that could promote standard spelling. All teachers either worked from the premise that learning to spell was connected to the process of learning to write or they placed some emphasis on the teaching of spelling as a separate subject in a traditional manner, coupled with an emphasis on spelling within the writing context. None of the six teachers approached spelling in a purely traditional manner.

All of the teachers said, in one way or another, that copying word lists and focussing on the mechanics of words does not ensure the development of correct spelling within a writing context.

3) Students who experience difficulty in learning to spell

Margaret and Paul both expressed concern for students that don't seem to learn to spell the same way as other children. Margaret, an early primary teacher, believes that most young students learn to spell naturally and in the beginning stage it is developmental. Paul teaches a later primary class and gives weekly spelling tests.

Though both approach spelling differently they describe a similar dilemma of not knowing what to do about those students who seemingly experience a great deal of difficulty in learning to spell. Both teachers were unable to generate possible reasons for these types of problems. Margaret and Paul seemed unaware of ideas and activities that could be incorporated to enhance the visual memory capacity of students who display difficulty in spelling. Margaret, being experienced, kept on striving to find something to help the particular child she was describing, but Paul felt lost as he didn't know what else he could do. Paul maintains, "Lots of kids slip through my door and I don't understand why they are not getting the word right. Especially seeing as they have gone over it and they will consistently make the same mistake, even though we have gone over that, over and over."

I feel strongly that all teachers and those in professional development must also be thoroughly aware of the indicators of the stages of spelling development. Teachers should be taught to watch carefully for the indicators and characteristics of each stage and learn intervention strategies if it appears a student isn't making progress.

4) Spelling in whole language classrooms

It became evident to me that inexperienced teachers and those that follow a whole language approach without the background of teaching other language programs, need lots of practical ideas and strategies to help them cope with students who don't progress according to the developmental stages outlined in the new Primary Program (1990). Tarasoff (1990) suggests that teachers should discuss phonetics and common word families so that children can practice graphophonic patterns and learn to spell unfamiliar words with the same letter sequences and generalizations. Sheila also expressed her concern that if some students were left on their own to construct knowledge about spelling they would rely on functional spelling forever and never progress past a certain stage. In other words Sheila maintains that some students plateau in the developmental stages of learning to spell and require instruction to push them further. I believe that children spell according to the mental constructs they themselves have about spelling (Buchanan, 1989) but this does not mean that teachers cannot intervene and provide formal activities to promote the growth and movement towards standard spelling within the context of student writing.

Teachers must also understand that not all students are able to learn to spell in a wholistic, natural setting. Some learning styles are conducive to a more structured environment and require a different instructional approach more closely matched to their learning style. According to Tarasoff (1990) a teacher's role is to present information systematically to those students who do not intuitively develop spelling knowledge. Tarasoff (1990, p. 62) maintains that, "direct word study can help to focus some students' attention on the essential elements." Tarasoff (1990) also suggests that teachers must take into account the preferred learning style of the student, i.e. visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or tactile and offer appropriate instruction. Tarasoff (1990, p. 25) states,

"If a teacher is taking into account the learning style of the student, then the teacher is considering how the student processes (represents) the particular information best...If the teacher is aware of the students processing strategies, then he/she can match teaching practices to students, increase the students' awareness of their own strategies, and encourage students to experiment with other ones to find the most effective."

5) Analyzing student spelling errors

The teachers who chose to give traditional spelling lists did not discuss how the marking of words right or wrong was of any help to their students in learning to spell in standard form. Ken expressed that the spelling tests he gave to his class were invalid. He also chose not to comment on report cards regarding the test scores because even the students who were able to memorize well for the Friday test were still misspelling words in their writing.

Margaret, Sheila and Rachael expressed an awareness of the idea of looking for errors within student spelling and writing, to instruct students individually. Sheila and Margaret both use individual conferencing and Sheila maintains that the majority of the student spelling errors in her class are related to speech problems. Through clarifying discussion Rachael stated that she should take more time in her program for individual spelling conferences, as she felt whole class lessons on spelling were inappropriate, as many students would not be ready for certain spelling strategies.

However, there was no mention from any of the teachers of the concept that student spelling mistakes are usually not random but found in patterns and are indicators of developmental spelling stages. It would appear that the teachers need more specific information regarding the stages of developmental spelling and the types of student errors likely to occur within each stage. Practical instructional strategies to help individual students correct their patterns of errors would also benefit the teachers.

6) The importance of teachers as role models and creating safe environments

All of the teachers believe that creating a non-threatening, print rich environment in which children are free to take risks, are involved in a variety of writing activities, and are allowed to invent spelling will help build confidence and over time will help children construct new knowledge about spelling. Turbill (1983) maintains that learning to spell needs to be closely integrated with learning to write. The early primary teachers, Margaret, Rachael and Sally are in no rush to demand standard spelling as they strongly fear an early emphasis on correct spelling could inhibit the developmental stages of writing. This belief came from the following sources: 1) Margaret attended whole language and writing workshops over the last ten years and observed her own two children learning to spell. 2) Rachael learned this philosophy during her professional development year and is always eager to read the latest books on whole language and teaching the whole child. 3) Sally knew intuitively that young children shouldn't be forced to spell in standard form and has been pleased with the recent literature that has made its way to her over the last five to ten years that supports her philosophy. 4) All teachers through classroom observations maintain that the majority of their students flourish in writing and learn to spell under this philosophy.

All participants felt the most important issue of all was making sure student self-esteem was maintained and enhanced. The fostering of successful experiences that build success and bolster confidence were promoted and discussed by all teachers. All participants in this study were careful to approach students' writing with spelling errors in a positive manner. There seemed to be a general realization that the kinds of responses teachers make to student spelling attempts do in fact make a difference to student performance and self-esteem.

Sheila expressed the importance of teachers demonstrating in front of their class the use of dictionaries which she maintains helps students realize that the teacher values conventional spelling and that learning to spell in standard form is a life-long pursuit. I strongly agree with Sheila's point: modelling a certain behaviour is always a powerful learning tool. Buchanan (1989, p. 8) also supports this belief and claims that "the interest and curiosity that the teacher has about the formation and meaning of words, will have a direct effect on the curiosity that his or her students have about spelling."

7) The influence of the home environment

Margaret , Rachael and Ken raised the issue of the importance of the home environment in relation to learning how to spell. Margaret feels parents need to be educated about developmental spelling stages and believes strongly that parents should speak clearly to their children and encourage them to write at home. Rachael feels many parents don't foster a risk-taking environment as they want to see only correct spelling and can easily destroy a child's confidence by a casual remark regarding misspelling. Ken spoke of parents in terms of supporting their children by helping them study and prepare for the Friday tests. Buchanan's (1989) research supports the claims made by Margaret and Rachael when she emphasizes the importance of communicating with parents about the developmental process of learning to spell. She believes parents think spelling is being ignored at school when children bring home papers with spelling errors. Parents need to understand more fully what teachers are trying to do in their classrooms to help their children learn to spell. If parents were clearly told about the developmental stages of spelling and taught how to reinforce these stages at home perhaps their children would take more risks in writing without the fear of criticism. Buchanan (1989) also maintains that if parents make negative comments during the early stages of spelling development, self-confidence is lowered and writing efforts are reduced. Lamme (1984, p. 18) concurs with the fact that parents are very influential on their children's attitudes towards writing when she states to them, " You are your child's first and most important teacher."

8) Differences between the early and later primary teachers

Early primary teachers, focussed on their students ability to invent spelling in order to write and express ideas and felt as Gentry (1987) expressed, that purposeful writing and inventing spelling are key to learning to spell. The later primary teachers placed an increased emphasis on conventional spelling and chose the traditional approach to supplement what their students were learning through writing and reading. Later primary teachers expressed three reasons, or underlying pressures for this increased focus on standard spelling: 1) Passing students into grade four that can not spell concerned them as they worried about their own professional reputation. 2) Society's requirement for convention. 3) Respect for the audience and the readers need to be able to understand clearly the intent of the author.

It appeared that the early primary teachers were able to implement the recommendations found in the Year 2000 document regarding the stages of writing as the philosophy presented closely resembled their point of view. However, the later primary teachers in this study had concerns about the teaching of spelling which are not clearly addressed in the Year 2000 document. As students progress through later primary and into the intermediate grades there is more insistance on correct spelling. Later primary teachers feeling this pressure tend to fall back on traditional forms of teaching spelling instead of trying alternatives. It appears that the philosophy of the Year 2000 document does not adequately address the concerns for standard spelling that some later primary and intermediate teachers have. It would appear that this could cause a slowing in practice, the smooth transition of the primary program to the intermediate program.

9) The connection between intelligence and conventional spelling

When asked, all teachers clearly stated that they did not believe that intelligence was related to the ability of being able to spell in standard form. However, there seemed to be a discrepancy with what two teachers said regarding the connection of intelligence to the ability to spell in standard form. Spelling was still used as an indicator of whether a child was a top student in Margaret's room or whether a child was a good reader in Ken's room. The idea that some bright children may also have difficulty with spelling was not clarified by most teachers. Paul was the only one who articulated this understanding when he stated, "And take for example Jane, she's a

terrible speller but a brilliant lady." Paul also claimed the opposite to be true, that he knows people who are good spellers but are not what he considers to be intelligent. "I know a lot of people who are great spellers who can't express themselves any other way, they can memorize but ask them to come up with a thought on one thing and they can't do it."

10) The connection of learning to spell in standard form with the development of other language processes

Most teachers, with the exception of Sheila, linked spelling either to the writing/reading processes solely or to both writing and reading, to listening and speaking but not to all language activities. Sheila, on the other hand, maintains that learning to spell is closely connected to all forms of language acquisition. A claim made by Tarasoff (1990) clearly affirms that listening, speaking, reading and writing are all practical experiences that help develop the spelling processes.

Sally expressed that spelling is not an end in itself and Bean and Bouffler (1987, p. 47) concur when they state, "Standard spelling is the consequence of writing and reading not the access to it."

All the teachers in this study promoted the writing process in their classroom and all believed that learning to spell was somehow related to this process. Writing, according to Rosen (1989), serves three main purposes described as follows: 1) Writing is a way of preserving things. 2) Writing is a way of reflecting on experience and ideas. 3) Writing is a way of opening up a conversation of a specific kind. Rosen (1989) maintains that writing involves the selection and manipulation of experiences, thoughts and ideas and this means power and control for the author. Writing also allows the author to observe his/her own experiences. The sharing of writing allows the author to tell about reflections of his/her experiences and the knowledge gained from those experiences. It is my belief that through writing one clarifies thoughts and learns about language. Writing helps young people construct knowledge about how to spell and about how to use the language to communicate articulately.

Sheila was the only teacher who expressed the belief that by teaching the correct spelling of words children would gain in confidence and actually be able to write with increased fluidity and prowess. Sheila maintains that by using only an inventive spelling system students choose simple words to express their ideas. Sheila's point of view is in a sense opposed to the Primary Program (1990). Perhaps there is a need to incorporate Sheila's ideas alongside of the stages of writing development outlined in the new Primary Program (1990). Sheila's point certainly suggests the need to study further children's writing as they proceed through the developmental stages of spelling to determine if children do peek in the quality of their word usage. Her belief also suggests the need to study student writing to determine if the teaching of correct spelling does enhance student ability to write. Tarasoff (1990) similarly maintains that spelling activities should enhance the writing process and not hinder it in any way. Sally also teaches her first year primary students a small set of sight words and maintains these sight words are key in their writing.

11). Peer pressure and society's norms.

Both Sally and Paul stated they believed standard spelling should be encouraged out of a courtesy to readers. Paul clearly articulated that since society was based on convention, students should learn to spell in standard form as there is a stigma attached to people who can't spell correctly. Sitton (1990, p. 1) concurs with Paul when she states, "When written communications contain misspellings, their worth is diminished in the eyes of the reader, and unfortunately, so is the personal worth of the writer." Paul also believes that peer pressure serves as a motivational technique with students during the editing and proof-reading stages of the writing process.

12) The influence of past experience and preservice training and current knowledge

None of the teachers expressed the idea that within the area of writing there's comfortable room for a combination of natural spelling development and formal spelling intervention. Tarasoff's (1990) research focusses on a model for teaching spelling that is sensitive to both the wholistic approach to teaching and the more traditional approach. "A model that focusses on a combination of effective approaches to teaching spelling will show that apparent conflicting approaches are in fact complementary parts of a complete spelling process" (Tarasoff, 1990, p. 2).

Deficient knowledge regarding formal spelling activities accounts for the teachers lack of discussion of a possible complementary program to assist individuals with standard spelling once they are writing fluently. Rachael and Margaret would appear to need to incorporate formal activities while Paul, Ken, and Sheila would seem to have to rethink their beliefs about the relevance of weekly spelling lists. As a teacher of first year primary students, Margaret would appear to have no need of concerning herself with formal spelling activities.

Paul, Ken, and Sheila teach spelling in a traditional manner and their reasons for partaking in this practice were: 1) They were unaware of any other approach to the teaching of spelling and this is how they learned to teach spelling during their practice teaching. 2) Traditional lists provide one more way to approach and help students learn to spell and they stated that repetition helped students learn to spell words correctly. 3) These teachers learned to spell under the traditional spelling method and it worked for them. 4) Spelling is an important separate subject that is central to reading and writing development. 5) They were nervous about sending their students to the next year's teacher not properly prepared in spelling, therefore they opted to use weekly lists to justify their spelling program and cover many basic spelling rules. 6) Spelling links the hearing of words with visual memory which makes the process of writing easier. The important point here is that there seems to be a need to introduce new information about the instruction of spelling with regard to specific formal activities that would enhance standard spelling without using traditional methods. Underlying the fact that these teachers still hold onto the practice of teaching spelling traditionally is the assumption that spelling used to be taught well (Buchanan 1989) and that spelling is now being abandoned in schools. Buchanan (1989) maintains that teachers need to meet this challenge and explain to parents new teaching strategies that account for the developmental stages of learning and individual learning needs and styles. However before this can be accomplished the teachers themselves must clearly understand these strategies and begin to practice them in their classrooms.

Half of the teachers in this study use the traditional method of teaching spelling, even though they all stated that they didn't think studied words transferred into student writing. It would appear that updated information needs to be made available to teachers, regarding different approaches to the practice of teaching spelling. Teachers need to realize that the traditional method drills words out of the context of writing and emphasizes only memory as a learning strategy, without incorporating meaning

and syntactical influences (Buchanan, 1989). Teachers also need to understand that the traditional method fails to take into consideration individual needs and the developmental aspects of learning to spell.

In her practicum Rachael learned to approach spelling through the writing process and to think of the development of the whole child. She also stated that her experience of learning to spell under the traditional method was negative and due to this she would never approach spelling in this manner. Ken also learned to spell from a traditional method and he feels it worked well for him therefore he chooses to teach spelling using the same strategies.

Both Rachael and Ken are beginning teachers and feel insecure about their craft, regardless of their approach to the teaching of spelling. Both are determined to pass on students equipped to meet the following years academic expectations.

13) Teacher Development

In looking for evidence of teacher development, Ken explicitly stated he needed to rethink his practice of giving weekly spelling tests, since he didn't feel the test scores were valid and worth reporting to parents. Rachael outwardly acknowledged the realization of needing to devote more time to individual conferences for the purpose of helping students learn to spell. She also ended the follow-up discussion questioning whether she should teach the Mc Cracken's spelling program. Paul, in his attempt to justify his practice of giving weekly spelling lists found he contradicted himself and clearly stated he needed more time to think. Sheila, Margaret and Sally were able to affirm and articulate confidently their beliefs regarding the teaching of spelling and how students learn to spell. Although in these three cases teacher development wasn't as explicit as in Ken's, Rachael's and Paul's accounts, their ability to justify their beliefs through classroom observation and supportive literature, implied a form of teacher development. It is my belief that engaging professionals in stimulating discussion regarding practice promotes thinking, which, in turn, promotes teacher development on varying levels-implicit and explicit.

It would appear that the teachers who practice teaching spelling in a traditional manner for the various reasons outlined above, do not change their practice even when they realize that students do not transfer the correct spelling into their written work. I maintain that unless teachers are given the opportunity to discuss their craft and reflect on their teaching methods, it is less likely they will alter their practices and seek new knowledge. During the interview and discussion Paul, Ken and Rachael expressed the desire to learn new knowledge in the area of spelling as they themselves determined this need. Margaret also expressed discomfort with children who were not able to learn to spell like other students. It was at this point in the process where new information could have been introduced to the teachers and more readily accepted. I did not take on this responsibility although I feel a teacher leader or an administrator wanting to facilitate change at the classroom level could have introduced an intervention of ideas for spelling.

The teachers realized that learning to spell is an individual process and using time in conferencing for the teaching of spelling may be a more appropriate method.

Helping students learn to spell is enhanced in an environment which promotes risk taking and is rich in writing opportunities. Positive feedback towards students for their efforts is necessary to foster growth in writing, which in turn promotes movement towards standard spelling.

There seems to be a need for formal spelling activities and teacher intervention to compliment what students are learning on their own about standard spelling through reading, writing, listening and speaking.

b). Collaborative Autobiography

The purpose of the collaborative autobiography sessions was to understand the extent which the personal background and professional history of each teacher related to his/her current teaching practice. It was also my intention to encourage teacher inquiry into practice thus promoting teacher development.

Some specific problems related to autobiographical and narrative data are summarized by Butt & Raymond (1989, p. 413),

"The fallibility of memory, selective recall, repression, the shaping of stories according to dispositions, internal idealization, and nostalgia or rumor all present the possibility of biased data. Looking back at a particular moment in time might provide a view that is colored by our current context, mood, or interest (Ross, Mcfarland, & Fletcher, 1981). As well, the telling of stories within a particular social context accentuates our predisposition to construct masks through which we not only wish to see ourselves but also masks through which we wish others to see us (Grumet, 1987)."

During the entire process of collecting the data from the collaborative autobiography sessions I was very aware of these types of concerns. However, by establishing a safe environment, I allowed the participants to share personal problems and past memories that were uncomfortable to remember as they interacted with one another. Sally and Rachael admitted they did not tell all of their stories, and both expressed a fear that people would think badly of them if they shared everything. These participants, although guarded to a point, seemed to me to be open and honest. As the researcher I was disappointed that generally there wasn't more discussion about the contradictions between philosophy and actuality. A strong example is the issue of the emphasis placed on the academics versus the importance of respecting individuality, enhancing the self-esteem of everyone and developing the 'whole child'. Perhaps as they think about this process further and have time to remember and think about what they said, they will begin to align their philosophy more closely with their reality and slowly make change in practice. The process of collaborative autobiography allowed affirmation and negation of beliefs to take place but this method on its own did not push the individual teachers into confronting and formulating action plans to deal with the incongruities they discovered while collaborating. Although collaborative autobiography opened the door for the teachers to begin to recognize the contradictions and dissonances in

their own practice I did not, at this point, help the teachers make context-specific action plans that would effect classroom change. However, I do feel that collaborative autobiography is a worthwhile and valuable process in terms of making significant educational change. Collaborative autobiography allows teachers to voice what classroom change means to them and it acknowledges the teacher as learner and classroom change as a learning process (Butt et al, 1988). Unfortunately, the discoveries the teachers made during the collaborative autobiography portion of my study did not directly connect to some of my questions regarding spelling. It was my concern for the issue of spelling that prompted a more in depth probe at uncovering teachers beliefs, assumptions and values about how to teach spelling and how students learn to spell in primary classrooms. In all fairness, when using the technique of collaborative autobiography as a reflective process, the specific focus or area of concern studied in further detail should come from the participants, not from me.

The connection between collaborative autobiography and my findings with regard to spelling are somewhat vague. In a general sense, the collaborative autobiography portion of my research did show the connection of how the teachers approach spelling in their current situations to the relationship of past personal and professional experiences.

In Ken's case he only had two years of teaching experience and as a child he learned to spell under a traditional method. Ken was a successful speller and during his practice teaching he once again revisited this method of teaching spelling. Since Ken has never been exposed to other methods for enhancing standard spelling he chooses to teach spelling in a traditional manner.

Rachael also learned to spell under a traditional method and found this experience to be negative. In university she studied the concept of teaching the 'whole child' and during her practicum learned that spelling was a developmental process and the teacher's role was to provide a safe environment rich in print and writing opportunities. Her own need for security makes her provide a positive nurturing environment conducive to risk-taking.

Sheila bases her beliefs about spelling on her seventeen years' experience teaching children with language learning problems and observing the development of her own two children. Sheila maintains that learning to spell is connected to all language

acquisition. Sheila's own fear of failure keeps her trying to make a difference with all her students therefore she continues to age group her students to meet their spelling needs.

Margaret has high standards for academic achievement but from being a mother she learned to value the individual's particular strengths and weaknesses. She used to emphasize standard spelling but now feels students' ideas in the writing process are more important than correct spelling at her teaching level. She uses a conference approach to the teaching of spelling making sure her students know that although she is strict, she cares for them and their academic success. She also has a fear of failure and was raised in an environment with little praise; therefore she tries to help each individual meet with some level of success and makes positive comments during conferences.

Sally was raised in a harsh environment that stifled personal self-worth. From this she learned the value in maintaining the personal dignity of each child. She believes that criticism of student spelling attempts would be damaging to the student's self-esteem; therefore she chooses to praise her students efforts and teach a core set of sight words which she maintains makes her students more confident writers.

Paul wants his students to learn how to teach themselves, a personal focus he came to value through some failures in his life. Paul's philosophy didn't fit with the practice of teaching spelling traditionally. He discovered this dichotomy when discussing spelling in detail. However he also believes in enhancing the self-esteem of each student and worries about those who do not meet with success, as he fears they will not develop healthy self-esteem. It is my feeling that Paul, not knowing alternative teaching activities, holds onto to the traditional practice of teaching spelling so that some of his students will achieve some measure of success on weekly lists, even if the words studied do not transfer into their writing.

By sharing our personal and professional stories each individual's craft knowledge was discussed. Sharing craft knowledge with others benefits the self professionally, as it is through discussion that one is able to clarify and articulate the curriculum of his/her practice. Talking about craft knowledge is a beginning step in the process of being able to write about it for a larger audience. I maintain that teacher development flourishes when the element of risk is encouraged and valued and time is

provided for reflection. It is my belief that by beginning the process of collaborative autobiography I was able to deliberately set the tone for honesty, trust, respect and risk taking. Since I was the primary department head at Beach View Elementary for six years prior to this study, I had already established a rapport with all of the participants. Since collaborative autobiography requires people to share personal and professional stories, they must be made to feel at ease and be reminded that they control their level of disclosure. Collaborative autobiography involves a large element of risk that further promotes reflection during the individual's writing of his/her autobiography and the four phases borrowed from Butt (1992) outlined in chapter two. Barth (1990, p. 86) clearly concurs when he states, "Probably no professional development activity has as much potential for promoting reflection, clarification, articulation, discussion-and risk-as *writing*. Successful writing about practice can be an endeavor from which 'everyone wins, and learns: the writer, the reader, and the school.'" Clearly evident during this study was that the process of writing an autobiography in collaboration with colleagues, is a freeing, cleansing, and often a cathartic experience that promotes teacher development.

Having participants write and talk in a general stream of consciousness before working through the four phases of autobiography (outlined by Butt, 1992), gave them the opportunity to share anything they felt was meaningful in their lives. It also served to help organize their thoughts and trigger many memories that were useful. The time spent on part one, the 'general stream of consciousness', helped to establish an atmosphere of trust and created what Barth (1990) terms, 'a community of learners'. This made working through of the four phases, which is a difficult task, a bit easier as each participant was able to listen to all presenters in a collegial manner. An increased awareness, respect, understanding and empathy for the presenters was apparent.

The collaborative autobiography sessions provided stimulating dialogue amongst the group which aided each participant in the writing of his/her autobiography. All participants took notes during presentations as reminders of past events or experiences pertinent to themselves. Everyone was amazed at how listening to others served to trigger memories and associated stories rich in detail. Collaborating helped the participants in creating, constructing and writing their own stories as we all used ideas inspired by others when they rang true to our own individual story.

Telling and reminiscing about their lives also helped the participants clarify and organize their thoughts and feelings which greatly assisted them with their writing. This study confirmed my hunch that autobiography would be flat in comparison to autobiography written and produced with collaboration. Collaborating within a group gave rise to a train of associations and rich reminiscences allowing participants to recall the details of long-forgotten incidents (Barth, 1990). As Barth (1990) maintains, writing is a powerful form of learning but it also is a difficult task as teachers in this study were encouraged to clarify and edit their work to make their meaning clear. From their writing, teachers were able to articulate and share their craft knowledge.

The feelings and emotions generated in this group were at times frightening as I did not feel qualified to deal with them other than try and empathize. In two cases memories were extremely painful to relive. I concluded from this experience that a knowledge of counselling skills would have been advantageous. Therefore I strongly recommend that any one attempting to facilitate collaborative autobiography should be equipped with strategies for helping those who become intensely emotional during the sessions.

Sally, Margaret, and Sheila talked about teaching as being satisfying but only as one aspect of their busy and varied lives. According to Huberman's Life-Cycle research, teacher career phases, paths or sequences are identifiable. The 'renewal' phase seems to reflect accurately many of the feelings of these three teachers.

"This meant focusing on a preferred grade-level, subject matter or type of pupils; disinvesting in school work and increasing outside interests; reducing contacts with peers other than those of one's most convivial group; avoiding additional administrative tasks or off-hour commitments, and not getting involved in future school-wide innovations. The tone is resolutely positive, but there is a clear sense of pulling back" (Huberman, 1991, p. 181-182).

Paul, Ken and Rachael are still experiencing the 'painful beginnings' stage described as, " a sense of being overwhelmed, continual trial-and error, vacillation between excessive strictness and permissiveness, exhaustion, difficulties with pupil discipline, fear of judgements on the part of other teachers or administrators, intimidation by some pupils" (Huberman, 1991, p. 180).

Coincidentally, the birth order of Sheila, Margaret and Rachael are the same. All of these women were born as middle children and all assumed nurturing roles within their families at a very early age. Paul's birth came after an older sister and so did Ken's; however Paul was the baby of the family and Ken was a middle child with a younger brother. Both Paul and Ken were nurtured by their families. Sally was an only child raised in a rather unusual environment where she was made to take on chores and care for an aging and ill grandparent. Strongly evident from the data was that the females involved in this study were either forced to or naturally assumed nurturing roles from an early age. The males in this study did not. Interestingly enough, all six teachers currently describe themselves as being nurturing teachers.

The following brief conclusions regarding each participant are organized according to what Sparks-Langer & Colton (1991) describe as three major benefits realized from teacher's narratives:

"First, these studies give us insights into what motivates a teacher's actions and an appreciation for the complexity of teachers' everyday lives. Second, teachers' narratives provide us many detailed cases of teaching dilemmas and events. The third, and most valuable is the insight gained by teachers themselves as a result of this self-inquiry" (p. 43).

Self-inquiry promotes reflection, which in turn enhances teacher development.

1). What motivates a teacher's actions and an appreciation for the complexity of teachers' everyday lives.

Ken

Ken is motivated by a strong fear of failure and feels he must strive to try a variety of ideas and teaching strategies to ensure everyone is learning. Being a new teacher Ken worries about his reputation as a professional. He also feels accountable to parents, other teachers and administration. Growing up in a nurturing environment with a loving and supportive family has made Ken realize the importance of listening carefully to his student's stories and showing them that he genuinely cares and promotes their individuality.

Rachael

Rachael is motivated by her strong need to continue to nurture as she did when she was a child. Her classroom is child-centred and operated by her students. The many activities found in Rachael's room are there to nurture the 'whole child' in many of the goals outlined in the new Primary Program (1990). Rachael is a beginning teacher and feels some concern over her professional reputation, therefore she delicately nudges her little ones along the developmental stages of learning. Rachael is also an over achiever, greatly influenced by her deceased father. She constantly strives to learn new things to better herself personally and professionally.

Sheila

Sheila is extremely success oriented and has a fear of failure. As a child she always admired her successful mother, who was the dominant role model in Sheila's life. She works hard to maintain control over the many aspects of her life by being organized and well prepared. It really bothers Sheila when things in her classroom do not flow as planned. She continuously strives for harmony in her classroom. She is also a nurturer and believes that making children feel wanted, loved and happy about coming to school, is half the job of teaching. The nurturing side to her personality comes from childhood when she and her sister were given many responsibilities, including cooking the meals for their father. Sheila also has a strong desire to make a difference with minority children and those who have special learning problems.

Margaret

Margaret teaches from what she calls a "mother's perspective" From this point of view she promotes mottos such as, ' Always do your best!' and relates to her students in a manner similar to the way she raises her own children. She is a strict teacher who sets high expectations and will not accept student work she doesn't feel meets a certain standard. Her approach to teaching is directly linked to her father's critical nature, but because Margaret was placed in the role of caregiving as a child, she also manages, through conferencing to let her students know how much she cares for them personally and academically. She has a fear of failure and a strong need to be praised which was denied as a child. Margaret strives to find ways to help all students achieve and if someone isn't doing well academically she tends to feel she has failed. Margaret regards teaching as only one aspect of a busy and full life and she strives to maintain balance personally and professionally. Margaret has also developed a sense of humor due to chronic medical problems.

Sally

Through many traumatic childhood experiences Sally has learned the value of coping mechanisms such as humor. She feels compelled to ensure her students know how to use coping mechanisms. She is a nurturing teacher with a forgiving nature, which is also linked directly to her childhood experience of taking care of her sick and at times abusive grandmother. Sally strongly believes the personal dignity of all children should be respected and students should be allowed to progress at their own rate. In teaching, she places a strong emphasis on art, drama, music, and physical education as she is very gifted in these areas and probably would have become an actress instead of a teacher if it weren't for her strict and religious upbringing. She regards teaching as a career where she can use her creative talents and states clearly it is only one aspect of her diversified life.

Paul

Paul is motivated by the need to teach his class to teach themselves. He bases his teaching on his personal philosophy of learning to become self-reliant and continually improve self-esteem. As a result of this dual focus his classroom is run on democratic principles and respect for the individual. Self-reliance and self-esteem became increasingly important to Paul after failing to achieve his goal of a career in engineering. He also maintains that he was indulged as a child because he was male and the youngest, never having to fend for himself.

2). Detailed cases of teaching dilemmas and events.

Ken

Ken clearly expressed the problems he was having trying to teach his students to become responsible and more focussed on their work. On the one hand he wants to control his class with stricter discipline measures, but on the other hand he wants to give his class the freedom to make choices. He fears being a traditionalist will make him lose sight of his individual child-centered teaching philosophy.

Rachael

Rachael's dilemma is derived from the fact that everything that takes place in her classroom is child generated. Although she is proud of her program and the children are happy to come to school she worries that they never complete anything. She

wonders if she should assume more control to ensure goals and objectives are being met.

Sheila

Sheila expressed how predictable her teaching day was and how she craved to be less rigid. However, she feels that students with learning problems cope better in a structured routine, so she feels she can't 'loosen up.' Sheila is also upset with the Ministry and district because of lack of planning and funding for integration of special needs students.

Margaret

Although Margaret has developed a whole language approach to teaching she has also kept and incorporated teaching strategies and methods that she believes helps students learn. To aid her approach she now arranges her class in groups instead of rows. Her dilemma comes from trying to stress high expectations for work standards, while respecting the individual's own rate of progress and learning style. Although she tries to remember the importance of the developing the 'whole child' she continues to categorize her students into three groups-top, middle and bottom.

Sally

Sally is unable to offer the type of program she prefers because many of her students have severe social problems which require stricter discipline measures. She expects positive learning to happen in her classroom for all her students but recognizes discipline may impede the quality of what she really wants to accomplish with children.

Paul

Paul clearly articulates his concern for enhancing the self-esteem of all students by trying to provide opportunities for everyone to meet success. He feels this is a good philosophy but in reality he thinks this is a difficult task as there are some students who never seem to meet with the same level of success as other students. Paul feels that students from a very early age are able to sense when they are different. He doesn't know how he can protect them, keep them learning and continue to nurture their self-esteem. He also discusses the dilemma of letting students progress at their own rate versus the need for teacher intervention.

3). Insights gained by teachers themselves as a result of this self-inquiry.

Ken

Ken came to the realization that allowing students the freedom to make choices requires an element of responsibility that many students aren't automatically able to handle. The concepts of freedom and responsibility must in many cases, be taught. As a young person Ken was nurtured by his family and given a great deal of freedom to make choices. He feels that providing students with many choices is a valuable component of his teaching style, which he directly attributes to the influence of his parents. A central theme in Ken's philosophy of teaching is the importance of taking time to listen to every student's story and time to make sure that every individual feels worthwhile.

Rachael

During the collaborative autobiography sessions, Rachael came to the realization that she is a workaholic, a condition brought on by her continued striving to live up to her now deceased father's expectations. In her classroom she believes strongly in developing the 'whole child' and providing an environment where students feel safe to communicate openly and interact with one another. Her belief is strengthened by a recollection of the limiting expectations of her childhood second grade class where you were rewarded for not talking all day. Although she was academically successful she admits that she was not as successful socially and because of this she realizes the need to develop all aspects of the 'child' described in the new Primary Program (1990).

Sheila

As she spoke grievously about her mother being a strong influence and role model during the collaborative autobiography sessions, Sheila was able to understand more clearly why she is driven to be a successful teacher and mother. All her life she sought her mother's approval and even though her mother passed away two summers ago, she continues to draw strength from her mother's example in balancing career, university courses and family. Sheila talked about events in her life as being signals from a higher power and maintains that she bases a lot of her decisions, personally and in the classroom, on her intuition. Sheila also realized there are patterns in her life decisions that clearly indicate a desire to make a difference with minority and at risk students.

Margaret

Margaret came to realize that the teacher she is today is directly influenced by having stayed home for several years to raise her own two children and by having been raised in a home where she was denied praise. During her presentation she spoke emotionally about too many parents "copping out" on their children. She tells her class to do their best and has high expectations for their achievement. As a parent she believes that setting high expectations and following through consistently was instrumental in both her son and daughter graduating from high school with honors. She fears she may be the only one who has high expectations for some of her students. She hopes she makes a difference even with those children who do not have the support and influence of strong and devoted parents.

Sally

Despite the difficulties Sally has encountered during childhood and an unhappy marriage she came to realize during the collaborative autobiography sessions that she is still an eternal optimist, a true romantic and possesses a great sense of humor. She believes there is always hope, even in the face of adversity. Because of her experiences she is empathetic towards her students and maintains that along with teaching children coping skills, respecting the personal dignity of each child is of number one importance.

Paul

Paul came to realize that he bases his teaching philosophy on the ideals of self-reliance and self-esteem. As he told the story of his life he became increasingly aware of how important these two foci were in his own personal development and felt that if he incorporated these tenets into his program he could facilitate student growth in these two areas early in their lives.

Personal comments and conclusions from the participants about the process of collaborative autobiography.

A month after we had completed the collaborative autobiography sessions I asked each individual to reflect on and tell about what they personally and professionally got out of being involved in the collaborative autobiography process. I asked for both positive and negative feedback and found the comments regarding the

entire process were generally positive. Following are the personal comments from the participants regarding their involvement in the collaborative autobiography sessions.

Ken: "Personally I enjoyed doing it. I've been doing a journal for years but this is more depth. Once you write you can stop and think about it. I enjoyed hearing other people's comments and seeing that there are similarities. You know like you don't want to share this or that because you feel like a real idiot especially the failure part right? When you sit in the staff room everyone jokes around but you really don't know what happened before, like that they might have screwed up a lesson, so I appreciated hearing other people's stories and their honesty and support. You just felt so much support. Professionally, I am very conscious of what I said to everyone about my beliefs and philosophy about children and what I actually do in my classroom. I know that it has had me thinking a lot of times and as I'm about to say or do something I think that's not exactly what I said that I wanted to do as far as my philosophy goes. I think everyone should go through this process at least every five years as it keeps you in check with yourself. Being May right now, well, we are almost towards the end of the year-I'll probably be looking more to next year, you know, start at the beginning. Trying to establish things or restructure things where the kids are involved at this point, just isn't going to really work I don't think. It's certainly been a reminder to me."

Rachael: "I thought it was very valuable. I felt a little bit intimidated after I heard other people's experiences and stories and it made me wonder if I was doing enough in the classroom and what I was doing with my life. I didn't feel comfortable opening up too much. I didn't want people to think badly of me, so there is more written than what was spoken. I enjoyed it. It was nice because it has brought a couple of us closer but it didn't affect some other relationships, which is fine."

Sheila: " I really took a really good look at myself and what I really do think is important. Even what I do I guess- you get so busy, you don't have time to think about it, you just do it . It's been good that way. It's given me a chance to look at why I do what I do-what I'm teaching, how I'm teaching and what kind of a teacher I am. It's been nice to kind of take a chance to step back and look at those things. I don't think teachers do that unless they are really asked to think about that, as there is never enough time."

Margaret: " I think more empathy and understanding of the people that were involved and we've come to be almost a little club within ourselves. We have a great deal more concern with one another and checking up on one another. Also it was good to reflect on things and think about whether the things you said were the reasons why you did the things."

Sally: "I was fascinated with the other people's stories. I felt closer to them. I wondered if afterwards they would feel like the person who tells all to the bartender and wouldn't want to speak to us again. I felt that I had not told all my stories. I told some of the high points and there have been some horrific things that have happened in my life and I told only the bare bones of them. I didn't go into the agony and horror of whatever the problems were. I also didn't go into some of the highlights of my time when I was on my own because it wasn't relevant to teaching and it was a personal development and very personal to me- very private. I felt like I was sharing with people I wouldn't normally have shared with. I try not to discuss my past because I think it would colour how people would think of me. I got out a lot of things that were inside that I'd been sitting on for awhile and hadn't coped with for awhile. So it was cathartic in that sense and I was able to go from day one up to now all in one time- before when I reviewed things I reviewed parts of my life that needed reviewing so to deal with today to see how it related to that. To put it all together was very difficult and I had a couple of crying jags along the way and agonizing, but I realized as I kept on writing that it was like life, I had to keep on going and here I am today an incurable romantic and still very optimistic and I was very happy that the process revealed that to me. I really sympathized with the other teachers with the things they had gone through. It was interesting that so many had to go through trials to get into teaching. Teaching may have not been their first choice but never the less from my point of view they are terrific teachers. I liked the social aspect of the sessions too. I thought that was great. I also thought it was the kind of thing that all young teachers should have an opportunity to do. I notice that those who were just starting out really showed amazement on their faces when they realized where they were at and where they had come from and that they should have some plan for the future. They really started thinking. The process helped them come to that."

Paul: "A certain bond, a kinship with the other participants. I got to see a side of them I'd never think I would have seen in any other context. I appreciate getting to know them a lot more than I ever did before and I now can respect their ideas rather

than just sort of saying I don't know where that person is coming from because now I do know where they are coming from. Also it was a good reflective process for myself. It made me question a lot of things that have happened in my life and some of the things I do in teaching."

Final Conclusions

This thesis has been concerned with six teacher's lives and the influence that personal and professional experiences, have on current teaching practice and philosophy. The beliefs and current practices the six teachers have regarding teaching spelling and how students learn to spell in primary classrooms was also thoroughly examined. Data were collected in three distinct but connected ways: Collaborative autobiography, interview and follow-up discussion. All methods engaged participants in self-inquiry and reflection in a personal and professional manner. Conclusions drawn from this type of qualitative research are context dependent and although it is difficult to make transferrable generalizations to other primary teachers in other situations, it is my belief, that commonalities do exist.

This type of research is qualitative and falls under a specific category of study called 'phenomenology'. Therefore an underlying intention of this thesis was to bring about a better understanding of the importance and value in a humanistic study, within the realm of educational research. In other words, during this study teachers were encouraged to express their existing craft knowledge and make sense of their practice (in particular in the area of spelling) at their own pace and in their own way. Individual differences, learning styles and learning rates were respected. Collaboration enabled the teachers to discuss their experiences with one another and formulate and articulate their educational opinions. Through individual interviews, discussions and during collaborative autobiography teachers were able to meaningfully reflect on their practice, consider and share their own craft knowledge and make changes and design action plans they deemed appropriate to their specific situation.

The collaborative autobiography sessions allowed the teachers to reflect and think about their educational beliefs and underlying teaching philosophies in a general manner. They were able to connect personal and professional experiences to explain the reasons for their current assumptions and beliefs. The interviews and follow-up

discussions specifically made teachers focus on one aspect of their practice which was a method I used to help teachers deepen their own interpretation of their knowledge (Butt & Raymond, 1989). The interview and follow-up discussion pushed the teachers further into better understanding their current practice and underlying beliefs in the area of spelling. As the researcher I was able to view how these six teachers educated themselves through individual experiences and events.

It became apparent during my research that many schools could benefit from the processes used in this study. As a facilitator I was not telling teachers in a top-down fashion what styles and methods to use but rather I was guiding the reflective process. I did not come as an outsider or teacher leader with a pre-packaged curriculum to be implemented into their programs. Rather I was a colleague who listened to their stories in a non-judgmental way. The processes of collaborative autobiography, interview and discussion, engendered self-inquiry or rather self-scrutiny which gave them some insight into why they are the way they are. In some cases professional change was clearly stated, while for others an awareness of themselves and their current practice became more evident. In all cases there was evidence of professional growth in an individual way. Teacher development, which in turn benefits students, is an important goal actualized during this study. Grumet (1991, p. 71) expresses my feeling well when he says, "If my work permits the teachers I work with to examine their own work with a seeing that is more inclusive, that surveys an ever widening surround, that is a search I would gladly join."

Time appears to be a key element necessary for entire staffs so that they can be engaged in the kinds of processes which encourage and promote reflection. Reflection must be guided, taught and practiced before it becomes an integral part of a teachers' professional life. It became apparent, during this study, that in order for reflection to be of value and impact positively on students it should be done in collaboration with trusted colleagues. Schubert's (1991, p. 224) comments are appropriate here, " The stories of teachers and researchers are most thoroughly written in the collaboration and dialogue that in turn enable them to grow positively with students."

In order for staffs genuinely to take part in these types of processes, first a culture of collegiality must be established which again requires time and cannot be imposed or mandated. Collegiality promotes the element of risk which is also a required component for nurturing reflective processes. It is my belief, that taking

time for collaborative autobiography at the beginning of a school year would help to establish the necessary climate of trust, empathy, cooperation and collegiality needed for reflection and teacher development within a school. To be effective this process must include the administration and all other personnel that work within the school. If everyone is involved in a team approach the chances of establishing, maintaining and enhancing a truly collegial culture is even greater. It is through dialogue, discussion and in some cases debate that realizations are made, educational dilemmas are discovered and future professional plans are established. Through involvement in these types of processes teachers begin to feel liberated and more in charge of their professional destinies and empowered to learn at their own rate. It therefore appeared that these opportunities we strive to offer to children under the Year 2000 document, should also be afforded to all participants in the education process as we are all learners. As Barth (1990) maintains that in a community of learners reflective processes provide teachers with the opportunity to grow professionally and act on their wisdom in relation to their individual needs and the needs of their students.

After having worked with this group of teachers it is my strong belief that collaborative autobiography, interviews and discussion help to revitalize and rejuvenate teachers, allowing them to actively think and reflect on their practice. The processes used for gathering data in this study made the teachers feel excited and more engaged and committed to teaching. Giving time to these types of processes improves the working reality of teachers and enhances the teaching profession. This, I believe, helps improve the learning environment for students. Benefitting the learners, that is everyone involved in the educational process is a goal desired but seldom achieved. I maintain that all the processes used for gathering data in this study, but in particular collaborative autobiography, are powerful and liberating approaches to teacher development.

During the analysis of the data some questions emerged that warrant further examination:

The dichotomy found in the spelling issue is that from the whole language perspective spelling should be developed the same way as any other language acquisition; on the other hand, correct spelling is a desirable goal (Buchanan, 1989). In primary classrooms is the issue of teaching spelling as a separate subject (formally

or traditionally) a concern or should primary teachers let standard spelling occur naturally over time within a whole language context?

Once children are fluently writing do they peek in the quality of their word usage if they are not exposed to a formal spelling program?

Is there a need to incorporate formal spelling activities alongside of the developmental writing stages outlined in the new Primary Program (1990) ?

Do primary teachers, regardless of their approach to language, need access to more information about the teaching of spelling?

Is student performance in standard spelling an issue with parents, intermediate teachers, and administrators? Is student performance an issue with the students themselves and if so, when and why does it become an issue?

Provided the culture of a school is conducive to collaboration and collegiality, would reflective processes take place without someone serving as the catalyst? If the catalyst is important, does the type of leadership make a difference?

Would it be possible to establish a climate of trust and risktaking if the facilitator had no previous history with the participants? In other words, would the participants feel safe enough with an outsider to be engaged openly and honestly in collaborative autobiography?

Is there a need once a facilitator triggers the process of reflection to follow up through discussion to ascertain whether the dissonances between philosophy and reality discovered by the teachers themselves, are becoming more closely aligned?

Is it important to have a specific focus that will deepen an understanding of a specific component of craft knowledge when engaging in reflective practices?

If collaborative autobiography, interviews and discussion promote reflection, which in turn facilitates genuine teacher development and benefits the students, then why aren't more schools actively involved in such processes?

Finally I would like to invite the readers of this thesis to draw their own conclusions, make their own inferences and ask their own questions.

APPENDIX I

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH



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April 3, 1992

Ms. Gloria Gustafson
1852 Jacana Ave.
Port Coquitlam, B.C.
V3C 5Y4

Dear Ms. Gustafson:

Re: The Use of Collaborative Autobiography, Interview and Discussion to Uncover Teachers' Assumptions, Beliefs and Values About the Teaching of Spelling and How Students Learn to Spell in Primary Classrooms

This is to advise that the above referenced application has been approved on behalf of the University Ethics Review Committee. Please forward to the Research Grants Officer a faxed copy of the approval letter from Dr. Alan Taylor, Director of Curriculum and Assessment (School District #43, Coquitlam). It is our understanding that you received verbal approval from Dr. Taylor in March 1992.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William Leiss, Chair
University Ethics Review
Committee

INFORMED CONSENT BY SUBJECTS
TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH
PROJECT OR EXPERIMENT

Note: The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits involved. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received the document described below regarding this project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Having been asked by Gloria Gustafson of the
Education Faculty/School/ Department of Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project experiment, I have read the procedures specified in the document entitled:

Collaborative Autobiography, Interview and Discussion

I understand the procedures to be used on this experiment and the personal risks to me in taking part.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this experiment at any time.

I also understand that I may register any complaint I might have about the experiment with the chief researcher named above or with

Dear/Director/Chairman of Education Simon Fraser University.

Copies of the results of this study, upon its completion, may be obtained by contacting:

Gloria Gustafson

I agree to participate by engaging in collaborative autobiography,
interview and discussion.

(state what the subject will do)

as described in the document referred to above, during the period: April to June 1992

at an elementary school

(place where procedures will be carried out)

NAME (Please print): _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: _____

Once signed, a copy of this consent form and a subject feedback form should be provided to you.

June 17, 1992

Dear Colleague,

For the purpose of my project I need to reproduce your autobiography and transcript of the interview and follow up discussion for the appendices. Your complete anonymity will be respected through the use of a pseudonym. If you would please sign below giving permission it would be appreciated.

Thanks,

I hereby grant permission to reproduce the above mentioned documents.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX II

How To Write Your Autobiography

PART 1 A General Stream of Consciousness

When beginning to draft your autobiography, within 5-10 pages, consider the events or turning points in your life that are significant in shaping the person and professional you are today. Briefly jot these incidents in point form and while doing so pay close attention to your feelings that are attached to these events. As you write about the critical incidents of your life identify and discuss your emotions at the same time. Please be as open and honest as possible but realize you are in complete control over your level of privacy. Only disclose what you feel comfortable sharing. Keep this as a separate document.

PART 2 Specifically Focus

Secondly divide your autobiography into four phases and attempt to answer the following questions within 2-4 pages (borrowed from Butt 1992 and Townsend, Butt, and Engel 1991) :

- 1). Describe your current working context. (What is the nature of my working reality?)
- 2). Describe your current teaching style and the curriculum you use. (How do I think and act in the classroom?)
- 3). Describe any reflections you may have of your past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of your present professional thoughts and actions. (How did I come to be the way I am?)
- 4). Describe your preferred personal/professional future after personally analyzing the three previous phases. (What do I want to do about it?)

Keep this as a separate document.

Prepare both these documents in draft form as more ideas will come to you with time and as we share our stories collaboratively. Leave your drafts for a few days and fill in details as you see fit. What is divulged during our collaborative autobiography sessions is to remain confidential within the confines of this group unless negotiated. For the purpose of this study you will be referred to through a pseudonym in order to protect your anonymity. Although this is a difficult task my hope is that you will also find it therapeutic and worthwhile. When we meet to share

our stories please bring pictures or other items along that you feel will help you present important aspects of your life.

Please contact me at 942-1014 if you have any questions or concerns. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX II

Interview

What made you become a teacher?

Describe a typical teaching day.

When you teach Language Arts how do you encourage expressive writing?

To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

What connection, if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the students writing?

Is there anything else you do to encourage standard spelling?

To what extent do you view spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and knowledge?

How do you think students learn to spell?

How would you characterize the process of learning to spell: a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?

Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form?

If so, why?; If not, why not?

APPENDIX III

Part 1

KEN

PART 1

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Being born in of itself is not a major significant occurrence in my life being that it is life itself.

I was born on Sunday September 15, 1963 in my home. My home being in the city of Ridderkerk, The Netherlands. I don't remember much of my early childhood. I know most from what I have been told. However the first and probably most significant turning point in my life would have to be moving from my country of birth to a new country which I'm sure I never knew existed. On August 6, 1967 I stepped off a plane in Montreal to arrive in my new home. We arrived in B.C. via the train on August 9, 1967. I can't say how I felt. Probably not fear because I wasn't fully aware of the magnitude of the move. Reflecting now I would have to say that it would have to be the biggest turning point in my life. Moving to Canada has afforded me all kinds of opportunities I would never have experienced living in the Netherlands. I guess I say this out of ignorance but I can't picture myself in the same lifestyle or circumstances I am now (on further questioning, my parents agreed with my thoughts).

From my arrival in Canada and through my early teen years I can't really see any major occurrence except for the fact that my parents were the biggest influences in my life. My ideals/values have been shaped by the way they raised me. Both in what I agree with and what I disagree with. There was never any undo pressure put on any of us kids in the family. All that was expected of us was our best. My personality has never been one of a go getter (I am glad to say that this is changing). Going after one thing and then another and I am thankful that at those times when I didn't want to my parents had the final say. They were usually right in their decision making. Even today my attitude tends to be of a carefree nature. I like to take each day as it comes. If it doesn't quite work out, well tomorrow I can start over again. This may be great for the nervous system most of the time but it tends to lead to procrastination. Take it easy until you have to perform.

My parents never had any influence in my post secondary decision making. As most parents and adults they wanted to know what my plans were for after grade 12. I knew early that I wanted to work in the area of Fish and Wildlife. I enjoyed the outdoors and its offerings. Having gone camping as long as I can remember I'm sure helped. I chose those courses in high school which would allow me to continue on into university. I graduated from Port Coquitlam Senior Secondary in June of 1981 and by that time had my foot pretty much in the door at B.C.I.T. Only my final marks had yet to be received. I learned some harsh realities in the months prior to B.C.I.T. and the year after. I had never worked at any job other than babysitting and odd gardening jobs while in high school. So here it was June and I had to find a summer job to pay towards my tuition at B.C.I.T. I had at this point saved up lots of money from allowances and such so I didn't need to make all my tuition in two months. I got a job working as a busperson at a restaurant. To this day I have respect for any buspersons because of what I experienced. I started in the fall of September 1981 at B.C.I.T. I was enrolled in the Forestry program with the opportunity to transfer to the Fish and Wildlife program in my second year. So here come the realities of life. I couldn't get straight into Fish and Wildlife because I needed some job experience but I couldn't get a job in that area because I needed experience. Something I think we've all heard before. The other reality was that I wasn't really ready for post secondary education at that level. The same laissez-faire attitude I carried through grade 12 I brought to B.C.I.T. Work just hard enough so that you don't fail. I did alright until my second term at B.C.I.T. (Spring). I was in a Statistics course in which I never really got a handle on the concepts. As a result I never passed that course. My first major setback in my ever so nice flowing life. In order to continue I would have to come back and take the Spring session again and only for that one course. So I decided not to go back. So after being so sure I wanted to do Fish and Wildlife I now wondered what I should look to do for my life long career.

I enrolled at Douglas College planning to take business courses. Everything was full when it was my turn to register. Now the reality was that I must find a job. For a period of two months my life was hell.

Nineteen eighty-two was not a good time for anyone looking for jobs but especially someone with no real job experience and no education. That was the one and only time when I hated getting up in the morning. It was a real low point in my life. I felt really useless and guilty because I wasn't working. There was many a confrontation between my parents and I. In November of '82 I got a permanent

temporary job. It was working here that I saw that I didn't want to be doing this the rest of my life.

I worked during the summer doing odd jobs and I tried again to register at Douglas College (Fall '83). I consider myself lucky to get one Marketing course and two Phys. Ed. courses. My parents couldn't believe you could get credit for taking P.E. courses. I do poorly in Marketing (no sense for business) but do well in P.E. One is soccer in which we happen to have to teach kids at a private school. I enjoyed this experience and along with my summers of counselling and having fun with children I decided I wanted to become a teacher.

I graduated from Douglas College in May 1986 and transferred to Simon Fraser University. I get into the Professional Development Program with a minimum of 60 credits. Myself and a friend of mine are able to pair up for Education 401 and we have a great time teaching. We are new and eager and loaded with creative ideas. Of course this is possible in your first semester of the program. The tough part came in the Spring of 1987.

Now I was alone and left on my own with a class to teach all day. The pressure is great and one tends to become less creative with so many things to focus on. I was assigned to a school in Vancouver and proceeded to get eaten alive by both students and School Associate. Can't say there was a lot of support from the staff either. My management skills were lacking and besides trying to work on that there were 100 other things I was supposed to be working on to become the perfect teacher. Education 401 never prepared me for this. We were given so much freedom in 401 and now I was feeling the pressure to be someone that I wasn't. I didn't feel I could be myself. I end up dropping out at the midterm.

I am confused because I feel that I can teach and I have what it takes and now I've been set back.

I don't quit school this time. I take a classroom management course along with some other summer courses. I get back into Education 405 that Fall. I feel like I'm doing fine during the practicum and then find out that I'm not doing to well at the midterm. I'm devastated but realize that if I'm not going to make it I may as well go about teaching the way I want. The way I feel most comfortable. Up to this point I had been teaching everyone else's style. I had nothing to lose. I complete Education 405 and P.D.P. in December 1987 with a standard teaching certificate. I just wanted to teach so I wasn't looking to go for my degree. Just more courses that have nothing to do with teaching.

I get a job subbing in February 1988 for the district of New Westminster. If I had learned anything from my management course this was when I was to find out. This was also my baptism of fire to see how much I really wanted to teach. I subbed for 14 months and when I saw that I wasn't about to be hired beyond a subbing position, with only a standard certificate, I went back to S.F.U. to complete my degree.

I attacked my studies and wanted to do well assuring myself that this was my ticket to a permanent teaching position. I went to school for 11 months and at the end of it I can remember driving home looking out over Port Coquitlam and saying to myself I've done it . I'm a teacher. I had also said this in December of 1987, but after getting my degree I felt really proud (first one in my family to get their degree) and felt confident that I was going to get a permanent job. I was ready.

I subbed for three months in Coquitlam (here we go again) and then got a permanent position. I've never looked back. I'm doing what I want to do and the permanency of my own class allows me to do things my way and with my creativity. I should mention that the staff at Beach View Elementary had a lot to do with my success and their support was great and still is great. I do and will remember it and hope that I can be of support to other newcomers to the profession as my teaching skills increase and develop.

PART 2

Working Context

I teach a classroom of 25 students with an almost even split between boys and girls. The students are arranged in groups so that high students will be interacting with low students. Each group consists of 4 students with the exception of one group having 5. This works out to a total of 6 groups. Each group has chosen their own name and the students know that they are part of the group and must work as a group. This can be tough at times because they are all very social and there are a few who do not realize the consequences of their actions or inactions. Most students are very good at pointing out the expectations of others but not always quick to see it in themselves. Only about half of the class seems to be responsible for their own work and behaviour. Some are to reliant on their parents and others don't seem to get much support from home. In my classroom I try to teach them responsibility. The room arrangement and the decore of the room focus on a child centered classroom.

Teaching Style

I would like to think that students are realizing they are responsible for their own work and other classroom expectations. I want to make them think about their actions (teaching them to be proactive rather than reactive). I want to give the students freedom to express themselves. I want them to be able to interact with one another. I also realize that not all of the students can handle freedom. It is something that has to be taught. I am careful as to how I react to a students questions and answers. I want students to feel like they are a part of the classroom. That they can be creative. I want to nurture their creativity. They need support and encouragement since it may be lacking at home. I am heavy on those who need it. Pushing those who need pushing because of lack of effort. I tend to feel like I've failed if I can't get certain students to learn or do their work (homework). I realize that I'm accountable to parents (some more than others) and I don't want to be seen as uncaring and indifferent to their child's needs. Having said this I realize that I can't teach them all the way that I would like to and I need help. Also that I can't make a child learn. I can motivate them but I can't force them to learn. Teaching strategies/styles are changing and being stretched depending on the students. I use whatever works in certain cases. I feel that I have a good rapport with the students and want to them to feel that I am approachable. I try to see the humour in life and things although much is lost on the younger students.

Reflections: personal/professional life

From my philosophy statement written at the end of P.D.P. to go with my resume.

As a nurturer of children I feel that my philosophy reflect that children are all important. As a teacher I reflect personality and ideals that the student may model and carry on in life. It is therefore my professional responsibility to give my best to my students.

My role as a teacher is to facilitate the student's growth, which will guide me in providing various teaching strategies. Lessons should be relateable.

The learning environment should be positive and give the child a feeling of safety. A feeling that they too have something to contribute. Freedom to express themselves, inquisitive minds and cooperative learning will be part of an encouraging, nurturing and exciting learning environment. They must be made to feel worthwhile and that their uniqueness makes them special. Students should get a feeling of success. I am here to help the child succeed not fail.

As a professional it is my responsibility to continue to grow and keep current, therefore giving the students the best that can be offered. Introducing fresh and new concepts, varying teaching strategies, sharing in a child's excitement and failures, being enthusiastic, and staying in touch are important teacher factors in establishing the growth of a school child.

My parents helped in shaping my thoughts and actions. They never forced me to do anything but always expected me to try. Positive experiences present positive experiences. I was given the freedom to be me. I learned from my mistakes and found that I analyze. I am a rational thinker. They were always giving and helping so one naturally feels compelled to extend that.

Negative experiences from past teachers have also lead to the way I think about teaching. Because of my own experience as the underdog or minority I feel for those who have to struggle because of factors that they may have no control over. I want them to succeed to feel that they are somebody.

My struggle with trying to please other and not being myself has lead me to see that we are all different and the our differences should be accepted. I want to teach the way that I feel most comfortable with and I want the students to feel that they can be comfortable with their own individuality. Different strokes for different folks.

Finally I would say that my 17 months as a substitute teacher provided me with an opportunity to gather ideas on what I liked and disliked about teaching and ways of teaching. With such a wide variety out there it was an experience to see how things are done by different teachers. Some which I would keep and others that I would like to keep away from.

Future: preferred/personal

I want to extend what I already know and build on those experiences. I am always willing to try something new and creative. I want to keep an open mind and above all never lose my creativity. I realize that I do not know everything and am always teachable. I never want to think that I have arrived as the ultimate teacher for then I may become lax and lazy. I want to focus on the fact that there is always someone better out there and that is what I should strive for. My future is still far ahead of me and apart from the professional aspect I'm not sure what I see myself doing in the future.

I think that this process of reflecting on one's philosophies and styles derived from their past should be done more often as we teachers go through our careers. It

provides one with checks to see if what we believe and think is really what we are presenting to our students and those we work with. It definitely helps one to establish or reestablish what the believe as far as teaching children goes.

KEN

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: What made you become a teacher?

KEN: Enjoyment of kids, working with kids. I had experiences that I could work with kids and I enjoyed doing that, so that is basically it.

INTERVIEWER; uhu

KEN: I get here at about quarter to 8, so that I have lots of time to prep and do any marking that I didn't do the previous night before. So basically I want to be ready when the kids come in so I don't have to run out of the class and get stuff. Kids come in at 9 o'clock, I take attendance. The kids go through a monitor system so everybody gets to take attendance one day and you go through five kids a week. We start with math, usually a bit of a warm up, review of what we've done the day before, and then we go through the new stuff. Some is board work, some is manipulatives, everyday examples things and then I give them assignment, and they work on that. Followed by Language Arts. It is at that point two days a week we are doing right now, we are doing novel studies, so I have three groups, so. Actually one group goes down for learning assistance with Kathy and Gail and then I have two groups up here. Two guys are doing individual novels, cause they are head and shoulders above everybody else. The novels we are doing are too easy and then the rest of the group is working on a novel together. So we will read together and get to read out loud and help each other and then we will do some questions on it, pictures, anything else recommended stuff that they can come up with from the novel...how many days did I say, two days, right, and then three days will be part of my writing process. It is at that point all the kids working at different areas cause obviously work at different speeds. So I have some who start writing out own stories, and some kids have difficulty with that, so I became more structured and gave them a topic and some kids did way better at that. Of course

some are very slow at it, so they are still working on it. So I have about five different things that are going on, different stories and things that the kids are doing. And they seem to enjoy it. Last year I did every day and it turned out to be a bad thing cause it was just too repetative. Five days of writing was just too much, so now its more down to 3 days or 2 days, and they seem to enjoy that more. So thatsuntil recess. After recess we come in, 20 minutes of silent reading. I think it is important that they read. And so sometimes we read together, and they enjoy that, other times I just make them read on their own, not sharing and pointing at pictures, talking, and followed by 20 minutes of either a listening activity, handwriting. So it's mostly language arts according to the stuff, journals for 20 minutes, that, I do that once a week, Tuesday, ... activity Thursday, so some things like that are consistent... Math Tuesdays is the drill day, have a drill when we start off, so they know that, those are routine things. I have 40 minutes before lunch which is either music, computers, want me to be more specific than that?

INTERVIEWER; No, that's good enough.

KEN: Science, and those are the three things, computers, two days music, and then I switch between Science and Social Studies. Kinda flip flop. After lunch from 1 to about 1:20, including reading responses, I read to them. So I started with really short little stories, so it actually a story and I built up to novels, and I try to do a variety of novels and also novels that are at the beginning of a series. I hope when they go to library they pick up the rest and want to read them. So some kids do, some kids don't, and I give about 10 minutes and we just do a reading response. Now this group, last year I let the kids respond anyway they liked and the front of the book had different responses, but this year most of them just do predicting, ... I predict so and so is going to do this or something is going to happen so we do that. P.E. we do for half and hour twice a week right after story. Also language arts in that time, then I tend to do things like adjectives, nouns, spelling, language arts basics, homonyms, and captials, punctuation, all that kind of stuff...Then I have art two days a week at the end of the day and language arts which on Mondays is spelling pre-test, so we go through that and we divide it up ... We go through the test, pre-test and the page is folded in half and so later on they switch papers, kids mark them. Anything that's not right, they look on the overhead cause I have written them on the overhead and they write the correct word beside the other word so they can see the difference. That's basically it, so my day is not exactly the same every day..except..for math..

INTERVIEWER: When you teach language arts, how do you encourage expressive writing?

KEN: How do I encourage expressive writing? I guess I do and I don't. Like I told you, some kids have a hard time, so if kids come to me and they say, I want to write about this, I don't want to write about that, I let them, but I also ask them what do you know about my dog, and then they say, my dog is brown, and that's their story. I encourage them to go beyond where they're at. Even for kids when I give them a topic, some of them start off really well and they sort of peter out, so again I will ask questions. So a lot of times kids were doing the writing process. I do a lot of the editing and proof-reading and I become a questionnaire, and so I'll ask, why did he do this, or what is going to happen, what should be happening. So I ask the five, you know the five questions, what, where, why, when. So they go back and answer them and then fill in the blanks. So I extend it that way. I guess that is about it.

INTERVIEWER: So you're journal writing too?

KEN: Oh yeah, I have journal writing, do that once a week, some kids are told that they can't write about certain things cause they write about it every week. You hear about the soccer game every week. So I encourage them to change it, and others, well now I'm saying you to give me at least four sentences, cause some just give me one sentence. In 20 minutes I think is a fairly long time. And then some struggle with the fact that they have nothing to write. I say, well, did you eat dinner last night, did you walk to school, what did you see on the way to school. Some are having a hard time with that, like they just think of stupid things to write about, or, I didn't do anything this weekend. Well, nothing. You just sat there. Well, I watched some TV. Well talk about TV. So I try to encourage them to think beyond what a lot of us say. I mean a lot of us would agree that sitting and watching TV is nothing but you got to pull something out of them for their journal, so I do that and then the response logs that I've done. Actually with a smaller group like it took one of those anthologies, and we went through it and we had responses and at that point they had to come up with their own, so I didn't say, they didn't do anymore, didn't do a lot of the ..projecting things, like starting to ask real questions, like why is so and so like this, why did the author write that. So I got a few to do that, and the was pretty good. I'm looking at, yeah, so response journals in the process, some stuff on computers...

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

KEN: I think I would say I follow them all but I think I do too many in the last... I push the pre-writing since I know the kids can do the prewriting, and the webbing and... and all that kind of thing and the drafting. I just take it upon myself to do the editing and proof reading and as of yet, actually I guess, number five we haven't done much sharing of our work so now that I've said this, I'll have to sit down and do that. It's just because of the kids I have, you know, I've done. When we did report writing, we have been doing some editing and stuff, but kids will read it and not see anything wrong with, you know, and I think that is part of the thing they don't want to attack somebody's work and say well, you spelled this wrong, or something like that, so I shun that. I do stages three and four myself and I don't actually mind doing that, cause I might get it right the first time, so I haven't really pushed a lot of editing, proofreading.

INTERVIEWER: O.K., what connection if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

KEN: In my kids? (Laughter) That I have now? Actually I'm not sure that I see much of a connection. I mean I do spelling and it's a mixed bag of words, right? Like I've taken from this old unit and they have used ...words and other words and they have said these are then I get the kids work back, and you wonder if they have ever seen that word. A lot of kids will ask me words that we have just finished studying so, and in that respect I don't really see it and a lot of them are still, the ones that I have now are, lot of them still at the inventive stage, sounding it out and coming up with very strange looking words.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else you do to encourage standard spelling, besides like you know, you are saying you underline the words in their writing and you draw it to their attention that they made a mistake?

KEN: ...Use their dictionary, cause a lot of their journals come up and say, can you spell this word for me? Right, and I say, well go to your dictionary and look in your dictionary first. If it is not there I'll put it in your dictionary, so I encourage them to use their dictionaries. And mostly we have done dictionary stuff so they can do it and it's basic beginner one, so that is the other way I do it.

INTERVIEWER: And you mention that in the afternoons you do some specific language arts...are they related directly to spelling?

KEN: No. One thing with the group that I am using now for novel studies when I am going to their questions and stuff, I am correcting their spelling. I really think it is important that generally the sentence may be wrecked the sentence structure the spelling. I think, is important so I go through that and correct it. I ...sound of these kids, most of these kids if I send them back to check the word over, can find it, say that is a mistake. I mean I sent them back even after it's on the overhead. Some of them can't see the thing, send them back two or three times. So I find that most of the kids I don't say go back and look, a few...

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you view spelling as a separate subject from other language art activities?

KEN: Want them on a scale...

INTERVIEWER: Whatever

KEN: I think it ranks pretty high but I also know that it fits with where the person reads. Like I have never had much difficulty spelling, but I have always been a reader. And so I have gathered all my visual images of words and sounding out all that stuff and reading, and kids nowadays don't read. I think there is a direct correlation, so that they don't see words and they don;t sound out words, you know. Take the time to do that, so I mean, the kids that I have, I have the two guys that are doing individual novels are also doing different spelling words. They have had spelling words as high as Grade 6...and they can do these things, but it is also because of their level that they can read that, their reading level is way beyond any of the Grade 3's in here. If I give them any Grade 3 books, they are way behind, they can read in Grade 6, 7. I have one guy which is always, forever taking out Science books, microwaves and reading all these books so I see that as a direct correlation to amount of reading he does, ... how much spelling to give. In answering the question I was way off on a tangent.

INTERVIEWER: No, I think you are answering the question. Like do you in your classroom, I think what ...

KEN: I guess that I do treat it as a separate subject.

INTERVIEWER: Yah, that's what, and when do you, like, you were saying about your day, when exactly does that fit in? You write them on the overhead.

KEN: Yeah, I do, I do the pre-test Monday, in the afternoon the last thing before we go home, so they have time to go to the marking and that kind of thing. I was taking time out on Wednesdays do like little spelling bees, things like that, but I found that in the 20 minutes I am using for other things now,gaps and then Friday's we have the, our spelling tests about the same time, so Thursday I encourage them to take their books home and look them over and actually that's the best way to do it. That's the way I always get it right, memorization, so I'm not saying that's the best way. So I guess I do keep it as a separate thing, based on what I just finished saying with those other things.

INTERVIEWER: I think you may have answered this one too, Ken, what do you think influences students in the learning to spell in standard form?

KEN: Reading.

INTERVIEWER: Reading. In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

KEN: I don't think I actually spend much time at all, I don't think I did anything on spelling. Mean, talk about Math, language arts, how the writing and things like that, but I don't specifically go into spelling maybe one or two kids. I mentioned some...they take more time to look over their words and stuff, but I don't think I specifically go out and take spelling as a separate.

INTERVIEWER: What do you thin is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

KEN: I don't think there is any correct relationship. I think that children can be taught to memorize words. And a lot of them probably do that before any spelling tests, and will forget the following day. So I'm not sure that a direct thing. You can, I

think, just through constant repetition, you can get that. Once again, reading, I think, is important. And people who read a lot don't necessarily have to be intelligent. They should, I guess, based on how much they read. But I don't think there is a direct correlation. In that someone intelligent would also be a good speller. I think that would be an assumption, but I'm not sure that...

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

KEN: How do I think students learn to spell?

INTERVIEWER: In other words,

KEN: Listening. I know it is from listening cause some kids the way kids say words, they try to spell them, they come out the same, other times, so I think it becomes an auditory thing. For some it would be just strict memorization. That's probably where I lose some when they come a we later and say, how do you spell this word, you know, they haven't really been learned. Repetition definitely, because certain words over and over from K to where my kids are now. They can spell, and, and I, and we, you know that is just basic, comes from repetition, and again from the reading. Just seeing those words and having those mental pictures in their head, like I know what that word looks like, cause I've seen it, you know.

INTERVIEWER: Right. O.K. How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, is it a developmental process or is a task memorization?

KEN: Both. For myself I see that, like when you are doing spelling, if I am doing spelling or even when I was taught spelling. The words that I got were standard words. They were not necessarily the words that I got out of a book or probably harder words in books that I read, than I got from a spelling things. So on one extreme, like I could memorize the words that I got from the teacher, but I also learned from the ones that I read. Again that visualization. So I think it is both.

INTERVIEWER: Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, and if so, why and if not, why not?

KEN: I think it is important that they learn to spell because, I mean they are leaving from here going to the next grade and somebody is going to have expectations of how to spell. Some of the inventive spelling will apply here, guess once again is coming from their own brains and mouth. You can't understand a word. Like I had a student last year who I had to ask, like I'm getting pretty good at this point of being able to let this person have like x beside a k and things like that. I wonder, you know, it was a bright person that it could have, I don't know where they got the sounds for things that there is just no combination whatsoever. So I think it is important that they learn how to spell, and I guess the earlier grades inventive spelling is great, but we can't go through life with inventive spelling. Because the newspaper inventive spelling either, has to be correctly spelled, so.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Thank you.

KEN

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: Ken, you stated that the words you practice in spelling are not connecting to the student's writing. Can you say more about that.

KEN: Well, basically I got the words from the Dolch word list, and other common words to Grade 3, that's where I've taken them from. And that's basically the way that I've done it. Because I do the writing process, it's, I only do it maybe twice, three times a week. Makes it difficult to pull out words, I guess, without making it individualized. Since it is not individualized spelling, that's the way I choose to do it. Everybody gets the same set of words, except for a couple, group, three groups...what words the kids get. Does that answer that?

INTERVIEWER: Yah. If it's not working though, in other words, it is not transferring the words that you are teaching in those lists. If they are not transferring back into the writing, do you still feel it is necessarily important to have a weekly spelling test?

KEN: For me it is, because I think I would go back to those words and I know now that even, how many weeks there are in a school year. You tend to, after awhile, to run out of 300 odd words or whatever Grade 3 are supposed to know. So I know that I am

going back to words that they have already had. And some of them will get it and other ones will make the same mistake again. So there is kind of that idea of repetition. I think it is important for kids to spell. So as long as I think it is important, and this is the way I'm doing it until somebody shows me another way. You know, a better way. This is the way I will do it.

INTERVIEWER: Where did that idea, where did the idea of teaching spelling in lists and having weekly tests, where did that idea come from?

KEN: I guess basically that's the way that I got it in school, so I just carry that on. Yah, I guess that's the way, I would just transfer it the same way that I got it. Nobody, like I said, nobody has shown me any different ways and even though things that I'm using now as a package that was produced for Coquitlam that presents spelling in that way.

INTERVIEWER: When you find spelling mistakes in student's writing, you handle it differently for the individual student. Could you give me some examples of what you do for different students.

KEN: First of all, I never use a red pen. When I'm correcting words so, and usually the corrections come during writing process. Journals I don't worry about cause that's their own, you know, style of writing and things. I don't want to fool around with that. So I use a blue pencil and, or a blue pen, and I'll just, for most people I write the word out once. Other kids I will do it more times and go through the whole thing, and correct everything. The kids that I would expect to spell words right, like if I know it's a spelling word or something, then I will just tell them, here's the word, go back and fix it, cause I know that you know how to spell it, cause we've done it somewhere, or get your dictionary.

INTERVIEWER: What do you mean by the kids that you expect, is there a reason why you can say, I expect that person, whereas I don't expect that person to be able to spell the word.

KEN: Yeah. That's not a good answer, is it? (Laughter) I think in every class you have certain expectations of certain kids, you know. I can look at some work and say, this person is being awfully lazy for what I know they can do, what they're abilities are. And so at that point I'll just say, O.K. first of all, we've had this word before. We've seen it before, you know. Even things like copying off the board really bothers

me when they can't spell it right. To me, that's just laziness for the majority of kids. Well, just, this is what it sounds like, and I know what the sentence is, so I'll just scrawl it down, so. I send them back and make them look at it and some they don't even have the ability to find the word in a sentence, like they will read it the same, you know, even if it is spelled wrong. Just say what is this word and they'll say it correctly, but they won't sound it up phonetically or whatever so.

INTERVIEWER: You encourage standard spelling by giving weekly tests, by having them find misspelled words in their writing, that you have underlined, by having students use their dictionary, and yet, you don't specifically comment about spelling on their report cards. Is that true?

KEN: Yup.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Do you have any reasons for not doing that?

KEN: I think for the most part my comments would be pretty standard right across the board. Like I said, kids will go home and their parents will take the time to study with them. And they will have memorized the words, so I guess in some ways, now that I am saying this, I don't put a whole lot of stock into that. This is brutal, just going to thrash my whole writing, my whole spelling, going down the tube... Yah, so I don't want to put like a whole lot of stock in it, because if I do, then parents will say, well my child is just a great speller. Where I know that some of them, within a week or so, will have forgotten the spelling of the words. So I don't put a whole lot of stock in it. I like to kind of, see spelling as part of the whole language arts process instead of just one specific thing to look at, cause there is more that is involved in it. Comes up in the writing and the reading and all that kind of stuff....

INTERVIEWER: O.K. You stated that learning to spell was both a developmental process and a task of memorization. But I understand that you believe that inventive spelling is all right to a point, but that there is a point which they can't invent forever. Would you expand on that idea a little?

KEN: They can't invent forever, because I can't understand. Eventually it comes to a point where certain letters of certain sounds, you know, and other letters don't, just don't fit. And so you can't continue on with making these things up. Also maybe easy for me, because in some cases I get to read the whole thing in context, so you get a few

words and you have some idea of the kid. Like journals, for instance, sometimes it is easy, because you know something about the child, and they always like to write about a certain thing. So you can kinda pick it up. But if a parent has to read the same thing, right, they are going to wonder what it is that these kids are spelling. So to a certain point I can accept it and probably in journals I accept it, you know, like I said, things like writing process and that, which more people will view than myself. Parents and other people, I find it important that they have to tell them correct spelling.

INTERVIEWER: Well is there a particular age or grade that you see that all, you know, that they should be able to spell correctly?

KEN: I base it on my three's, which most of my three's are pretty low, right. I would think that Grade 3 would be a pretty good gauge, based on what I see now because a lot of them, you know, a lot of them are probably more Grade 2 than they are three, as far as spelling and that.

INTERVIEWER: You just mentioned also, parents. Do you feel any pressure from the parents that there should be a spelling component in your room?

KEN: No. But I don't feel pressure from parents for anything that I do in my class.
(Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else on the issue of spelling that you feel strongly about?

KEN: Oh, I feel strongly that I am probably like missing the whole boat after I finished answering question number three. I am going to have to go back and question why I am doing spelling, I guess. Like I do think it is important, but now I'm not too sure, that the way I'm doing it is the right way. Stew over it this all week, spelling.

APPENDIX III

Part 2

RACHAEL

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

May 22, 1964 - When it all began!

I was born at 12:02 a.m. to Don and Shirley Maxwell, both aged 26. Cam is my older brother and because of closeness in ages (only 15 months difference) we were/are very good friends. We're there for each other when we need someone to listen and to help out. My sister, Sherry, born in 1967, and I have also become closer in the last two years. She is one of my closest friends, too. I love my family!

We started out as a happy/normal family as I remember lots of laughter and friends and other family members being around a lot. Daddy worked for Imperial Oil Home Heat and travelled throughout BC which meant quite a bit of moving around for the family I lived in Burnaby for my first six months, then we moved to Burns Lake, BC; then back to the coast, Port Moody; then to Prince George where my sister was born. We moved to 636 Garrow Drive, Port Moody, BC, where I began school - Glenayre Elementary - where I did Kindergarten and Grade One. I loved school and was always academically successful. Socially, however, I was incredibly shy. Whenever my friend, Tracey Perry, was sick and couldn't go to school, I was instantly sick and could sometimes stay home, too.

My dad and I had a very special bond. We would read together after dinner - the paper, books, Cam's readers from school. I'm sure it was Daddy who gave me my love of books, reading and learning. My brother would bring his readers home from school and I would read them upside down before Cam could read them right side up. I loved doing things with my Dad - swimming, walking, driving around. (Even grocery shopping because he would take me for an ice cream at Dairy Queen at Burquitlam Plaza!).

He was, I am sure a workaholic, as he worked to earn his Commerce degree from UBC. Mom tells me about their dating days and she wouldn't see him for a

couple of weeks because he would be studying and working on papers, and working at Safeway. He continued to go to night school when he had a family. I always wanted to go to university just like him and carry a briefcase just like him.

Daddy always wanted the best for us, too. He had high expectations for us. He would tell me I was his princess. According to some of the reading I've done in the past year, I've discovered this is not the healthiest type of relationship for a parent and a child to have. The child doesn't see that the husband and wife are the primary characters in the family, thus, causing problems later in life when they are in a relationship. I was going to win beauty contests (eg. Miss Silver Star in Vernon). He wanted me to earn the Imperial Oil Scholarship and go to university. A lot of what I did was, perhaps, for Daddy. He was taken away from me April 16, 1972 in a fatal traffic accident.

Family Change - how did it affect me?

Mom was widowed at 34 with 3 children, aged 9, 7 and 5. It was a loss that still lingers in our memories. At the age of 7 I felt it was my responsibility to help Mom and make her happy. By doing this, I would make Daddy proud of me, too. Daddy continues to influence me. I feel like he is a guiding light or a Higher Power watching over me, helping me make decisions about my life.

It is partly because of my father that I have accomplished the things I have set out to do. Striving to succeed at school, earning the Imperial Oil Scholarship, going to university were dreams that were partly shaped by his influence. Thank you, Daddy!

My childhood was not what I would call even close to normal from the point when Daddy died. I have done a lot of reading and reflecting during this past year about dysfunctional families and the roles of family members. I was what psychologists call "spousified" by my Mom. I took on the role of spouse for my Mom. She confided in me and I was there for her during the next few years when she began having marital problems with her second husband, Ken, who had 2 kids, Debbie and Jeff, from a previous marriage. Mom was not ready for this relationship and she could not accept parts of Ken's personality that were so different from my Dad's. They were married only 2 years, 2 months and 6 days after my Dad died.

I was in Grade 7 when Mom told me that she was unhappy in her marriage and did not know what to do. From that moment on, free and easy childhood was definitely over. First, my real father had been taken away from me and now I was having to deal with the eventual separation of my parental unit as I now knew it. The worst thing was I was not allowed to talk about it to anyone. Another family secret.

Mom and Ken's marriage was a change in lifestyle that was difficult, but fun, at the same time. Debbie and Jeff came to visit every other weekend, for 2 weeks in the summer and a week at Christmas. We each had our activities and Mom and Ken did a phenomenal job of transporting us and supporting us in everything we did.

Mom wanted us kids to try as many different activities as possible so we would be prepared for adolescence and adulthood. I figure skated, took dance lessons, swimming lessons and went to Brownies. Later, I switched to hockey, and soccer. I loved being active and this passion helped me to keep my weight down, an obsession that is still with me but not quite as all-consuming as it once was.

I was a very good, well-behaved, helpful, considerate child. I remember getting up at 6 a.m. on weekends to go biking, then for a run, shower, iron for Mom, then make breakfast for the entire family of 7, do the dishes, errands, babysit 4 or 5 nights a week. At school, I got great grades, was involved in all the sports, student council activities (was president of the Student Council in Grade 10), was friends with everyone. I was everything to everyone.

The funny thing is - it is funny today - I felt like I didn't count for much because I did not have a boyfriend! This always lead me to believe there was something wrong with me. In some ways, I felt thankful to be smart and successful but in other ways it made me feel that others didn't like me because of "it" (my intelligence). I have tried to stifle/hide it.

My home life continued to be stressful, unpredictable and unstable during my high school years. At the end of grade 10, Mom decided to try to get together and stay together with Ken again for the fourth time. The pattern had been set - Mom would get fed up, frustrated by Ken, ask him to leave, he would leave for a couple of months, they would talk because Mom would get lonely and ken would return. This time was different, however, as Ken had been transferred by Imperial Oil to Edmonton. Mom,

Sherry and I left for Edmonton at the beginning of my Grade 11 year, leaving Cam behind since he had just graduated and was working full time. We got moved into the house, enrolled in school and Mom became totally depressed and decided it was not right and we moved back to Burnaby.

I buried myself in my books to catch up to my classmates, babysat as much as possible and developed a circle of friends at school who were fun to be with. I still remained true to my Mom and stayed home as much as possible in case she needed me. It was at this time that I realized that she drank a lot. When I came home from school and up until the time I went to bed she usually had a glass of wine in her hand. It calmed her nerves, she would tell me.

I got my first part-time job in January 1981 as a cashier in a gas station and my life began to take shape as I had lots of money to buy clothes, save for a car and university and do fun things with friends.

My grade 12 year and graduation were everything they were supposed to be. I was still getting good grades, meeting new people, and began dating boys. I went out with some pretty cute guys who were to me "the- be-all and the end-all" ie. I was going to marry each one of them. I took things very seriously and very early on would determine the fate of those poor boys.

The biggest thrill of my life had to be getting accepted into SFU on a scholarship from Imperial Oil. I wanted to earn my Bachelor of Business Administration to be just like Daddy. Well, I enjoyed my first year and got A's in socializing and pub nights and a D in Calculus and an F in Economics; and was placed on academic probation. After seeing those grades and having gone on a boring date with my Economics TA, I decided that Business was not for me.

My life began to change rapidly from this point. In between semesters, I worked at the gas station and went to the Calgary Stampede, and found myself a new boyfriend, named Hans. He was very worldly, ten years my senior, very empathetic, very serious, very opinionated, very, very organized, leading a very structured life. He was/is a very dedicated hard-working teacher in Pitt Meadows. We dated as friends but I knew that we were not on the same wave length. I felt totally stressed out after a date with him. I tried to break off the relationship several times but he always seemed

to talk me into getting back together with him. Friends and relatives told me it would not work, that he was not the man for me but I continued to see him throughout my second year of university which was more successful but not less turbulent as I got pregnant and had to have an abortion. I guess I could have kept the child who would have been 8 this year, but it just was not the right thing for me to do. After all, what would people say about me or the family. It had to be one of the most devastating events in my life and I cannot say that the emotional pain is gone entirely. Having been impregnated with Hans' child was another reason for me to stay with him. After all, who would want a used woman? We carried on, Hans happy, and me following along, doing what was expected of me.

We spent 2 months together in Europe and I felt totally controlled, sort of dragged around by him. I had always had a sense of adventure and loved doing different things and this trip was no exception. I loved discovering new places, lingering and enjoying the culture and languages of Europe. We went to Portugal, Spain, France and Holland. I feel very fortunate to have had the experience and I know I will be back.

I started a legal secretary course in October, 1984, and did very well. I completed it a week before Hans and I were married

a year later - August 3, 1985. We were married and honeymooned in Europe - Holland, Germany, Austria, Switzerland and northern Italy.

I came back and got three job offers and took the one closest to home in Coquitlam in a conveyancer's office. Unfortunately, this lawyer was cheap and, at times, quite nasty so I applied at BC Tel and got a 2-month summer temp job, then a job at Nexus Engineering until something at BC Tel came up again. By December of that year, another job came up and I remained there until the following September when I went back to school to begin working towards my teaching degree. My decision to go into teaching was prompted after taking a course, entitled, "Career and Lifestyle Planning" with Barb Mowat. She was incredibly motivational and supportive. When the Interest Inventories, IQ tests, Ability tests came in, they pointed me in the direction of motherhood or teaching. Well, the latter seemed a lot more appealing at the time.

After an incredibly enjoyable and challenging time back at school with a direction in mind, I went back to BC Tel for a year while continuing to take night school courses. I loved it there, too. I worked out in their gym and at Fitness New West, made lots of friends and became to know the real Rachael. At this time, Hans and I were moving right along as we sold our condo, bought a house (May, 1989), and were planning our third trip to Europe. Financially and materially, we were doing great.

I went to Europe with my friend, Hazel, for a month. For the first time in my life, I felt like I had control of my life. I got to decide things daily. I was very upset the day Hazel left and Hans joined me for two months.

While I was away, however, I found out that I had been accepted into PDP which I started in the fall of 1989. I felt like I belonged in the classroom as soon as set foot in the Grade 1/2 classroom at Golden Ears Elementary School in Maple Ridge. I had a wonderful School Associate, Denise Johansen, Faculty Associate, Judith Grafton and partner, Heather Haggerty, who remains a close friend today. My second practicum was even more character building. I was in Wendy Newport's K/1 classroom at Baker Drive Elementary School.

PDP was a wonderful experience that I wish I could do over again as it's just like a favorite movie. The second time you get to see it, you see new things and learn new things about the characters. I love learning and value the lessons I was learning everyday and the people that I got to meet. As a matter of fact, many of my friends from PDP will be around for a long time to come. PDP is an experience that is synonymous with life. It was intellectually, physically and emotionally challenging but also extremely rewarding and fun (as long as I kept my sense of humour). It is very important for me to be intellectually challenged and involved in many things in life that is when I feel most stimulated and alive.

After PDP, I finished three courses, subbed in Maple Ridge, Mission and Coquitlam and learned so much. Nothing, however, could prepare me for my first teaching job at Beach View in Coquitlam. The job was available because of Dual Entry and the influx of excited students --- or was it --- parents who wanted their kids to start school early. In any case, I was thrilled and pretrified from December 12

when Jane Olser hired me until January 4, 1991 when my first class was to come together.

When the job did start, I was obsessed. I became emotionally involved with it. I took two courses so that I could complete my degree by the end of the summer. I worked my butt off. I look back now and realize that my job consumed me, defined me, and that isn't healthy. Needless to say, I spent less time with Hans and my waking hours preoccupied with my job and a very supportive, loving friend who gave me strength and a sense of self-worth. I knew one day that I would leave Hans and had already tried once to leave during our 6-year marriage. The time had come, though, when I could no longer live like a woman-in-chains, and made to feel responsible for Hans' life. I was always there for him just as I had been for Mom, co-dependent again and it was through the eyes of an outsider that I learned that I actually had choices in my life. On March 24, 1991, I left Hans and the lie that I was living.

I finished the school year, physically and emotionally tired out but I had to begin my last semester at SFU. I worked hard, exercised a lot. I enjoyed, for the first time in my life, time to myself. I was fortunate to be able to housesit for someone who lived close to the dykes in Port Coquitlam. I rode my bike everywhere, ran along the dykes, ate healthful and nutritious food (I got to choose what and when I ate). I found it difficult to study but I did what I had to do to do well. I began to realize that there are more important things in life than straight A's. I also spent time with family and friends. I loved having guests from Japan stay with me. Kumiyo and Kazuya and I became very close friends and we spent lots of time talking and sharing and laughing.

My second teaching year has been a joy! The children came into school wanting to learn, wanting to be challenged. They learn best when they can talk, play, are involved in their work. It is a challenging job, pulls one in a million different directions, evokes all emotions, forces one to be ten steps ahead of the children -- and I love it! I have to admit, I get physically and emotionally tired and I must take time out for me. When I stay in tune with the children and see things from their point of view, I can teach the way they learn.

1) My current working context

I teach a class of 18-6 year olds and 1-5 year old (who is a native Indian, entitled to a full-day Kingergarten program). The six year olds are in the middle of their second year of the Primary Program and the five year old is just finishing off her first

year of the Primary Program. The classroom is set up for active-interactive learning to take place. That is, the children have room to play with each other or spend time alone. The children are very social, talkative, dramatic, open, honest, bright, imaginative, spontaneous, emotional. The curriculum is child-centred/directed and the classroom displays this. The socio-economic status of the neighbourhood determines the kind of learning that takes place. A lot of time is spent on problem-solving (the social kinds of problems), and social skills. There are some extremely caring, compassionate children in the class who make this quite enjoyable and easy to teach.

2) Teaching style and curriculum

My teaching style is based on the Primary Program. As a teacher, I am the facilitator of the children's learning and growth as a whole person -emotionally, socially, physically, intellectually. The learning, as much as possible, is child-paced, takes their abilities and interests into consideration. Their projects - writing, art, constructions or inventions - should reflect their knowledge, interests, thus, guaranteeing their success and feelings of accomplishment.

I want to establish a classroom where the children feel safe and happy. I think more learning can take place when they feel valued. I try to be calm, positive, flexible, enthusiastic, patient, open, helpful. A sense of humour and playfulness helps, too.

I want to create a tone that extends into my life - honesty, openness, happiness and laughter, sharing of feelings, and fully experiencing life and other people.

As far as curriculum is concerned, the children are it! Their interests and experiences are the working curriculum. They come up with the best ideas for learning takes place when they are interested in the subjects.

3) Past reflections

My childhood experiences were happy but there was a lot of sadness, too. Now, I suppose I'm addicted to fun, laughter so I like to keep positive and have been able to quite nicely, this past year. Thank you, lord! I concentrate on positive aspects of children's learning and what they can do. PDP prepared me for that. I would like to

become more familiar with curriculum so I know where to take the children from their current position.

I loved school, felt successful there and believe all kids should feel this in order for them to be lifelong learners. Children need to feel trusted and valued before they can learn the intellectual stuff. They are all individuals from different backgrounds and need to be treated accordingly.

It is important for all aspects of child to be addressed, including the social and emotional parts. Positive attitude about themselves helps them learn, make friends, contribute ideas, share. I was very shy at school. One day in Grade 2, in a class of 40 children we had a substitute. At the end of the day after I had completed quite a large number of SRA sets, the teacher said "You all have a detention except Carolyn Miller. She can go because she did not say word all day". I probably would have loved to have been laughing and joking but I wanted to be soooo good!

Children should have a chance to be with friends, learn to cooperate and play with others. At this stage, they are interested in learning and observing the world.

In Grade 12, I had to work cooperatively with a rowdy guy and loud-mouthed rock 'n roll chick. I could not believe my English teacher was going to make me work with these two. I only wanted an A and they only wanted to pass. I had much fun working with those two. They did what they had to and had some great ideas for me to work with. We ended up getting an A or a B but they became approachable human beings for me after getting to work with them. I believe children and adults ought to have the opportunity to work with others and not just their best friends. Recently, I partnered the children up with people who they had not worked with very much. One little girl who had been quite reluctant to work with one little boy said, when we were all finished, "I made a new friend today". Neat!

Because of my unstable childhood, adolescence, life, I want a stable environment to a certain extent. I do believe children can learn best when they are secure. Even when I was in Grade 11 and had moved to Edmonton and back, I found it hard to concentrate, so children from unstable homes deserve at the very least to come to a classroom where they will be comfortable and secure and acknowledged.

4) My preferred professional future

I have chosen profession that gives the gift of children and seeing the world through new eyes. For this, I feel fortunate. I want to provide a fun yet stimulating, challenging program to meet the needs of developing the "whole" child. I am open to any suggestion to this challenge.

- I need to network with others in school, in the district and outside of the district, take courses

- in the fall, I will begin my 6th year - I am ambitious and love to learn and I learn best when I am involved.

- I have signed up for Math Their Way to improve my Math program so it is more individualized, self-paced.

- I am going to save for a leave of absence to, perhaps, go back to school or teach somewhere else for a year - New Zealand, Japan

- for the first time in my life I am content to stop striving to go to the very top in the field. Last year I was thinking about a principalship. I now know I want to teach and be with the children.

- I want to have student teacher in a year as this will help me set/achieve some basic classroom organization/lesson planning/behavioral objectives

- I want to write some children's books

Personal future

1) spiritual

- spend time each day in meditation, reading affirmations

- continue healing work with ACOA, 12-Step, individual therapy

2) social

- spend quality time visiting with family and friends. This past year has given me lots of time to appreciate and accept them and love them for who they are. As I have learned and continue to accept myself, I have been able to allow others to be who they are.

- I want and love to meet people and want to widen my social circle.

At this time (June 5, 1992), I do not feel ready for an exclusive relationship but when I am it will be "roomy" there will be space for individuality, self-growth and strength and self-love that allows that to happen. The relationship will be based on mutual respect, honesty, openness, comfort with each other, shared interests, activities, love of people, especially children, travel, environment, outdoors, back to basics existence, enjoy the moment, kind of a guy, ambitious, determined, happy in his work; enjoys, prepares good food, open-minded, honest, not into image, does not carry a comb in his back pocket, has a sense of humour, loves kids, open generous, has a big heart, is spontaneous, fit, sports-minded. I saw quote recently - "It's not what you give to me that makes me love you but what you give to others" - I love this.

- I want to nurture relationship with those I can have fun with, feel comfortable with. I like to have a number of people in my life because I get so much from all of them. Each of them is special.

3) Physical

- I love to be active/outside/huffing and puffing/sweating
- I'll swim anywhere
- I love my bikes - a woman of the '90's - I have 3 of them. I'll do some bike trips
- I have recently learned how to kayak
- I want to learn to windsurf, scuba dive
- I will run and do aerobics (my passions) one day again
- I enjoy weightlifting - I'm hooked
- I like down hill and cross country skiing, camping, horse back riding, hiking, fishing
- I want to do a triathlon

4) Recreation/Hobbies

- I knit
- I have a patio garden
- I am enjoying decorating my apartment
- I love cooking
- I love to travel and would like to explore these destination in the next year:
 - Club Med
 - Cycle England
 - Gulf Islands
 - Quebec City (have just been offered a bursary to study French for three weeks this summer)

5) Intellectual

- I want to read more classics
- I want to take some more courses, some in the area of teaching, some not (eg. philosophy)

RACHAEL

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: What made you become a teacher?

RACHAEL: I have to say, when you first asked me that question ten minutes ago, love of children just came into my head. I also, always resisted going into teaching because it was too traditional, I wanted to be a business man walking out in a briefcase, but I took this interest, I took a careerfrom '87 and that course use an interest inventory, when the IQ test, ability test, my professions I should be involved in were either motherhood or teaching, those were the things I scored highest in, so I thought, well, the next point, I guess I will go into teaching. That's what made me want to teach most I think.

INTERVIEWER: That's neat. O.K. Could you describe for me a typical teaching day, what your days are like?

RACHAEL The children come in and we normally do journals, do a lot of just kind, of just kind of chatterly journal, do a lot of visiting and the children either do their

writing in their journals. From there I have the children read what they have written or I write down what they dictate and from there they go to a center somewhere in the classroom. Some or more play oriented centers and other children choose to do more writing, math, kids just love math, spend a lot of time at the math centers, and from there we have journal sharing. We read our journals that the kids, they enjoy sharing the journals and the children being really good, little audience and everything, clap after the child has shared. Then we have a story and we do morning news and printing on the chalkboard. Let me see. By that time it is recess time and, now this might sound very structured, in that time there are so many things that are happening and eventful day.

After recess we have book time, special helpers read a book of their choice. I'll read a story, then we might have math or do an art activity or thinking strategy in different orders until lunch time.

After lunch is usually the time when we have our special activities. Today is Music, Wednesday is we have buddy books in library, P.E. we have Monday and Thursdays, and Fridays there might be a video or some fun activities, cooking activities. I think that sums it up. Two mornings a week we have a mum that comes in to read to the children and it's fun and the children are learning and we have little meetings to discuss how the day is structured. Actually on Friday the kids decided that they wanted to restructure the morning a little bit, they weren't too happy with the way the mornings were going.

(Laughter)

Right now we are working on this Australia unit, which is really taking off, they are really excited about learning about big Koala bears and kangaroos and they are writing about those things in their journals.

INTERVIEWER: You know when I'm listening to you I am smiling because you are smiling and you talk with such pride about your class - so neat - I just love it.

RACHAEL: It's so much fun.

INTERVIEWER: Really special.

Sounds like a really interesting day, I'd love to be in your class. You know how you talked a lot about language activities, you do a lot of language and my question is, when you teach language arts, how do you encourage expressive writing? How do you encourage that in your room.?

RACHAEL Well, oh boy, good question. Children really do like, I'm trying to give them as much knowledgeable language, as excite words and frames as are necessary. There are some kids who are quite brave and they will know to write other things besides I see, I see, I like, I like. Seems that the background, the ones with the home backgrounds that aren't very stable tend to like the frames, I don't know, I may be generalizing. But I like to expand, the other children that want to write a little bit more freely just ask them questions 'cause you really, tell me more about that or what else could we add to your writing, without, I don't like to put down what they have written but I know at times they just need a little bit of stretching, I know they can do it. Does that answer your question?

INTERVIEWER: Yeh, I think there are other things that you do too, when you were talking about your day, I think that the sharing of their journals too really encourages them to learn from each other too. I sort of thought of that when you were talking, that's a neat way for them to have each other model.

RACHAEL That's right.

They all sit and sort of, they all help each other with their journals and they will say we copied each other today, but we don't use that term, we helped each other.

(Laughter)

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's cute

To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

RACHAEL: At this point we do everything may look like a draft, the children the work that they do ends up being a final copy. But there are children who are ready, and who do edit. There are four of them in the class that do edit their work. They will write something and I will ask them would you like me to put this, would you like to see how this would be seen if it was seen in a book? And some of them will say no, some of them no, no I like it the way it is, so I can read it. And there are some that are

still to get down, I see something, or in their emergent spelling, I love you. I love you. That's a lot of brainwork right there and I don't feel that they are quite ready to erase all that or do a whole new page with it all written correctly with the spaces and punctuation. So I, does that answer your question?

INTERVIEWER: What connection, if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

RACHAEL I think just through the writing process and practicing and seeing yet other students writing and my writing, they're actually becoming closer and closer to standard spelling all the time. There are stages, I'm not sure what they are called, but there are five stages in the writing process and in learning to spell from scribbling all the way down to standard spelling. And but, I think, eventually the children will get better just through seeing print and using it, and getting used to the sounds and sharing and doing lots of talking and reading, and yeh, reading their own writing that they spell, big connection.

INTERVIEWER: How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing?

RACHAEL I don't, I wouldn't call them a mistake. I would ask them would you like me to put this into the language text that we see in books or

INTERVIEWER: That's a neat way to do it.

RACHAEL I never use, would you like me to write this the real way for you. I give them lots of encouragement. Boy you sure, you're really thinking today, you have lots of sounds in that work, but you just left out one little one, one short little e over here. Just I try not to correct everything in their journal. I try to pick out maybe one letter or capital letter or capital letter if there is a capital letter in the middle of a sentence we just work on that on that particular day and maybe scribble a reminder note tomorrow, we won't put a capital a for a in the middle of the sentence and lots of encouragement..I believe in it I really believe in the writing process. But I am finding it really it is just so peer pressure or something, I see other work up in the hall that I'm not quite sure that the children have done it themselves and sounded out the words and I don't I think there is a lot of value in them practicing and taking risks, especially at this stage. They are just been in school for a year and half and everything they do, every attempt they

make at trying to write is, should be supported, just like when they are learning to talk. We can't be correcting their every grammatical error they make and have to give them support and encouragement and practice.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Is there anything else that you do that is deliberate to encourage standard spelling?

RACHAEL: I try to have quite a bit of writing up to do with the units and

INTERVIEWER: I have been noticing your charts on the wall.

RACHAEL Yeh, and signs and everyday, if we don't do the news at the board we do some sort of a chart, make up a chart for playground rules or how to share, taking turns, and reading the books, sharing books. I am quite concerned about the children learning standard spelling and I want to send them off to the next teacher, I have a little bit of concern that they know as much as the kids coming from other classes.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you use spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

RACHAEL For a short time I was doing McCracken spelling, I would take a small group of children based on their ability to the book corner. We would write on our little chalk boards spelling, working on blends or short a, short e, things like that. And actually I should get back into that, it was working out quite nicely having the five different groups and we were doing spelling on chalk boards for five or ten minutes, the kids loved it. That's, I haven't done that for a couple of months.

INTERVIEWER: So, like do you see spelling as a separate subject, or do you see it more intertwined in writing?

RACHAEL More intertwined. More in a meaningful context. We do Yesterday we are doing words that ended in ay and in the secret message I left out all the ay sounds, I made up a silly message, and the kids listed off another ten words ended in ay and they all rhymed with day, and it worked out really well.

INTERVIEWER: That's a neat activity. That's neat.

What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

RACHAEL: That's a very good question. I think they have an inborn desire to want to know how to spell like the people who write books, like mommy and daddy, or teachers, they just, I really think they want to. They have desire to know and they don't ask how to spell words very often, they will just sound it out. I will help them but they want to know.

INTERVIEWER: That's neat. In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling when you write your report cards?

RACHAEL I would make a comment something like their emergent spelling is through practice has become more conventional over time. something like that. I'll just say that their spelling is becoming more conventional, or that they are taking more risks with their spelling or they are becoming more familiar with blends, becoming more familiar with short vowel sounds. I'll leave it there for now, I'll get back to it.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

RACHAEL I don't think there is a connection. In this class there is a handful of children who come out with extremely brilliant comments for kids of this age and they either, they don't take the time to spell the word or they don't know, they might not know the sounds of the alphabet, they are not that familiar with it. But their world knowledge, they do so many things with their family, and that the moms and dads read to them a lot or they watch educational shows on T.V., Knowledge network, the kids come to school with such a wealth. They might not be able to document all those facts in writing and correctly spell the words, I don't think that there is that much of a connection.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

RACHAEL Through practice and exposure to books and print, signs, charts on the wall, other people, watching, observing other people write and just writing as much as they can, writing the grocery list for mom and dad, writing notes to grandma and grandpa, making little booklets, labeling cards, just using print in a meaningful manner.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, is it a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?

RACHAEL: Developmental. I think it, when the children are ready, they will learn, but we have to, I should have mentioned this before to, we have to sort of scaffold for them, we have to be there, to, can't push them along the kids that use from their journal every day after awhile have to change even if they change the frame. I like to me saying something else and using different.. need to kind of push them along.

INTERVIEWER: Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form?

RACHAEL I no, I think the kids, they have such wonderful stories and ideas, they are so creative, I think it is more important to nurture their creativity and their imagination and some of the stories they have are so touching and tender, who cares if they can't spell the words. Death. There is a death in the family in their writing board and their journal. I think we should be addressing it that child and that idea that's down there and not, excuse me but you spelled death, Deth. I don't think that is appropriate at all. Either we have to address the child's feeling at the time, what they are expressing, I don't think it's that important.

RACHAEL

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: Rachel, you were saying that from our interview you wanted to add a little bit to the first question, what made you become a teacher.

RACHAEL: Yes. I wanted to add that I always enjoyed doing crafty things and I think I'm quite creative. So I like putting that side of myself to work in the classroom. And I love what comes from the children after I present them with something, they come up with even more ideas. That's sort of fun, my childish side gets to come out a little bit more in the classroom.

INTERVIEWER: That's neat. Rachael, when we were talking about encouraging expressive writing, you said it seems that background the ones with the home backgrounds that aren't very stable, tend to like frames. Can you explain that idea a little more to me.

RACHEAL: I think they feel more comfortable with words that they know and are familiar with. And they don't want to take any chances by writing things that they might be "wrong". But they take a big risk by starting a sentence with, oh last night I got to do this. They would prefer to write, I see a sun, or I like. They're still safer in the confines of a frame.

INTERVIEWER: Why do you think that is?

RACHAEL: Could be, because things at home, they have to do things right at home, and they might not be given opportunities to try things, and they don't feel safe in a risk taking environment. They are not used to trying things, and perhaps, not really failing, but trying things and having them not quite right. But just being encouraged and encouraged to try again. They could be told that they are stupid or, or told that they are wrong and don't do it unless you do it right. It's not a very supportive environment. I think that might be why.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first begin to believe in this idea?

RACHAEL: Oh, actually I think it just happened this year. In having worked with younger kids last year, I have the same ones that I've had since last January and I notice a big difference in the ones that come from, seem to come from a more stable home. These, the children from a more stable home seem to be writing at this time, three, four sentences in their journal, and the other ones, they might write five or six, but mainly frame type sentences. Which is fine.

INTERVIEWER: I understand that you don't believe that spelling mistakes found in student writing should be viewed as mistakes. You emphasize the positive and tend to encourage your students. Could you expand on this viewpoint.

RACHAEL: Did I say that? (Laughter) Oh, I'm sorry... It's been a long day.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. I'll just say it again. I understand, and you can correct me if I am wrong, that you don't believe that spelling mistakes found in student writing should be viewed as mistakes. You emphasize the positive and tend to encourage your students. Could you expand on that viewpoint.

RACHAEL: Oh, I think the kids, it's hard for them. Every day they come into school and they want to try and write and tell their story and it's. We tell them that their words are spelled incorrectly and we should point out every spelling correction that has to be made, and we circle it in red ink. I don't think they, anyone feel like writing very much. So I think if we encourage the positive, tell them, oh look at that, you got the th in think and the k, fantastic. By writing something in a response in their journal, use that as an example. If we use the same words that they've used, but the words that they use, but printed in the way they would be seen in books, the children will pick up from that and from seeing the words over and over again. Oh yeah, that's how to spell. That's how I spell that. And it just takes time and exposure to print and it's hard. I would like to be able to sit down with the kids and maybe teach each child a particular spelling rule that they are working on, whether it is a diagraph or a blend or, not up on my phonics lingo, but I'd love to be able to sit down with one child, at least one child, preferably the whole class, and work on, a particular thing that they need help with every day. And I'm not even close to half the class, but, if I can get through to a couple of kids that ... both say k and I feel that I am doing something. And if they use it the next day, great, I can just move onto something else. Does that sound,

INTERVIEWER: Very clear. This idea of being positive and trying to get around to all the kids, of trying to, I guess, would it be like conferencing. Is this idea important to you in your program, really important?

RACHAEL: Yes, it is. Now that you mention it, it's really important and I don't, I haven't really made time for it in the day, not enough time for it. During the week, not enough planned time. Something to do for next year. But it's very valuable and to

teach all of the kids, who was it today, wanted to use the word climbing, the koala is climbing. And I had to explain to Brian that there's a, I told him there is be in climbing, there is a silent b. But to tell some of the kids that, that are just starting to write, well, that does not make any sense to them. That b says b, and nothing else. They are just not ready for that rule, that, for that lesson. So I think individual conferences, they are so rewarding in it's one, they just grow from those.

INTERVIEWER: Is this something you would like other teachers to learn about, to see other teachers doing?

RACHAEL: Yes. It's very valuable. Because I know out there there are some who are still teaching whole class lessons on sh and ch, which is, it can be done in a comfortable environment, but give them a worksheet on sh words or ch words. Some kids just aren't ready for that. In this class, I know they are not ready.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. You mentioned that students have an inborn desire to want to know how to spell, like the people who write books, like mommy and daddy, and teachers. Where did this belief come from?

RACHAEL: Well, something I learned about in university and in the primary program. But in the classroom, the kids are constantly asking how to spell things, and they, in the middle of a brainstorming session, or their own writing, or journal writing. They will go and get books. They will go and look at signs. They will ask each other. They'll even run down to the boys and girls washrooms to go check out the door to see what it says, so they know how to write girls and boys. They are curious.

INTERVIEWER: So it was from observation and experience that you gained that idea?

RACHAEL: Yes, that's right.

INTERVIEWER: What are your reasons for believing there isn't a relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

RACHAEL: What is the reason for. Just from some observation again, from being in the classroom and. And there are kids out there, they know a lot, but some of them just

aren't perhaps ready to express themselves correctly in their journals, or in their writing. But they have a lot of knowledge about how things work and they work with, they might not, boys especially I think, sexist statement (Laughter), boys don't sit for very long with Mom or Dad writing, I don't think. That's kind of...use of generalization, but I know of more of the boys in this class, that are out doing sports with Dad, working in the garage with Dad building dune buggies and making things that are battery operated. And the girls are more apt to be at home playing school and things. Have I answered the question?

INTERVIEWER: I think so. What the question was, why are your reasons for believing there isn't a relationship between standard spelling and intelligence, think you answered that.

RACHAEL: There is still out there ... knowledge about, but those kids out there doing active things and doing things just aren't really practicing their spelling, or sitting down reading.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. You said at one time you were doing the McCracken spelling, in small groups, as a separate spelling activity and you felt that it worked and you should go back to it. Why do you think it worked?

RACHAEL: The kids, I think it helped in that the kids became familiar with the beginning and ending consonants and, it was just, like being a new way for them to think about words when they just say a word, like cat. And they say it over and over to themselves. They can hear, they might hear at least two parts of the word, the beginning and ending consonants. And they might even hear that middle sound. It's just. They haven't been, sort of exposed to saying the word over and over. They might, I don't know...not sure if I'm coming across with any intelligent...It's a way for them for begin decoding.

INTERVIEWER: Is this practice though, consistent with your belief that spelling is more intertwined in writing and context.

RACHAEL: Not really. But it's, it might be just a bit of a crutch, so I know they are learning how to spell some words. I kinda like it. I need that. It's that satisfaction that they are learning some words. Actually see they are starting to make a connection,

kinda come through for me. And you have to remember, these groups are sort of heterogeneous group. The other kids would be helping them too.... You really have got me thinking.

INTERVIEWER: O.k., we'll move on. You stated that you believed that learning to spell is a developmental process. Could you expand on this idea.

RACHAEL: O.K. I'm going to use the word love. Children only use the word love as an example. Children that are learning how to spell, they might not know what letter says o or oo in love, so they might write down a stream of letters, anything that they know they think the letters that they see around the house, letters in their own name. Actually they might even start before that, they'll write down things that don't even resemble print of any kind to us, some scrawls and things like that. And then they might get into printing, writing down some letters, and then they might begin to hear certain sounds and write down an L and a few other letters. And they might be able to hear the L and the v, so they will write down just the L and the v. If they know something else is in there, and soon they might write down L u v. And then through practice and exposure to that word and perhaps a little lesson from someone that they'll know that, o says aw sometimes, so we will just put an o where the u used to be, and then they will learn about the e being on the end. Just from seeing the word, or being known. So it, has this over time and with exposure and practice, I think they learn language that way.

INTERVIEWER: In the long term, later on in primary, what would the consequences of this philosophy be?

RACHAEL: Stories might not be spelled entirely accurately, which I don't think is a bad thing. Just as long as they get down their wonderful stories about their life, from something from their imagination. I think their ideas are more important than how those words are spelled. I, in time I think they'll learn how to spell correctly if they have to.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else about the issue of spelling that you feel very strongly about?

RACHAEL: Memorization of words and testing children on words. Some kids like to be tested, but, treated in a positive way I, don't think it can hurt. But I know growing up, it was a competition to try and be the best speller in the class. But spelling didn't come easy to a lot of kids and they just felt like failures, and we had to write the word out twenty times when we made a mistake,... a negative experience. I don't think it's all that valuable.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. thank you very much.
(more at end)

APPENDIX III

Part 3

SHEILA

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I grew up in a small town in the state of Washington. I was the middle child, having an older and younger sister. My father was a friendly, quiet, very kind man. My mother was out-going with a strong personality. From an early age I paid close attention to "feelings". At about 3 years old I have a strong recollection of a near death experience. Those feelings of being in touch with a higher power have always guided me.

My mother was a teacher before she married and had children. She took time off from her career to have children. After my younger sister was about 4 years old, my mom began to substitute teach to "keep her foot in the door". Once my younger sister entered school, mom got back into teaching full-time. But she also had to work towards her degree. So she went to summer school for several years, which meant she had to travel and live on campus some 200 miles away during summer week days. My sisters and I took care of meals, the house, and dad (or so we thought). Mom came home for the week-ends. My sisters and I were also responsible for jobs year round to keep the household running smoothly. While most of my friends had non-working moms - I thought they were lucky to not have as much housework as I always had. My responsibilities meant no watching Saturday morning cartoons until all chores were done. But although my parents gave me (and my sisters) these responsibilities, they also provided some independence that my friends didn't get. There were many times when I felt proud of my mom and I knew she always worked hard. I appreciated her more and more as I became a parent and teacher myself. A working mother was not the norm in the '50's, so I know it couldn't have been easy for her - especially when she was going to school on top of everything else.

When I was in high school I had a ball! I was a member of the Honor Society, a cheerleader, active in many school functions and was respected and well-liked. My parents supported and got involved in everything my sisters and I did. There were football and basketball games on Friday and Saturday nights to go to. I was involved in

the International Order of Rainbow for Girls (a branch related to Eastern Star and Masons) and had meetings at least twice a month. I was elected to "go through the chairs" for Rainbow which meant I would serve a term (3-4 months) as Worthy Advisor (ie. President, Leader) for our local assembly. It was a hectic life style and I do remember a few times feeling very stressed with all the things I was trying to do (study, boyfriend time, cheerleading practice, games, Rainbow meetings, visitation meetings, planning meetings, fund raising, house chores, etc.). But I was happy. I had a great family and friends, and was having fun.

I always knew I'd go on to some college or university after high school. I also knew I wanted to get away from my small town (as far as I could go without paying out-of-state tuition). As I said, I loved my growing up, but I did have this "small town girl" complex. So I ended up going as far north as I could and spent the next 4 years at Western Washington in Bellingham. I got my B.A. in 3 years by taking classes every summer. I was homesick and hated school for most of the first 2 years. There were times I was lonely and depressed, but never, ever considered dropping out or going back home to live. I was determined to make this work and saw anything else as an example of failure. At the end of my first year at Western, my high school sweetheart (who had been in the Army and sent to Viet Nam) got stationed at Fort Lewis, Washington. We had gone together for over 3 years and had plans to marry (although just talk and dreams - no engagement). He began coming up to Bellingham whenever he had a week-end off. Things weren't the same and so we broke up. This was a tough time for me. I was still very homesick and now I had no one - or so I thought. I wasn't making friends easily. I developed an eating disorder and lost about 30 pounds. As I got closer to completing my degree my eating habits became a way to deal with stress, the fear of failure and lack of control. I set up many job interviews on campus and was not meeting with success and wondered if I'd ever get a job. I had 3 or 4 job interviews in California the summer after I got my B.A. But 2 months before going down for those scheduled interviews, I had met Kwenu, my future husband. I was depressed and just doing the "all work and no play" scene until my roommates could take it no longer. They insisted this particular Saturday night that I go to Vancouver, B.C. with them to a party. They had met several interesting guys the week before at International House on the UBC campus. Finally, I agreed to go to this follow-up party with them. That night, as we were driving down Broadway towards the party in Kits; one of my friends in the car pointed out a black guy walking on the sidewalk wearing a smock of distinct African cloth. She said, "Hey, I wonder if he's going to the party!" About an hour

after we got to the party, in walked this same guy - my future husband! We talked and danced all night. I thought he was interesting, but kind of strange. After that night I thought I'd never see him again. But he kept calling and before long we started seeing each other every week-end if we could until I completed my classes in Bellingham and packed up and headed for home, California and a future somewhere. On that trip home, with my little VW packed to the limits, I hit a slick spot during a spring downpour on the I-5 freeway. I spun around 360 degrees through the two lanes of traffic and then rolled over an embankment before coming to rest -- unhurt, but with a totalled VW and school and personal belongings thrown around. Before this had happened I had been thinking of Kwenu and whether we should continue our relationship. This car accident shook me up and seemed like a sign from higher powers to be sure of what I was doing because life with someone of another race and culture would be bumpy. I went on to California for interviews, but before arriving at my Beverly Hills (wow!) interview, I was involved in another car accident on the L.A. freeway. This time my mother was with me and was injured and taken to the hospital. I decided then to forget California and the rest of my interviews (was this another sign?) and go to Grad School in Bellingham and see what developed from the relationship with Kwenu.

After Grad School my relationship with my parents became strained over the commitment I had made to Kwenu (they did not like him). I was hurt, angry and defiant. I moved in with him and we got married after 6 months when I was hired by the Coquitlam School District. I worked as a Speech-Language Pathologist for five years until both of my children were born. It was fun, as most of the SLP's were also American and I felt close to them. I continued to work full-time after both children were born. Financially, it was necessary (Kwenu was finishing his Masters and working part-time). I was offered the Special Language Class teaching position just before I became pregnant with my second child. I had become bored and frustrated with the level of service I was providing as a SLP and so was excited, but scared about my new position. From the very beginning I loved this job - it was perfect for my background and I finally had a room and kids to call my own and work with exclusively. I was also learning from my own two children. I was fascinated by their development and used their language development experiences to enrich my knowledge and experience in teaching my students who had language delays or disorders. There were frustrations caused by my dual commitments. I had 4:00 as my cut-off time to pick up my two children. This meant I had to leave things not as done as

I wanted - or bring work home from school. There were many times I felt I was inadequate as a mother, teacher or wife as I tried to juggle all and had to make compromises. My mother was always my support here. I'd talk things over with her and she'd make me feel better and feel I was doing a GREAT job. My mother passed away a year and a half ago. I miss her terribly. I miss having her tell me all's okay and getting her recognition. I realize I spent much of my life comparing myself to her and trying to live up to her example as a working, organized, involved mother/teacher.

PART II.

1. I currently have a class of 10 students (9 boys and 1 girl) who have been identified as having a language learning disability. Although this is supposed to be their primary difficulty; in reality I have found there are many other contributing factors to their learning problems. I would say there are:

2 students who are mildly mentally handicapped

2 students who are autistic

4 students with social management (behavior) problems

1 student with apraxia (poor speech productivity and intelligability due to lack of oral muscle control and development).

The group dynamics have been such that behaviors from one or two are feeding others. Integration without an accompanying teacher assistant is impossible. Therefore, most support from the teacher assistant is not during my instructional time - but during integration time. My focus this year has been less on building specific language skills and more on behavior and social skills.

The physical space has not been ideal for this group of mostly boys who seem to need their own space. The classroom is too small to allow for centers or time away from others. Our seating arrangements have changed from (buddy) older/younger pairings, to individual rows, to our most workable set-up of the semi-circle.

We have instituted a time-out area and tried incorporating behavior modification techniques suggested by the School District Behavior Consultant. Presently we are still working towards following through on directions without argument, ignoring inappropriate behaviors of others, being polite and co-operative in all areas of the school.

2. I believe that if a child likes coming to school and is happy there, that he will be able to learn (regardless of disabilities). However, some factors in teaching benefit those who do have learning disabilities. So my teaching style has been very structured with a clear-cut schedule, work area and routines. A certain amount of predictability has been necessary to provide a secure, safe environment for those students who do not adjust to change easily. I use lots of encouragement, understanding and patient re-teaching or corrections. I try to create an atmosphere of respect and co-operation by demonstrating a warm, caring and polite approach to all problems. The importance of talking has always been highlighted. To try to show fairness and honesty in all situations, we share feelings and problem solving ideas through meetings and role playing. A big part of my approach and style in teaching has been making a connection with the child through their parents. To let parents know that we must work together as a team and that I am open and approachable.

3. I have always been drawn to the underdog, the minority, the outcasts. I became aware of this professionally during my first practicum. The most difficult child in the class (the one the teacher had the most problems with teaching and in behaving) was the one I liked the best and the one I took home in my mind each night. A demonstration of my empathy and need to understand those who are "different" can also be noted in my choice of a life-long partner (my husband comes from a Third World country). I have always wanted to make a difference - there was a strong desire to change the wrongs I saw and felt. Many of my decisions in life have been based more on heart and feelings rather than mind and matter. My instincts (those signs from a higher power) are often the driving force. Those things or people who touch my heart and soul motivate me to give. I like giving, I like helping. Much of this giving, I think, is the impact my mother had on me. I'm sure her success as a mother, student, teacher and strong, hard-working person was something I felt I had to compare myself to. I always wanted to please my parents, but recognition from her was especially important.

4. I intend to not take life quite so seriously. I want to enjoy each day more and worry less about planning for tomorrow. I am transferring out of Special Ed. and will have a regular class position next year. As my own children grow older and more independent; my husband and I may decide to move back to the States or to Ghana. In the future, I still have desires and interests in doing research (perhaps in autism in a

clinical setting). I also enjoy children's literature and would like to become involved in writing or editing books or videos for children. And of course, if there is time, classes to be taken just for the fun of it!

SHEILA

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Sheila, what made you become a teacher?

SHEILA: Gee, I don't know. I think again, I think my Mom had a lot to do with it. I identified with her. I tried to tell myself that I wasn't a lot like her, but I felt that I was. I think that had a lot to do with it, and I always liked school. When I remember, in 6th grade, being in school, and I thought sitting doing my work, but wanting to do it, the teacher's work, like I'd much rather be planning and doing what the teacher did than doing what the kids were doing. I thought that would be a neat job. I would like to be a teacher. And that's the first time I think that I sort of told myself, that maybe I would be good at that.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe a typical teaching day?

SHEILA: Oh, I don't know that there is a typical teaching day. I guess a typical teaching day is, I like to start the day off with some sort of personal rapport with, you know, setting sort of a good morning and good to see you with the kids. And with the kids that I've had it always...because they sort of want the recognition and need that attention and time for someone to listen to them because it takes them so much longer to communicate anything. That eventually, found that I had to set aside that time first thing in the morning, when they come in to let them talk and let them unwind. And then from there I think the rest of the day, I try to be superplan. I know what I'm going to do, but you also have to kind of let the kids sort of take you through that day. And how much they can absorb and how much they are ready for and how much they are not ready for. And so I find that a lot of my day, although I am superplanned, is sort of influenced by, sort of the atmosphere of a class, and how much the direction that they are going. So a lot of what I do I guess is also sort of fly by, you know. Sort of unplanned too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have specific times where you try to fit in language arts or journals

SHEILA: Well, our morning is, we have our talking time. We start out with, most of the morning is language arts. We have our spelling, three mornings a week, and we follow that up with two days a week of phonics work, sort of reading and writing, our responding to reading. So that sort of mixed in over the five days along with just listening to language, reading comprehension. Then the speech therapist comes in to the classroom and works with us one day a week, one morning a week, and takes the kids out another morning a week. So that's basically all morning til recess. And because some of the kids are integrated out, I've had to squeeze in some math time, whereas before I had it in the afternoon. I'm having to squeeze it in when one group is out. Then I work on math with the kids that I do have, then vice versa when the other kids go out for their ...period. And then in the afternoon we're less structured. I find most of my structure is in the morning. And then the afternoon is less structured. We fit in sort of art activities, some health and life skills, some of the P.E. periods and we have story time. We have silent reading twice a day. I have that followed by recess and followed by the 1 o'clock break. And I find that settles them down and gives them something to focus on, if I can't get back to class right away. So it is basically, language arts, recess, silent reading, followed by sort of a break, some kids go out, short math period for one group, and then we do some phonics or some writing. Then after lunch we do either the other math group, art, what else do we do in the afternoon. Sometimes we have a writing period in the afternoon. As well, we are working on a theme or health and life skills or science or something like that. And then we have our show and tell and our story time.

INTERVIEWER: Busy day.

SHEILA: My schedule has been dictated by the kids going out, so, and I like to juggle things too. Initially I was going to have, like of sort of, our talking period all in the morning, but I found that sometimes we needed to change that, have a period in the afternoon too. Two days a week I have it in the morning, two days a week I have it in the afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. When you teach language arts, how do you encourage expressive writing?

SHEILA: Well, they have their journals, and that's very open. I changed my approach to that too. In the past I've had to rely on more direction. I find the kids couldn't just write. You know, tell me something that you are thinking about, or tell me, just something you want to tell me about, need more direction on that. They are better at that now where I can just say O.K. it's time for your journals. You know, anything you want. So that is one aspect of written expression. The other one is I've just started this year doing more reading response, where I introduce a book and before I have even read that, they put down their thoughts about just from the title and the cover and respond to that,

INTERVIEWER: sort of like a predicting.

SHEILA: Yeah, or just, what you know their feelings are, maybe some of them do know the book or whatever. And then I take sections of the book where I will read to them. And sometimes I will have specific questions for them, like predicting, or how did you feel about what the character did, things like that. Other times I would just leave that and say, O.K. draw something about what I have read... We done a lot of, we also do very specific writings as far as notes to the parents, letters, cards, lists. And then every month when we do our calendars, we take things from the calendar that are happening that month and we use the vocabulary from that to do some writing, can be a class book or can be just things for their journal or can be something we are using as a theme for that month.

INTERVIEWER: That's quite a bit. To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

SHEILA: I think when I first started that I was really watching it more closely. Now that I've been more familiar with it, I hope that it comes more automatically, because I'm not as conscious of watching to see if we are going through these stages. I think we do it quite a bit. I know that it becomes natural for us to go over sort of the brainstorm making lists, using vocabulary, just the words, get started with, getting our ideas sort of organized that way. And we always, most of the time, we do draft. The kids are really, I think they know now that what they write doesn't necessarily mean that it is the final product. It is more difficult to get beyond that, at this age group, I find that, sometimes when I am pushing them to read, to do, to edit. I have two or three kids who just, it frustrates them, it makes them angry to have to correct and redo. Yeah, I

think I follow it quite a bit, but I'm not, I don't do it, saying now we have to do this, and now we have to do that... It just seems a natural process for us.

INTERVIEWER: What connection if any do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

SHEILA: O.K. I guess the connection would be in that area when we go back and we're looking at editing and proofreading now. I'm finding probably next year when I have another class, I probably will change my approach to spelling, especially in writing in their journals, cause I found with kids with learning disabilities it is too hard to break a habit of, sound it out and spell it. They can't get beyond that. And then when you tell them there is a correct way to spell that, they are frustrated. Some of the kids come in naturally wanting to know the right spelling, how do you spell this. Look it up, and some of them want to look it up in their dictionaries and for me to say, well, just sound it out. They would rather do it the other way. So I, at that point when those kids who already are very concerned about having it spelled correctly, wanting to get that information from someone or somewhere, I think, even though it does slow down the process of getting that information down, the flow of communicating and writing. I think it's more important, like I, I miss that connection of starting of the importance of spelling very early, and especially for those kids who already are at that stage of it's important. Things have to be spelled correctly. I want to know what this word looks like, so. And then other kids it is really hard to go back to that stage, to correct, and so I think I would like to have it introduced earlier. Like when we are in the process of getting our ideas down, like key words, when we are brainstorming...making a list of whatever at that point, giving yourself time to make sure that these kids are using some standard spelling.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing, like once they have written something, what do you do about it?

SHEILA: If I really cannot read it, I have the kids come up and have a conference, and say read this to me. And at that point, they are reading it to me quite often, they find they can't read it either or they find their own mistakes and therefore correct it, or we correct it together. Other kids don't see that. Like it is amazing how some kids who don't like to do corrections, will find a way of either changing it or avoiding that. So at that point it's really, I almost have to step-by-step go back through the whole thing

with them, or let it go. If they are not ready to correct the spelling that's not a problem to them, they are not concerned. Then it's more of a problem for me, and it's more of a concern to me, so at that point I might just work on the language, rather than the spelling cause quite often that's part of it. Because there are kids also in there who maybe aren't saying the words correctly anyway, so if the words and the language from them is not correct, then I can't expect them to spell it correctly, and I don't want them to be writing my language and my words down. So it becomes sort of a really individual thing. If the child can identify the mistake, and if his words, then I probably would push for having it corrected either alone or with me. If the child cannot see that there's a mistake on that, and he's not making, producing the word correctly in his own language, then it gets to be, where I'm having to model for them, and trying to help them through that speech process of that. So then it becomes more of an oral language lesson rather than a spelling lesson, or spelling correction.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that you do to encourage standard spelling?

SHEILA: Well, they all have their own dictionaries and they like using those. I use also our printing practice as sort of a spelling practice as well. When we introduce certain letters in our printing, at the end of the day, after they have written their three lines or whatever of the letter d, then they use their dictionaries and they come up with a list of words that start with the letter d, but have to be words from their dictionary that they can read. They can't just pick any old word that they want. It has to be a word that they would use. That they know the word, they can read the word and then they use that. I think that helps them because a lot of spelling I find is not so much sounding it out, or recognizing it visually, well I guess it is recognizing it visually as well as having that as part of your vocabulary. The kids may know the word plant, but if they haven't seen the word plant, it doesn't have quite the same impact as, O.K. look under the page p for plant and suddenly they say, oh that is plant. And then I think they do recognize that not only can they read it, but they can spell it, they can see it, they can spell it. So I think another way of sort of emphasizing standard spelling is to get more practice and just recognizing the word visually and out of context as well as in sentences, and doing lists of words, writing them, seeing them in different kind of print, not just you know in a book, or the teacher's printing, but they write it, they read it.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you use spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

SHEILA: I use it a lot. Three periods a week, and as I was saying, I really feel that with spelling, these kids have language disabilities, it has to be, it is an oral exercise, as well as a written exercise so we, and I insist that if I'm dictating words, they have to say the word, so that I know they are saying it correctly. Cause they, if after I model it they can't say it it's a blend or if it's a particular sound that is misarticulated, then they are going to have a heck of a time spelling it. It is going to have to be a visual thing at that point, rather than a sort of an auditory lesson as well. So that aspect of an oral lesson, an auditory lesson, as well as incorporating the visual. And in the past I've changed my spelling a lot over the years, and the thing that I found that was missing the most is having the kids use the words in a meaningful context, in a sentence, not my sentence necessarily, but in their sentences. So that is what the older kids are doing this year. They are getting a lot of practice with the word as a word list. But they are always getting practice at using the word in a sentence, in their own sentence, in a meaningful sentence that they have written themselves.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

SHEILA: I think it has a lot to do, with I guess, how important it is to the teacher in the classroom. As I said, I have had kids who come in and it's important to them already. So in that case, if they have, and in some cases, it is kids who have had books and words presented to them in a written form at home so kids who have had parents who read to them, have books at home, who already are interested in words that they see, so I think that influences, it is just having books at home and being familiar with written word. And then I guess the next influence is how important it is to the classroom teacher when they are doing their writing. When she is doing her writing, now I don't know how many times I'm putting things on the board, and I will say, oh, now how do you spell that. And I am quite honest with the kids that sometimes I don't know how to spell things that I come over and I guess we will have to look that up in the dictionary, or gee let's sound that out. So I think quite early they have to know that spelling is a process that never ends.

INTERVIEWER: In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

SHEILA: Well, I guess I do quite a bit, because, and again, I am going to have to tie that back in with the oral process, it ties so closely to what my kids are doing in speech and language, that it has to become a big part of our language arts program. And those kids who do have articulation errors, it becomes much easier for them to connect that with a visual thing. Like if you got a kid who is six years old and can't read yet, but he can produce the f sound. Suddenly when you teach him f and he sees that in a word, and knows it comes at the beginning of the sound, it's much easier for him to correct that sound. And I found out, both as a teacher and a speech pathologist, that when you are working on speech correction, then suddenly spelling and reading, you know, if they have been introduced to that, becomes a real advantage to that child to be introduced to that. So I think in language and speech, it helps if the kid can spell and visually look at a word, and internalize that much more, and because ...these kids do not, their strong point is not auditory processing. They're visual is always going to help them, so as soon as we can get into that, and stress that, I think kids it is better for them. So I do mention it quite a bit and reporting it...I know I did. I didn't mention it the last reporting period, that I did spend quite a bit of comment talking on it, the report before. So the parents do know that it is important.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

SHEILA: I don't know if there is a lot of correlation between that. I think there's more correlation between sort of the visual memory, the processing, is I've got kids in here who are of average intelligence. But because of the learning disability and processing difficulty, it doesn't always show, and I know a lot of people who are quite bright but are very poor spellers. So, I can't say intelligence and spelling are closely related. I think it is,... kind of, to be a visual memory, an auditory memory,... weakness.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

SHEILA: Well, I think you have to look at their weaknesses and their strengths. As I said, I used visual aids as much as I can and introduce that as early as I can, and pair it with the auditory and the oral. So that they all connected, so that they are getting, they are hearing the word, they are saying the word, they are seeing the word. And I think

with a lot of kids don't need all three of those. That I think that it is important to make those connections, even with the kids who come in with a lot of natural sort of intuitiveness to words and how words are put together and what words look like. But for the, I'd say the average and below average child who is trying to make sense of all these strange symbols and how they fit together, and makes a word. I think you have to make that connection of what you hear and what you say and what you write down as a connection between all of that. And the more they see that connection, I think the better it is for them to learn and to continue on with making that connection.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, is it a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?

SHEILA: I have to say it is developmental, because I think a lot, like I said, a lot of kids come in here and they are ready, and then other kids come in and because they haven't had, I guess because they are not ready, they haven't had the exposure, they haven't been ready to take these arbitrary symbols and suddenly put meaning to them. So you have to kind of put them through sort of a development of playing with the letters and playing with the sounds, and playing with the language and get them ready to put more sense into it. So there are kids, I think, who have gone through that process and are ready to handle, clocked the words, and other kids who still need to play around with making scratches on the paper, and pretending that they can spell. And I think the memory thing comes after they have been introduced, and after they have played with it. Then they realize that that's another aspect that you can take it, a chunk of letters and remember what it looks like. And remember how to write it, because it doesn't change over time. But a lot of kids aren't ready every time they come to a word they think a whole new thing over again. So I think the memory comes later, after they've gone through a stage of playing with letters, playing with sounds, playing with language.

INTERVIEWER: Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, and if so, why, and if not, why not?

SHEILA: Yah, and again I think I'm changing my views on this because I've had such a difficult time with some kids in this class going back and making it...I think it is important, because for some kids, once they get into that spelling how you think it is, it's too, it becomes too burdensome a task to go back and correct and to make it

important. Like it wasn't important last year, why does it have to be important this year. They may never get beyond that, so I think, although I don't want to be picky, picky, picky, I want them to take a certain amount of interest in word and say, oh I wonder what that word looks like, or I want to look up that word, or I think I go ask Mrs. ... to write that word in my book, and so I think it is important. I think once you sort of establish that, that kids will take that to varying degrees. I mean those kids who I have to sort of direct them to that, will always be sort of those kids will let things pass and some things they will look up, but the other kids who come in and are interested in that, will certainly incorporate that more. But if I don't give them direction, this is your dictionary, yes it is important. Yes I will provide words that are important to you. Yes, we are going to correct some things that don't make sense in your journal or your writing. Yes, the things that I put on the board, that I write for you and the notes that I send to your mom, I want to be spelled correctly. So, if I'm not modelling those things, then I can't expect them to take that at the end of the year onto the next teacher. So I think it is important for them to realize it's just not for the teacher, or some of the kids who are interested in spelling, but it is something that is, like I said before, life process. When we are learning how to read and write, we are also learning how to spell things correctly. There is a right way and if you are interested, there is a way of finding that out.

SHEILA

FOLLOW UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: Sheila, when I asked you to describe a typical teaching day, you mentioned that you do spelling three mornings a week. Can you tell me more about this, in other words, what is involved during these spelling periods?

SHEILA: O.K., well I have really three distinct age groups in my class. So they are divided into their sort of ability grouping. And I have a teacher assistant with me, specifically on those times when we are working on spelling, so she takes a group, and I take a group. The youngest group I find, is still working, just on readiness and working with identifying and becoming more familiar with letters and the sounds, and things like that so, basically they're working on their own, with just some supervision. But the teacher assistant will direct a group and I will direct another group. And then we switch off every other week, so that I still, keeping tabs on what is happening with

each group. The younger group I have working on the McCracken, sort of introducing phonetically, sounds, and gradually getting into some very phonetic simple ones, little bow, words. The older group I have working on, it's called a Sixth Spell program. And they have, it's set up so that they can work independently basically once they know that the rules to the program. So they have, I call it a code card, and each week they have different activities to use that vocabulary and those particular words. And it's different areas of grammar and phonics that it takes them through. They work on using the word, putting them in an alphabetical order, putting the words in a sentence, putting the words into plural, singular, short vowel, long vowel, so that each week, when they get a new list of words, they have to think of, they are doing these different activities with the word, and I find that it's. Initially it was difficult for them, but now they are able to, because they repeat the same types of activities every week. That they are much more independent and they are now understanding what, what do you mean by singular and plural, and remembering these rules about changing the y to i and adding s. And it's become, I think, much more making a connection back and forth. After awhile they have done it so often, they remember, oh yah, I did it with that word last week, or whatever. So that, I'm really enjoying this, is the first year that I've done that. But I really have, I guess, three spelling programs going, depending on kids level.

INTERVIEWER: Readiness or their age?

SHEILA: Yes,

INTERVIEWER: Where did the idea come from that you should teach the spelling as a separate subject?

SHEILA: I guess it's just with these kids, that they have a big hang-up with words anyway, with language.

INTERVIEWER: Right.

SHEILA: I notice that there was a sort of connection once the kids got into reading and spelling, they had that visual link to the language and a lot of times it's just hearing it, because the auditory processing is so poor for most of these kids that I'd be saying, lake, and they might just be hearing the k at the end, they didn't hear the whole word or

that's the thing they are clued into, is the k sound. And so I find that it's, even when I was working as a speech therapist, that I really focused on sounds of language, and so to break it down into. I mean, spelling just seemed natural, because spelling links the hearing and the visual together so easily and it just seemed like a natural thing to do with the language kids. So that I'm working on, sort of, auditory discrimination. If the kids have articulation problems, and they are not producing certain sounds correctly, if they are having trouble blending things and then the spelling helps them sort of visual thing to get the oral, the visual, the written, everything together. So I guess that's why. I probably emphasize spelling more than most teachers do, because it's not just spelling, it's, we use it for our speech work and our language work as well.

INTERVIEWER: Would your viewpoint be different in a regular class, like next year you mentioned that you were going to be teaching regular class?

SHEILA: I don't know. Probably not. I really find it as a strength, I think it helps them with their reading. I think it helps them with their speaking. I think it, and because most of the kids in the primary years are still really developing language, that I think it's just a really strong hook for the kids to use. That once they can make sense of the words that they are hearing - they can see it, they can write it, I think it becomes much more meaningful and they are more likely to be able to expand and grow from that.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. You talked about the idea that having children spell words the way they sound can be a hard habit to break. So that during the writing process, you would prefer to emphasize standard spelling at the pre-writing stage, rather than wait for the editing and proofreading stage. Can you expand a little bit on that?

SHEILA: O.K. I guess it's mostly those kids who are either not concerned about correct spelling, or are not that aware that it has to be spelled a correct way. Or the kids who do show an interest, I mean, I find the kids that do show an interest I want to follow that through and make sure that, if they try to sound it and it doesn't look, sound spell it and it doesn't seem right to them, then they have a real need and desire to find other ways of correctly spelling, so that I think, needs to be done when they are ready, when they are asking for it. But then those kids who don't show an interest, that aren't even aware that maybe there is a right way and a wrong way. I think to wait for them naturally might not ever happen. (Laughter) You know it really depends, but I think once you are introducing written words and spelling, that I think they have to know

there are words that we can sound out and sound spell. But there are words that follow certain rules too, or that are more difficult. That these are going to be words that you are going to need help with, that you know a dictionary might be a helper, or some of these rules that I'm teaching you will be helpful. Because I, a lot of these kids are inflexible and once they get thinking that this is the way that you do it, it's hard for them to go back and say, that I'm doing it wrong or now I have to change something, or suddenly now this doesn't work.

INTERVIEWER: Sheila, do you see that that inflexibility that you are talking about as being more pronounced because you are in a language class, than you would, say if you were in a regular class.

SHEILA: Yeh, oh yeah. It's, I know the kids that I have are very hard on themselves and it's, a lot of it has to do with they themselves have had experienced that feeling of, I don't know how to do this. And so now, that once I've said O.K. sound spell, or just spell it the way you think it is, and then later for me to say, well that's not right, it's really hard for them, it's getting back into that thing, I don't know what I'm doing and experiencing failure and. So it's been really hard for the kids to think, to accept that I have to do this over, or I'm inadequate in this area, or now she's saying, I'm not doing it right, that sort of thing. So I think the process of going through that area of checking or looking for help in other areas at the beginning. It's easier for them than O.K., I've written all this out and now you want me to go back and change it, and they look at it as a whole picture as too much. Whereas if it was just a part of their initial process to correct as they go along, it's easier, it's not such a big burden, chunk of job to do again.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Well, obviously you, from what you're saying it sounds like at one point you were wading through the editing and proof-reading stage, but you've changed your views on that.

SHEILA: Right. Initially I was going through the writing process pretty much as it was, you know, outlined to me when I was going through that. And showing them that, you know it doesn't, you know, this is just a draft. You know, I just want you to get your ideas down and we'll look at those other things later. But I found, well, some of the primary kids may not ever get beyond that but, I find that the primary four, the primary 3's or 4's, that when we do want to work on a finished product, no matter how

much encouragement or, I say, oh this is going to be really special, I can't wait until we can take it and show it. It didn't help. It was just, this again.

INTERVIEWER: That's very interesting.

SHEILA: I guess I find too, when I'm writing that there are certain words that I want to know right away. Like when I look back at when I'm drafting something. And sometimes I'll just leave a little note, like if I know that it's wrong, I will leave a little note on the side, or I will circle it, or something. And I usually will go back before I'm finished and look that word up. I think that's a more natural way to leave your work, rather than turn it in. And I know, and I think the kids most of them know too, at primary 3 and primary 4, when they are stuck on a word. They are not sure about a word and I think, why not let them get that word when they want that word and.

INTERVIEWER: Do you worry about, by saying that, by making that known to them, do you worry that perhaps they won't challenge themselves with interesting words in their stories?

SHEILA: No. in fact I think it might be the opposite. I think they might pick easier words cause they know they can spell it. Whereas, well I want this word, and Mrs... will help me with it. I do want this word, I really want this word.

INTERVIEWER: Yeh, interesting. I actually believe that too. (Laughter) That shouldn't be on the tape - don't type that Alice (I DID).

O.K. to summarize your views about spelling, I understand that you believe that spelling is very individualistic. Some come to school with an intuitive sense of how words are formed, where others are just beginning to play with language and symbols. In other words, it depends on the readiness of the child. Can you say more about that?

SHEILA: I think it's, it goes back to their language development. I think because language is a developmental process, I think that is a part of it. I think a lot of it also has to do with how much stimulation there is at home. But I think that just that whole idea of language processing, and the idea of what language is, takes longer for other kids.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Sheila you also do whole class lessons on spelling. You mentioned that in your interview. Was a lesson involves in oral exercise as well as a visual. And you help the students make the connection between what they say, what they hear, say, and write. You also have the children use the words in a meaningful context generated by themselves. Are these ideas important to you?

SHEILA: Yah, I think they're very important.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think they are worthwhile ideas that you would like other professionals, other teachers, your colleagues to learn about?

SHEILA: Yah, I would say so. Because I think, whenever you can connect all the senses to learning, it's a benefit to the kids, because all, I mean when you are working with a group of kids, a class of kids, they are all going to have weaknesses and strengths. And try to use all those areas if you can, incorporate it easily.

INTERVIEWER: You emphasize standard spelling three mornings a week during printing, through the use of personal dictionaries, by modeling conventional spelling, by using this. In other words you emphasize the importance of conventional spelling. What are your reasons for this strong emphasize, I think you have already answered that, but if you would just say again, your

SHEILA: I think it's again, getting back to making a link between the language. Language that they are hearing and giving them something visual and giving them that tool that they can take their thoughts and what they are saying and they can also pass that on to someone else by writing it as well. They don't have to be receiving and giving just like talking all the time. That's a whole other area of language, but you have to make that link so that they realize that the language, that another way of expressing their language, their ideas.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel that your report cards reflect and are consistent with your beliefs about spelling?

SHEILA: Yah, I think so. Many, many of my reports, depending on what term I'm reporting on, I've made some comment or link to how they are doing in spelling, or that aspect of language where they're processing and writing.

INTERVIEWER: Is there something about the issue of spelling that you feel very strongly about, that you would like to make a comment about? Or have you already said it all?

SHEILA: I think I've said it. I think, I just, I can't cause I have sort of that link of taking the unspoken thought language and making them see that there is a link between what they are thinking, the words are in their head. The words that they actually speak and the words that they can put on paper, that it's all interconnected. And I think once the kids make that connection the whole thing of language, and spelling, and reading, and writing becomes much more, has more meaning, and becomes easier and its fun for them, I think.

INTERVIEWER: Well, thank you very much Sheila.

(writing here that I didn't type)

SHEILA

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Sheila, what made you become a teacher?

SHEILA: Gee, I don't know. I think again, I think my Mom had a lot to do with it. I identified with her. I tried to tell myself that I wasn't a lot like her, but I felt that I was. I think that had a lot to do with it, and I always liked school. When I remember, in 6th grade, being in school, and I thought sitting doing my work, but wanting to do it, the teacher's work, like I'd much rather be planning and doing what the teacher did then doing what the kids were doing. I thought that would be a neat job. I would like to be a teacher. And that's the first time I think that I sort of told myself, that maybe I would be good at that.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe a typical teaching day?

SHEILA: Oh, I don't know that there is a typical teaching day. I guess a typical teaching day is, I like to start the day off with some sort of personal rapport with, you know, setting sort of a good morning and good to see you with the kids. And with the

kids that I've had it always...because they sort of want the recognition and need that attention and time for someone to listen to them because it takes them so much longer to communicate anything. That eventually, found that I had to set aside that time first thing in the morning, when they come in to let them talk and let them unwind. And then from there I think the rest of the day, I try to be superplan. I know what I'm going to do, but you also have to kind of let the kids sort of take you through that day. And how much they can absorb and how much they are ready for and how much they are not ready for. And so I find that a lot of my day, although I am superplanned, is sort of influenced by, sort of the atmosphere of a class, and how much the direction that they are going. So a lot of what I do I guess is also sort of fly by, you know. Sort of unplanned too.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have specific times where you try to fit in language arts or journals

SHEILA: Well, our morning is, we have our talking time. We start out with, most of the morning is language arts. We have our spelling, three mornings a week, and we follow that up with two days a week of phonics work, sort of reading and writing, our responding to reading. So that sort of mixed in over the five days along with just listening to language, reading comprehension. Then the speech therapist comes in to the classroom and works with us one day a week, one morning a week, and takes the kids out another morning a week. So that's basically all morning til recess. And because some of the kids are integrated out, I've had to squeeze in some math time, whereas before I had it in the afternoon. I'm having to squeeze it in when one group is out. Then I work on math with the kids that I do have, then vice versa when the other kids go out for their ...period. And then in the afternoon we're less structured. I find most of my structure is in the morning. And then the afternoon is less structured. We fit in sort of art activities, some health and life skills, some of the P.E. periods and we have story time. We have silent reading twice a day. I have that followed by recess and followed by the 1 o'clock break. And I find that settles them down and gives them something to focus on, if I can't get back to class right away. So it is basically, language arts, recess, silent reading, followed by sort of a break, some kids go out, short math period for one group, and then we do some phonics or some writing. Then after lunch we do either the other math group, art, what else do we do in the afternoon. Sometimes we have a writing period in the afternoon. As well, we are working on a

theme or health and life skills or science or something like that. And then we have our show and tell and our story time.

INTERVIEWER: Busy day.

SHEILA: My schedule has been dictated by the kids going out, so, and I like to juggle things too. Initially I was going to have, like of sort of, our talking period all in the morning, but I found that sometimes we needed to change that, have a period in the afternoon too. Two days a week I have it in the morning, two days a week I have it in the afternoon.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. When you teach language arts, how do you encourage expressive writing?

SHEILA: Well, they have their journals, and that's very open. I changed my approach to that too. In the past I've had to rely on more direction. I find the kids couldn't just write. You know, tell me something that you are thinking about, or tell me, just something you want to tell me about, need more direction on that. They are better at that now where I can just say O.K. it's time for your journals. You know, anything you want. So that is one aspect of written expression. The other one is I've just started this year doing more reading response, where I introduce a book and before I have even read that, they put down their thoughts about just from the title and the cover and respond to that,

INTERVIEWER: sort of like a predicting.

SHEILA: Yeah, or just, what you know their feelings are, maybe some of them do know the book or whatever. And then I take sections of the book where I will read to them. And sometimes I will have specific questions for them, like predicting, or how did you feel about what the character did, things like that. Other times I would just leave that and say, O.K. draw something about what I have read... We done a lot of, we also do very specific writings as far as notes to the parents, letters, cards, lists. And then every month when we do our calendars, we take things from the calendar that are happening that month and we use the vocabulary from that to do some writing, can be a class book or can be just things for their journal or can be something we are using as a theme for that month.

INTERVIEWER: That's quite a bit. To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

SHEILA: I think when I first started that I was really watching it more closely. Now that I've been more familiar with it, I hope that it comes more automatically, because I'm not as conscious of watching to see if we are going through these stages. I think we do it quite a bit. I know that it becomes natural for us to go over sort of the brainstorm making lists, using vocabulary, just the words, get started with, getting our ideas sort of organized that way. And we always, most of the time, we do draft. The kids are really, I think they know now that what they write doesn't necessarily mean that it is the final product. It is more difficult to get beyond that, at this age group, I find that, sometimes when I am pushing them to read, to do, to edit. I have two or three kids who just, it frustrates them, it makes them angry to have to correct and redo. Yeah, I think I follow it quite a bit, but I'm not, I don't do it, saying now we have to do this, and now we have to do that... It just seems a natural process for us.

INTERVIEWER: What connection if any do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

SHEILA: O.K. I guess the connection would be in that area when we go back and we're looking at editing and proofreading now. I'm finding probably next year when I have another class, I probably will change my approach to spelling, especially in writing in their journals, cause I found with kids with learning disabilities it is too hard to break a habit of, sound it out and spell it. They can't get beyond that. And then when you tell them there is a correct way to spell that, they are frustrated. Some of the kids come in naturally wanting to know the right spelling, how do you spell this. Look it up, and some of them want to look it up in their dictionaries and for me to say, well, just sound it out. They would rather do it the other way. So I, at that point when those kids who already are very concerned about having it spelled correctly, wanting to get that information from someone or somewhere, I think, even though it does slow down the process of getting that information down, the flow of communicating and writing. I think it's more important, like I, I miss that connection of starting of the importance of spelling very early, and especially for those kids who already are at that stage of it's important. Things have to be spelled correctly. I want to know what this word looks like, so. And then other kids it is really hard to go back to that stage, to correct, and so

I think I would like to have it introduced earlier. Like when we are in the process of getting our ideas down, like key words, when we are brainstorming...making a list of whatever at that point, giving yourself time to make sure that these kids are using some standard spelling.

INTERVIEWER: Interesting. How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing, like once they have written something, what do you do about it?

SHEILA: If I really cannot read it, I have the kids come up and have a conference, and say read this to me. And at that point, they are reading it to me quite often, they find they can't read it either or they find their own mistakes and therefore correct it, or we correct it together. Other kids don't see that. Like it is amazing how some kids who don't like to do corrections, will find a way of either changing it or avoiding that. So at that point it's really, I almost have to step-by-step go back through the whole thing with them, or let it go. If they are not ready to correct the spelling that's not a problem to them, they are not concerned. Then it's more of a problem for me, and it's more of a concern to me, so at that point I might just work on the language, rather than the spelling cause quite often that's part of it. Because there are kids also in there who maybe aren't saying the words correctly anyway, so if the words and the language from them is not correct, then I can't expect them to spell it correctly, and I don't want them to be writing my language and my words down. So it becomes sort of a really individual thing. If the child can identify the mistake, and if his words, then I probably would push for having it corrected either alone or with me. If the child cannot see that there's a mistake on that, and he's not making, producing the word correctly in his own language, then it gets to be, where I'm having to model for them, and trying to help them through that speech process of that. So then it becomes more of an oral language lesson rather than a spelling lesson, or spelling correction.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that you do to encourage standard spelling?

SHEILA: Well, they all have their own dictionaries and they like using those. I use also our printing practice as sort of a spelling practice as well. When we introduce certain letters in our printing, at the end of the day, after they have written their three lines or whatever of the letter d, then they use their dictionaries and they come up with a list of words that start with the letter d, but have to be words from their dictionary that they can read. They can't just pick any old word that they want. It has to be a

word that they would use. That they know the word, they can read the word and then they use that. I think that helps them because a lot of spelling I find is not so much sounding it out, or recognizing it visually, well I guess it is recognizing it visually as well as having that as part of your vocabulary. The kids may know the word plant, but if they haven't seen the word plant, it doesn't have quite the same impact as, O.K. look under the page p for plant and suddenly they say, oh that is plant. And then I think they do recognize that not only can they read it, but they can spell it, they can see it, they can spell it. So I think another way of sort of emphasizing standard spelling is to get more practice and just recognizing the word visually and out of context as well as in sentences, and doing lists of words, writing them, seeing them in different kind of print, not just you know in a book, or the teacher's printing, but they write it, they read it.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you use spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

SHEILA: I use it a lot. Three periods a week, and as I was saying, I really feel that with spelling, these kids have language disabilities, it has to be, it is an oral exercise, as well as a written exercise so we, and I insist that if I'm dictating words, they have to say the word, so that I know they are saying it correctly. Cause they, if after I model it they can't say it it's a blend or if it's a particular sound that is misarticulated, then they are going to have a heck of a time spelling it. It is going to have to be a visual thing at that point, rather than a sort of an auditory lesson as well. So that aspect of an oral lesson, an auditory lesson, as well as incorporating the visual. And in the past I've changed my spelling a lot over the years, and the thing that I found that was missing the most is having the kids use the words in a meaningful context, in a sentence, not my sentence necessarily, but in their sentences. So that is what the older kids are doing this year. They are getting a lot of practice with the word as a word list. But they are always getting practice at using the word in a sentence, in their own sentence, in a meaningful sentence that they have written themselves.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

SHEILA: I think it has a lot to do, with I guess, how important it is to the teacher in the classroom. As I said, I have had kids who come in and it's important to them already.

So in that case, if they have, and in some cases, it is kids who have had books and words presented to them in a written form at home so kids who have had parents who read to them, have books at home, who already are interested in words that they see, so I think that influences, it is just having books at home and being familiar with written word. And then I guess the next influence is how important it is to the classroom teacher when they are doing their writing. When she is doing her writing, now I don't know how many times I'm putting things on the board, and I will say, oh, now how do you spell that. And I am quite honest with the kids that sometimes I don't know how to spell things that I come over and I guess we will have to look that up in the dictionary, or gee let's sound that out. So I think quite early they have to know that spelling is a process that never ends.

INTERVIEWER: In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

SHEILA: Well, I guess I do quite a bit, because, and again, I am going to have to tie that back in with the oral process, it ties so closely to what my kids are doing in speech and language, that it has to become a big part of our language arts program. And those kids who do have articulation errors, it becomes much easier for them to connect that with a visual thing. Like if you got a kid who is six years old and can't read yet, but he can produce the f sound. Suddenly when you teach him f and he sees that in a word, and knows it comes at the beginning of the sound, it's much easier for him to correct that sound. And I found out, both as a teacher and a speech pathologist, that when you are working on speech correction, then suddenly spelling and reading, you know, if they have been introduced to that, becomes a real advantage to that child to be introduced to that. So I think in language and speech, it helps if the kid can spell and visually look at a word, and internalize that much more, and because ...these kids do not, their strong point is not auditory processing. They're visual is always going to help them, so as soon as we can get into that, and stress that, I think kids it is better for them. So I do mention it quite a bit and reporting it...I know I did. I didn't mention it the last reporting period, that I did spend quite a bit of comment talking on it, the report before. So the parents do know that it is important.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

SHEILA: I don't know if there is a lot of correlation between that. I think there's more correlation between sort of the visual memory, the processing, is I've got kids in here who are of average intelligence. But because of the learning disability and processing difficulty, it doesn't always show, and I know a lot of people who are quite bright but are very poor spellers. So, I can't say intelligence and spelling are closely related. I think it is,... kind of, to be a visual memory, an auditory memory,... weakness.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

SHEILA: Well, I think you have to look at their weaknesses and their strengths. As I said, I used visual aids as much as I can and introduce that as early as I can, and pair it with the auditory and the oral. So that they all connected, so that they are getting, they are hearing the word, they are saying the word, they are seeing the word. And I think with a lot of kids don't need all three of those. That I think that it is important to make those connections, even with the kids who come in with a lot of natural sort of intuitiveness to words and how words are put together and what words look like. But for the, I'd say the average and below average child who is trying to make sense of all these strange symbols and how they fit together, and makes a word. I think you have to make that connection of what you hear and what you say and what you write down as a connection between all of that. And the more they see that connection, I think the better it is for them to learn and to continue on with making that connection.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, is it a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?

SHEILA: I have to say it is developmental, because I think a lot, like I said, a lot of kids come in here and they are ready, and then other kids come in and because they haven't had, I guess because they are not ready, they haven't had the exposure, they haven't been ready to take these arbitrary symbols and suddenly put meaning to them. So you have to kind of put them through sort of a development of playing with the letters and playing with the sounds, and playing with the language and get them ready to put more sense into it. So there are kids, I think, who have gone through that process and are ready to handle, clocked the words, and other kids who still need to play around with making scratches on the paper, and pretending that they can spell. And I think the memory thing comes after they have been introduced, and after they

have played with it. Then they realize that that's another aspect that you can take it, a chunk of letters and remember what it looks like. And remember how to write it, because it doesn't change over time. But a lot of kids aren't ready every time they come to a word they think a whole new thing over again. So I think the memory comes later, after they've gone through a stage of playing with letters, playing with sounds, playing with language.

INTERVIEWER: Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, and if so, why, and if not, why not?

SHEILA: Yah, and again I think I'm changing my views on this because I've had such a difficult time with some kids in this class going back and making it...I think it is important, because for some kids, once they get into that spelling how you think it is, it's too, it becomes too burdensome a task to go back and correct and to make it important. Like it wasn't important last year, why does it have to be important this year. They may never get beyond that, so I think, although I don't want to be picky, picky, picky, I want them to take a certain amount of interest in word and say, oh I wonder what that word looks like, or I want to look up that word, or I think I go ask Mrs. ... to write that word in my book, and so I think it is important. I think once you sort of establish that, that kids will take that to varying degrees. I mean those kids who I have to sort of direct them to that, will always be sort of those kids will let things pass and some things they will look up, but the other kids who come in and are interested in that, will certainly incorporate that more. But if I don't give them direction, this is your dictionary, yes it is important. Yes I will provide words that are important to you. Yes, we are going to correct some things that don't make sense in your journal or your writing. Yes, the things that I put on the board, that I write for you and the notes that I send to your mom, I want to be spelled correctly. So, if I'm not modelling those things, then I can't expect them to take that at the end of the year onto the next teacher. So I think it is important for them to realize it's just not for the teacher, or some of the kids who are interested in spelling, but it is something that is, like I said before, life process. When we are learning how to read and write, we are also learning how to spell things correctly. There is a right way and if you are interested, there is a way of finding that out.

APPENDIX III

Part 4

Margaret

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

My earliest memory is me in a smokey broom closet yelling with my sister. It seems we were trying to help Mom by mopping the apartment while she went to mail a letter and then we tried to shake the mop over the open wood stove and it caught fire. We panicked and shut ourselves in the closet with the smoldering mop.

Shortly after that incident we moved to a new home built by my Dad in Victoria near the old Jubilee Hospital. We always had chores to do, but my sister never helped willing. She had been a very sick child and my parents had enormous medical bills for her. My worst childhood accident was falling backwards off our new two wheel bicycle which we got the Christmas before I turned five. I hit my head very hard and I don't remember much about the next few days except a terrible headache. As a result I've had migraines all the rest of my life. My Dad's sister also suffers from migraines. My sister is two and a half years older than me, but tiny and frail so I always protected her. My brother is nearly five years younger and was spoiled by my Dad. I always tried to act happy so that there would be less friction at home. We played school at home on an old chalkboard we had setup in our basement. After watching a T.V. show about an operation I changed my mind about being either a nurse or a teacher and set my sights on being a teacher. This was reinforced in Grade 8 H.P.D. when we had to tell what our life goal was and I spoke about being a Teacher. My teacher said he didn't think I could make it. That probably set my mind to prove to myself I could "make the grade".

I played as many sports in Junior and Senior High as I could fit into my work schedule. But I never felt that talented at them because of my Dad's criticism, even though I lettered in sports when I graduated. My first high school dance I was able to attend was Grad. I was working every Friday night and Saturday in Eaton's Groceries. I made good money for the time but it went very quickly on clothes as I was expected to buy my own. I helped save myself a lot of money because I sewed my own clothes. My Mom's Mother was an expert seamstress who made lots of my sister's and my clothes when we were young. I like to watch her and I learned to be a very good sewer myself.

Growing up in Victoria is not the easiest place to be if you're not rich. Many of the kids I went to school with were snobs and very cruel. My first job was as a cashier/hostess at a small restaurant. The lady owner was mean and her snob daughter very unkind. I felt inferior and after about six weeks of split shift 8am-12 then 4pm-8pm I left on the pretext of going on a family holiday .

Our family never had enough money for any big trips but we did go up Vancouver Island and came over to the mainland to visit family. Once I started working for Eaton's I never went on holiday because I needed my money for University and I paid room and board at home every summer. Finally for my last year at home I had to borrow money to pay my fees because I got very sick with a mastoid infection in my left ear because I was trying to do too much. I remember University as being terribly busy doing papers and assignments, lots of fun and dances with the Royal Roads guys I met through Bill, a friend I met in Demolay when I was in Jobs Daughters who went to Royal Roads, always working at Eaton's and the year I spent on the Education Undergraduate Society Council as my Senior Rep. I felt inadequate but kept up a happy facade. My Dad wouldn't help me with any of my education except to use his car to drive when I went practice teaching. To spite my Dad I applied to teach in Vancouver.

Much to my surprise I was accepted in Vancouver. The school and staff were super and I loved my Grade Two class in a lower income east Vancouver area. My roommate turned out to be a nightmare as she was so in love with a boy from her hometown who attended U.B.C. and she entertained him whenever I wasn't there. This was a lot because my sister got engaged in August and her wedding was the end of November. Before I went home that Christmas I moved to North Vancouver to live with my friend Heather's family. I wanted to travel and buy clothes, but I had a student loan to pay back and I went back to University in the summer. So I went back to Victoria for the summer to go to summerschool and I worked at Eaton's again.

I had also met a very nice fellow on staff at school who gradually grew to be much more than just a friend. We both liked sports and he was gentle and kind. He played soccer and hockey and had lots of friends and a nice family. We went out lots the next year and got married at the end of the next summer. I went home and sewed all summer long for my wedding. I had to have my wisdom teeth out on my Mom's birthday, July 21 and nearly didn't recover from a penicillin allergy reaction in time for my wedding on August 25, 1967. We went to Kelowna for a few days and back to the oral surgeon in Victoria so he could treat my jawbone infection. I had to see an oral

surgeon in Vancouver for a while until it went away. Consequently I hate Oil of Cloves. I had to transfer schools because we weren't allowed to be on the same staff. I went to a further eastern Vancouver school by Second and Lilloett and spent two years in a portable teaching kids from Cassier Housing Development and many different backgrounds who lived in the homes near the school.

I helped George complete his U.B.C. courses by doing some of his research in the stacks at the Library while he attended class. We went to Spanish Banks a lot in the summer and he studied while I read or had fun in the water with his friends. Even though we had a lovely apartment and lots of fun together I knew George liked to live in a house. So we house hunted and found a lot and had a lovely home built,(not without lots of hassles). This also precipitated our move to Coquitlam School District. George is still at the same school. I was teaching in an awful situation with my first woman principal. She was transferred at the end of the year and I went back to work pregnant and worried about my job and our Fathers who were both ill.

George's Dad had Discoid Lupis and George was fast approaching thirty. So when his best friend," Mikie" died tragically we decided to start our family. I was able to teach until Christmas Break of 1970. Our son, "Maco" was born Jan. 17,1970 by Caesarean Section after a very long labour. He was a barfy, non-sleeper who was allergic to milk. Maco cried a lot and I was lonely and depressed but I stayed at home with him. I had to learn to enjoy being at home. Finally the house next door had a family move into it. Fay was from Saskatchewan and they had four kids. Doug their youngest became Maco's best friend and my other son. Fay taught me so much about being at home and once spring came and I got to know a few neighbours being at home wasn't so bad and I got even more involved in sorority and Sunday School.

My Dad was ill with a bad heart. He had worked himself to death. George's parents, although elderly, because he is the youngest were rejuvenated by the birth of their first grandson. George continued to teach and play hockey until the next year when he tore his knee ligaments, had surgery, and was off work for six weeks. That ended his hockey playing for a few years until he could play oldtimers.

Next, I was ready for another child and we really didn't want just one. I was thrilled to get my wish again when Lara arrived on May 28,1974. A due date section but the specialist was two weeks early and she was only 6lbs.10 oz. at birth. Same birth weight as me, but Lara lost weight and wasn't ready to feed and became jaundiced so she was put in the intensive care nursery and I went home crying all the way. She came home a few days later and was an easy contented baby because we were very careful

what she ate and she slept a lot better. My family loved Lara, so did George's Dad, but my Mother in law wasn't happy that we had another child and always treated Lara as second fiddle.

I thought I had all my priorities figured out, but I didn't because I always felt guilty about our families and our finances. Then my Dad died just like I knew he would. When I last saw him a couple of days prior to his death he was still in the hospital with his bad heart and he had only lived 64 years. Lara was with me in Victoria, but we had to go home to look after Maco and George. I wasn't sure if I'd ever done the "right thing".

I was very busy for the next few years taking my kids to all their lessons and activities. Now I'm so glad I was at home for them. George started coaching hockey schools in the summers for U.B.C. and B.C.A.H.A. which enabled us to travel to Whitehorse for two weeks for the next three years.

Then I remember the critical times in our lives. Maco had an inflamed appendix cavity when he was five and spent time in hospital twice before he fully recovered. It was very scary to look back on. He was also tested to start Grade One early because he could read and was a big bright boy, but also very noisy and full of life. He wasn't a very good sport because of his drive to win or always be best. All of these qualities plus many more have enabled him to be now on a full American hockey scholarship at university and be drafted by Chicago with lots of choices for his future.

Lara's critical years started when she had a random seizure when she was still seven. She was on Phenobarb for three years and in and out of Children's Hospital for EEG's, Brain Scan's and other tests regularly. We also found that she has double peripheral vision which she still compensates for herself and she exhibits Classic Migraine symptoms. Finally I couldn't stand her life on medication and asked if she really needed to be on it. The specialist couldn't say for sure if she was Epileptic. So we weaned her off medication and went through the withdrawal with her and got our daughter back. Lara has not had another seizure, but she is strong willed and a schemer. This has helped and hindered her development, but she graduated with honors this year just like her brother had in 1988.

We made a critical move ourselves when we moved to this house. I never wanted to move, but we did get rid of lots of junk and made a good investment. Also, we had to leave our old house in July and couldn't move in here until the end of August so we had some very special time staying with George's parents. Even though his folks fought all the time. The next year his Dad, "Cac" died, more of old age than anything

else. He was 81 years old. His Mother "Ma" died the next year after suffering terribly from diabetes complications.

I had started back to work more from trying to help at first with kids at George's school that needed Learning Assistance. There was no one to do the job so I did on a voluntary basis three half days a week and I learned " Direct Instruction" from Dorothy Ross at the same time. I still helped at Lara's kindergarten on Friday's and was given some awful jobs to do probably because I passed up the teacher when having Maco accelerated. I knew I wanted to go back to work so I applied to teach half time for the next Fall. But , I never heard anything so I was going to be called to sub at George's school,(so his principal said), when he found out my application had been misfiled. I was called in and interviewed and hired all in one day. I started teaching again half-time at Harbourview for Frank Kennedy. His" Assertive Discipline" principles have really helped me in all my life, especially when Lara was ill during this time period. My job was a saviour from her illness because I could change my focus for a few hours each day and I tried to remember, " that every day is a new day and to make the best of each day". I worked happily at that school until the "cutbacks" came and because I was part-time I was moved to Parkland and taught a Grade Four/Five in the afternoons the next year. Then I was Terminated due to further cutbacks. This was devastating to me professionally and I regretted ever stopping teaching and losing my job security. Then at the end of that summer I was called to do a long term sub back at Harbourview while the Grade one teacher was off recovering from Meningitis. I worked from September until March with some lovely children and it broke my heart to say good-bye. I "subbed" everywhere and in all grades even French Immersion For the rest of the year. That's why I think I was called and asked what I'd like to teach in September. I said Kindergarten and was given a job at Mundy Road with Ralph Kenkel. He tried to help me being bumped from that class but couldn't. Then I was sent to a school for only two weeks and staffing formulas moved me to Beachview Elementary for half-time Kindergarten. Then came an offer to go full time with Grade One and a permanent job. Although I've moved up to Grade Two and on to continuous progress and Second Year Primary I'm still at Beachview Elementary because I know" All Schools Have Good and Bad Points". My Saddest and hardest year has just past because Gloria moved on and I lost my best teaching buddy. She gave so much to all us primary teachers.

We had a wonderful trip to California once Lara was well enough to travel. This included San Fransisco and the Golden Gate Bridge, Magic Mountain and the

fantastic rides for George and the kids, and of course Disneyland and staying for half price at the Hilton on our Entertainment Book Card.

We got the most wonderful dog for our kids once Lara was well. Jock is part Yorkshire Terrier and part Poodle and he is smart, does lots of tricks, is very protective, terrific company, and helped us all through Maco's time away from home playing in the B.C. J.H.L. while he earned a hockey scholarship. This time period was very hard for me to let him go and yet keep in close contact to help Maco with all the "Politics of Hockey". I cried a lot and George helped keep me going.

Last summer we all drove across the U.S.A. taking Maco to Wisconsin to start his University in Madison. We visited Custer's Last Stand, which George and Maco loved because they are both historical nuts and the site is incredibly well done. We also went to Mount Rushmore which is truly awesome. After a short stay in Madison we left Maco and his best friend Doug, (who as incredible as it seems also on a scholarship at the same university), at his dorm and headed home via Plum Creek to see Laura Ingles Wilder's home as we had promised Lara. We also stopped at two of the Universities Maco would play at over the next year and checked out their hockey facilities. Once we got home Doug's Dad, Ian, started to pester us to go to the Christmas Tournament in Milwaukee. We booked the end of September and left on Boxing Day which helped me over Maco's return to Wisconsin on Christmas Day. His team won, Lara made good friends with the goalie's sisters who are from south of Winnipeg. Finally at the end of the year they kept winning in the play offs and made it to the "Final Four" in N.C.A.A. hockey championships. So we flew to Toronto and drove to Albany, New York with Doug's parents and the goalie, "Duke's", parents. We experienced the ecstasy of winning over the number one ranked Michigan Team and the agony of losing because of biased inept refereeing to the Lake Superior State Team. Our consolation was the wonderful Wisconsin fans who support our sons so fully and a stop to see Niagara Falls on our way back home.

While this was going on last year, Lara played Volleyball and Basketball for her High School and we went to watch the games. My Mom became increasingly less stable on her legs due to Arthritis and decided to move into a one bedroom apartment in a complex where she has her meals with the other tenants. She also has a bad heart and her vision is failing. It's so hard to see her getting old and needing help when I'm here and she's still in Victoria. That's my one big regret not being near my Mom as my family grew up and she's grown old and could use my help and I'm over here in Port Moody.

Specific Focus Part 2

I am currently teaching 25 children in second year primary. The range of ability is incredible. Sharla is EMH and has tested at 4 years and 5 months which is invalid as she was really too young when tested. She needs individual help with everything and has really benefitted by the buddies she has had in our co-operative groups of 4 or 6 children. Luckily this year I have 6 really good students who have helped her a lot. But, I also have 6 low talkative, inattentive, and immature children. Many of the students are from single parent families living in low rental complexes and are attention seekers by tattling, whining, fighting, being rough or picking on others, being loud or disruptive, or stealing as soon as my back is turned. These problems are also going on at the children's homes. I have one ESL girl and a boy who has transferred in from French Immersion. I have emphasised from the very beginning of the year that it is their responsibility,(job), to do their work and be co-operative, friendly, and helpful. (They check with 3 classmates before me if they need help.) This 4 by 4 rule really helps me and helps the children learn to collaborate. We usually start each day by writing in their Journals. This is modelled at first and then I often put up an incident of my own or a special notice for them to read after I've had time to see what's going with everyone. I put up a daily Good Morning with a reminder of that day's particular events and a relative time frame,(eg. after recess), and the name of the other teacher involved. I try to focus on the whole child and understand what is important to them by individual conferences daily and group discussions. I like the children to lead their own sharing and have a daily helper who always loves to take over for me. I think the children learn quickly that I'm fair, friendly, helpful, kind, humorous, and considerate as long as they are productive. My classroom is democratic and I like the classes opinions and I have often shifted focus on a theme because of their interests. I set up and have the children help set up different centers that we all want to use. My classroom has a relaxed yet somewhat structured atmosphere especially in the beginning because this is only their second year in school. I always have a quiet corner for those who need their own space, a place by my desk for private conversations, and a "Time Out" spot over by the side which was really useful this year for some of the children who needed to be on their own at one time or other. My principal, a marvelous lady to work with and for often drops in for a visit or comes when we invite her to share something special. Jane has seen all the children on their own for a sharing or when a problem has escalated to the level where her intervention is necessary. My students each had a buddy in the 6/7 class who helped them with their Reading by

reading to them, with them, and listening to them read. The rest of the staff is adequate, but I have really missed Gloria and appreciate more all the time what she did for me and all the others at Central.

My current teaching style is Towards Year 2000, but I use a variety of strategies and I have a Mother's perspective as well as being a teacher. I draw from Direct Instruction techniques, Assertive Discipline principles, Whole Language philosophy, Chime In verses, McCracken's materials, and I use a general Thematic approach to enable change whenever necessary. I like to do lots of whole group instruction because low kids need lots of repetition combining this with small group or 1-1 instruction where I can show empathy and make sure that each child knows I care. My Daily Conferences with each child gives me a chance to have children read, talk, share, or discuss with me by themselves while not being pressured. I am realistic in my expectations and I set limits. All activities are child focused and paced so all the children meet success at their own level. I think my classroom is attractive, that I am enthusiastic, and I have a reasonable sense of humor. I try to be relaxed and patient with parents and set up a good two way communication with them. I teach the children early in September to be responsible for their books, supplies, gym strip, runners, paint shirts, and notices. I say over and over that is "Not Mom's Job". Children in my class seem happy to come to school and lots of them come back to visit.

When I reflect on my past personal and professional life I realize that I am a product of my environment. I was very success oriented and I was afraid of failure. I was a strong middle child who protected and cared for my weak small older sister and wanted to be praised for my achievements like my brother who could do no wrong. Personally I never wanted to stop teaching so I did a lot with my own children and realize how valuable my time was to them. After having children I realize what is really important and returned to teaching a much better teacher. I try to instill pride in children by telling them, "you can do it" and teach them how to co-operate with others, socialize, and teach each other while instilling confidence to try, "D.Y.B.", (Do Your Best). I have succeeded so I am stronger and recognize that children need care and understanding to be able to move forward in spite of their problems. Sometimes I think my life is pretty boring but I've learned that I'm a stable person and children know what I am like and what to expect.

Finally, my personal and professional goals for the future include more university courses so I can make more money and I admit I always learn a few new things from every course I take. I want to help my children in any way we can :-

financially, emotionally, and just be available for them. I want to enjoy my life with my husband George and enjoy time with my Mom while she is still here. I also want to make time for family and friends. We don't see enough of our own families and I need to strengthen ties with them. I would like to have more time to see our old friends and travel and visit the people we've met this year from Wisconsin while we were on those trips I'd always wanted to make. At school I'd like to try new things or do something old in a more creative way. I have to strive to keep doing more, but still be realistic and instill self-confidence in children in my class. If I can remember to see the whole child then I can help build a child's self esteem and they can become self reliant so they could teach themselves and one another. Ideally my class would be full of challenges that were realistic and children would take risks with no fear of failure because we learn the most from our mistakes.

MARGARET

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Margaret, what made you become a teacher?

MARGARET: Always wanted to.

INTERVIEWER: You always knew that, eh?

MARGARET: Always knew that. Yeh. There was no doubt in my mind, I knew that from early in my life that I was going to be a teacher.

INTERVIEWER: Describe a typical teaching day
MARGARET: Bedlam. (Laughter)
Now, it's just, nothing is ever typical, because if something comes in or happens, it could change your whole day. But normally, to settle them, I like them to come in and write first thing in the morning and that gives them, me a chance to see what's going on their mind and them a chance to talk to me too. And I conference with them while they are doing that. And then I hear individual kids read. When they have, what I consider to be enough time sitting down, then they all take a reading time and now we start out with ten minutes. I am almost up to 20 now where they read with, by themselves, or with someone, with a little group. And then I read to them, or we do a chart or we do Chime-In or we do any other type of lesson that is pertinent to it, or information or

...With my bright ones this year we share and just. They took a break and went outside because it was nice to do our reading, with our buddies, and that was very successful. I don't know. In the afternoon I always let kids go for sips whenever they need to. They have to ask me. Can't have a drink because you might wet your pants. I don't know. I just do a whole variety of things, and have lots of things for them in the room. And always have a project that they are working on. And they always got other things they are working on, so they are not hanging on your left arm. What do I do next? I can't stand that. So we always have on-going things and lots of. This year has really worked very successfully, because I do have some top kids that are in the same age range, where you can do a lot more buddy work and buddy reading, good readers. And in the afternoon I do math or math centers or an open ended math activity. First, usually, relatively first, depending on whether something comes up after lunch, or something has come up from the school. And then we have sharing, and I like to have everyone share. Do that four days a week where everybody has chance to share whatever they want to share. It only takes about ten minutes and lots of. They share whatever they do, want to. And in the morning, if there's time, I have journal sharing or author's podium, or whatever you want to call it before lunch. And then we do some kind of a music activity or some kind of physical activity to keep them going. And I always have something going for an art project that they are working on, too. And doing on different ones. I don't always do all the things from the book that we have now, the art one, because there are so many other things that you can do that are semantic that the kids are really interested in doing. And there is never enough time to do all the stuff you want to do. I like to have time too, especially early in the year, for them to play and socialize and just see how they're developing. That's it.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Well, when you teach language art, how do you encourage expressive writing?

MARGARET: At the beginning of it, or when they are really into writing?

INTERVIEWER: Both.

MARGARET: At the beginning I start off, usually, by modelling what we are going to do. And very early in the year, even if there aren't kids who can write, frame sentences, I do that. And start out with a simple framed sentence and then I always do a chart that they give me for sentence frames. Or build little sentence strips and cut them

and put them into the chart. And they love to borrow them and use them and vocabulary. And later on in the year, when they are doing expressive writing, they have written something down. I ask them if they could add a word to make it more interesting, and I will help them add words. And this year I am doing about three different ways to encourage writing. I am doing more expressive writing, they can either do sound spelling. They can come and ask me a word that's like, a name of something that they really want, like the word Edmonton fits into their story. Or they have done a lot of work looking up words themselves, and they really feel excited when they find it themselves in the early dictionary. I also bring a lot of props and stuff in, that's something that's expressive. We will talk about it a lot first and have a big discussion about it and do a lot of webbing and different strategies with them. Whatever one seems to suit, and sometimes I have even had them suggest what they want, and you actually have to get a few top kids, sure helps.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that when they come in in the morning, that they start writing in their journals.

MARGARET: Yep. Always, we have journal every day. And whoever is the helper, makes them into two piles and gives them out with a friend. So it is just, they have a routine that settles them right in.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

MARGARET: I think fairly well, but I don't exactly do it lock step. I use lots of different approaches to it, because kids learn in so many different ways, that I find it, there's not just, there is no one set way for any group. After you get to know your kids a bit better, you know what different needs are for different kids. I don't really, I do it step by step, it's just, kids aren't made that way. They haven't read the book.

INTERVIEWER: What connection, if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

MARGARET: From the writing process I get a really good idea of how their spelling is developing, whether they are a sight speller or a phonetic speller or whether they are able to use cuing systems, to go and look up spelling themselves and find words. And

some children who don't have a good English background or haven't done a lot of spoken language or have a deficiency in it, they need a lot of help. And they need to be taught some of the standard rules. And I do teach phonetic spelling, but I also teach sight words, and I also teach dictionary skills to find words, and do a lot of things that are using the alphabet, really early in the year.

INTRERVIEWER: How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing?

MARGARET: I have a lot of kids this year that really like to know that this word will be spelled right. And I don't get upset about it, but I found it really works well if I print very small above the word with a blue pencil. Blue doesn't really stand out at you and scream at you. Some of them correct it, and some of them don't. But I'm really excited, because lots of time, I notice kids looking back or sharing a word with someone, because they have the correct spelling for it. And then I know that doing that kind of thing is really working, and it's really becoming a cooperative type situation. So I'm really happy with that, but I don't make spelling a big issue. I tell them, anything they can write, I can read. And when they got that confidence, they just start writing stuff down.

INTERVIEWER: I think you already answered this question Margaret, is there anything else you do to encourage standard spelling? I think you have pretty well covered that.

MARGARET: I do teach the sounds of the letters really early. And I am doing the blends, do lots of rhyming words, vowel substitution. They really thought that was funny, doing vowel substitutions this year. I think I have the brightest kids, they see the humour in doing that more. And we don't get a lot of brighter kids at our school. That was fun. They like to do. If it makes the word, or if it doesn't.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you use spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

MARGARET: I try to do spelling when I see it, when there is a need for it. But if I see a common mistake occurring, kind of keeping a little list of things, then I will say, you are all using this and doing that. And then I will make it a set lesson. But I don't do it so

much that way, I do it more a buddy system. Like who's got the word in their book, or who's word is that. Make up words and put them up on the chart that they spelled wrong. Or they want to add to our chart of spelling words, and they can go and find them for their friends. Because was lost today and it soon became found so it was really interesting. Yeh, that's a really good example. Sometimes spelling can be separate and is good to do it separate, but sometimes when you are doing something you've got the vocabulary to develop there. And one of the interesting things that I did this year, which is really a spelling activity, I made a great big cat. We put all the words we could think of about cat, on the cat, and then I made them aware and had them put cat in the middle. And they told me that we should put kitten there too. And then they sorted the cat words out. And that's really a spelling activity. But I don't think that I would say that I always teach as a separate activity. It's more theme related, and part of what we are doing. I don't think it needs to be. Otherwise it doesn't have any meaning to them. They are tuned out.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

MARGARET: I think they're, really become interested in words. They develop a liking for words. Aand even if some of the ones aren't the right letters, you can see that they are getting the sounds. And they really feel excited about it. They are very confident when they can do that, and that's a big thing in the Year 2000 thing, that you want to build that with them. And it's not so terribly important that it be totally correct in the younger kids. I think as they get older that you have to in the proof reading stage of writing. Say to them, that there is something wrong here, and have various means for them to be able to correct their spelling, and know how to do that by themselves. Whether it be using a dictionary or looking up from a list of words that they have on a certain theme, I don't know, just depends. Is that what you want?

INTERVIEWER: Uhhu, in your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

MARGARET: In a report card? In the early primary kids I will say to them, they are beginning to use standard ... in spelling, or that someone makes good use of standard spelling, and this year, I been, it's been quite different. Because I have had kids who have had a really good understanding of standard spelling. And I'm just as happy when you get someone who gets that break-through from doing just a beginning letter,

squiggly lines, to getting two or three of the right consonants. You know they are on their way to writing and they're just as excited too. So I don't see that it has to be the standard spelling that the end all. You want them to, the thing is to get them to be writing. They can read what they have written, that's what's important. If you could only educate the parents!

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

MARGARET: I don't think that there really is a relationship, because one of the little boys that I have that really is, in a quote, normal child, was just not, very timid. Took a long time to be able to write using anything near what would become, what you would call standard spelling. And in his next year of school, he's become one of the top students, because he was so confident that he was doing the right thing, using just his sounds. And, he knew at the time and as he matured, he began to use more and now he's really doing well. But with top kids they seem to know in, almost intuitively, that it's either the one letter or the other and they'll come and ask you which one it is. It's interesting. Does this have a silent e or does it have the two vowels together. It's really strange. They just seem to know that it's one or the other, and if they want to do it right, they will. Or they are even asking for a sticky and will write me a little note beside it, which is funny, because they know I'm busy I read those stickies at the side of the desk so they don't bug you.

That's cute. I love getting little notes from people.

INTERVIEWER: That's cute too. How do you think students learn to spell?

MARGARET: How? Just by listening to the, what is the sounds of it is to them, the word is to them. A child with a speech problem has really a lot of trouble learning to spell, because they can't hear the sounds, they have poor hearing, or defective hearing. You certainly find that out fast, because they just can't hear. They have to be able to hear it, and I think they have to be able to, some of them have to be able to visualize it in their mind. And some of them, when they put it down before their, it's really a developmental thing, a lot of it, I think. So because it is not just ready to until they've gone through certain phases and just because they are five years old, doesn't mean that for every last kid that should be able to. Some of them are really take a long, long time. One of my really young kids this year today, he wanted to spell fly, and he just

felt there should be an i in there. So he had the f, l, the i, and then he added the y too, and I said that's interesting. Why did you think you needed the i and he says because I can hear it in the word. I thought that was cute. He's absolutely right.

MARGARET: I think you've already answered the next question too. How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, is it a developmental process or is it a task of memorization?

MARGARET: I think as they get older there's more words they have to memorize, but beginning, it's developmental. And I think it should be developmental if they are going to be a good speller. Because if they, like except someone like 'Blue' if they are brain damaged or something, we don't know what it is like that, I think it is alcohol syndrome. Just, they just can't get it. And they don't even understand what letters are really. What do you do for kids like that, those kinds of problems. You just do the best you can.

INTERVIEWER: That's right. O.K. Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, and if so, why, if not, why not?

MARGARET: It used to be more important to me. But more important that they write, because the spelling comes as they develop the confidence in themselves and in their sounding out. No, it's not important to me now that they spell right, because it will come as they get a better understanding of the letters. And lots of them are missing teeth, and they are not saying them quite the right way. And when they practice saying words and doing Chime-In and things, all of a sudden, sometimes you see little bells go off. All of a sudden they clicked into a sound in a word and they are really excited about it.

O.K. thank you.

MARGARET

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: I understand that you view spelling to be a developmental process within the larger context of writing. You use writing to get an idea about how your

students are developing in spelling. Can you give examples of the indicators of this development.

MARGARET: The indicators in the development I...first of all, bringing in the initial consonants, and final consonants, and then developing the medial consonants and then I, some of these begin to show using sight words, or words that they use consistently in their writing. More in the idea at the very early stages where they are using frame sentences. They can begin to print those words that they've used in the frame sentences and transfer it over into any other writing they are doing.

INTERVIEWER: Margaret, you don't make standard spelling a big issue, but rather work on having the students write and build their confidence. Have you always felt this way?

MARGARET: For at least the past ten years I have been using this more than anything. I really like them to use their own spelling, it helps you to see developmentally where they are in their spelling, because I think at the very beginning they need to know their letter sounds and build from there if they are going to be a good speller, it's essential.

INTERVIEWER: Where did this idea come from, when did you first, you said ten years ago, what started to make you change?

MARGARET: I think when I came back to teaching, probably because of my own kids. And this thing that I really felt were important and then when I started taking some workshops and whole language courses, I found that the things I was doing already was exactly what they were looking for.

INTERVIEWER: Margaret, your comments on report cards about spelling are always in terms of writing, is that correct?

MARGARET: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: You also said we need to educate parents. Can you say some more about that.

MARGARET: I think parents need to understand that writing and spelling very much overlap and it's very much a developmental process and that they can help their children by encouraging them to use the sound of spelling and even more specifically, help them by speaking carefully and clearly themselves, and encouraging them to do that.

INTRERVIEWER: You commented that standard spelling used to be important to you, but now writing is what is important. In what ways has your viewpoint altered on this question?

MARGARET: I think the children can express themselves in their own way, and if you put yourself kinda in that frame, you don't have any trouble reading anything any child has written for you and as long as they can read it back to me, then that's what is important. They are beginning to put down the printed word and feeling a great deal of success and that helps build their self concept, and that's what's important.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else about the issue of spelling that you feel strongly about?

MARGARET: What do I feel strongly about spelling? I think that if kids really want words, they should know how to access them, because they love words, and using pictionaries and, it's hard. I feel very strongly about spelling, but I think that spelling should come from what they want to learn. Because if they don't want to learn it, you are flogging a dead horse, because it is just something that you want them to learn. It has to mean something to them and so much of a spelling lesson is incidental. It comes up from what their interest is.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Thank you Margaret. That ends the discussion.

APPENDIX III

Part 5

SALLY

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I was born on Easter Sunday, April 8, 1928 and named Anne Lillian Pavey. I entered the Vancouver scene at St. Paul's hospital. My parents Annie and Harry both were very young. They lived on Vancouver Heights and after 15 months of unhappiness one day, following an argument, both left-each thinking the other was looking after their baby. Three days later my paternal grandmother came to visit and found me strapped into a highchair, dehydrated and in a sorry condition. I recall my early years at my Grandmother's home with mixed feelings. Their large estate was set on fifteen acres of land in early Burnaby. It was an adventurous child's dream - orchards, gardens, a parklike wooded section and a huge sprawling house were mine to roam. My grandmother was an extremely organized woman running her family's affairs like a business while my grandfather was very industrious - he was superintendent at the B.C. Sugar Refinery, he did 3 to 4 hours gardening daily and he had many real estate interests. I have many things other children did without in those depression years but the strict moral tone of the family and the spartan code I was expected to live by were very demanding for a child. They told me I was a burden and that at all costs "I must not turnout like my parents". Each summer from June to September I went with my Grndmother to Keats Island - a child's unspoiled paradise. There, between Group Church Meetings, tents full of summer visitors and visiting relatives occasionally someone noticed I was there. My uncle Charlie, my dad's bRother taught me about art and nature at Keats and at home. My Grandfather passed his gift for music on to me. My wonderful Aunt Barbara, a terrific role model came home from her teaching job at a small coast island every holiday.

At 5 my Grandmother got me into 1st year by writing her version of my birthdate in the family bible. I could read and print short stories by then because as part of my Grandmother's church work she started one of the 1st kindergartens in Vancouver. She saw that I had many books, she taught me cooking, housekeeping, herbology and our family history. I was always at the top of my class of 48 or 50 but I was often home with the flu or taking care of my grandmother in her failing health.

As an untreated diabetic she developed a religious mania. Between 6 and 10 I was often beaten, punished or given unreasonable chores such as cleaning their 11 room house because of some supposed religious transgression. My grandmother died at 54. It was just at my 10th birthday. During those years my mother was run off our grounds by our dogs, my father was not welcome - he married an Alberta woman. Two years later he ran off with her sister whom he later married and has remained with throughout his life.

School and my Grandmother meant everything to me. When she was gone school was my main guiding factor for years. Aunt Barbara came to live with my grandfather and I. She was kind and supportive but not much at disciplining a headstrong girl. Her husband had a great sense of fun and humour which I learned to appreciate.

At school the kids called me "Teachers Pet" - I didn't relate well to them I was fairly mature and interested in things they didn't value. I began writing in high school after my efforts in sports, music and art were considered inappropriate by my family. I won a design contest for 2 years training in Montreal. It was considered "dangerous" for a 17 year old. I was nominated the "Best Junior Actress" in a competing B.C. play. It was considered immoral, etc. I became the high school news editor for two years. I was on several track teams and a winning soft ball pitcher and team captain. I tried everything to be popular throughout these high school years. I did make a few life long friends - Lisa, who like me never played with others until she was four, Nick, who I took a first birthday cake to - the first neighbour to move in for miles around in Lochdale and Nora and Catherine best buddies in elementary and high school. I worked at many after school jobs to get clothing money. My grandfather was wealthy but believed in each person being independent financially. I tried sales in a fish market, stores of several kinds, home care, modeling, etc. When I graduated from high school I made my own dress. Auntie Barbara almost missed the ceremony because a dog ate the corsage she had for me. Imagine my embarrassment when she arrived at the last minute with a garland of flowers for me to wear. But I was the one who got my picture in the local papers! The next year I took Sr. Matric in Nanaimo since my grandfather had retired at 75 and moved to Yellowpoint. Weekdays I boarded in town. I walked 12 miles to Yellowpoint on the weekends. I was disappointed in the classes, the standards were low. That year I met Marc Hardcastle, a returned Airman. I thought he had a great mind and that he was truly creative. He came from a fascinating

family of well known artists. We decided to get married and did so that fall. We didn't have enough money for a wedding ring. We had to get permission since I was only 19. In that process I wrote my first letter to my father and I discovered that my mother was barely alive in a hospital. I was barely married a week when I realized how very wrong it all was and why I have done such a thing. However, I had been taught not to give up and that divorce was a disgrace so I persevered. I worked hard as a cook, a waitress, a factory and a hospital worker to save money for normal school and to build a house. Both accomplishments were my "dreams" at that time.

Marc and I designed a home and built it on Capitol Hill. I sat on the D.V.A. steps for 3 days until they relented and gave my husband a Vet's allowance so he could go to school, too. We both went to normal school in 1948 - 49. I did exceptionally well. I loved it all because it gave me an opportunity to do all the things I liked - singing, dancing, physical activity, telling and creating stories, artwork, caring for children, organizing activities, etc. Marc, however, was unfortunately "out of step". He dreamed of teaching machines, individual instruction, family group, developmental pace, etc. before his time. We did our practise teaching on Vancouver Island. We were each sent a job offer on the island but to the wrong address. Marc accepted a position in the Bela Coola Valley. There was no chance of a job there for me so I decided it was a good time to have a child. While pregnant with Heather I contracted German Measels in my 2nd month. She was meant to be a twin - only she defiantly survived with only a few residual problems and a birth factor of 1. She was difficult to raise with marked perceptual problems but with a cheery, social personality and a great artistic talent. Against Doctor's orders I had Chad the next year and I almost died. Over the next 5 years I endured 9 corrective operations, oxygen deprivation, memory loss, much pain and finally a hysterectomy at 27. But against all odds I survived. With returning health I looked after over 20 stray welfare children in the outposts where we lived, setup community pre-schools so my children could have the experience and continually read educational literature assiduously. When Marc was transferred from Kokish to Alert Bay my children began school. I looked around for things to keep me going. I got involved in community drama, ran a variety of group craft classes, chaired the music festival, gave elocution lessons, designed costumes for a roller follies group and gave skating lessons and finally began working at the local newspaper. I typed, wrote social articles at first. Graduated to typesetting, engraving, light table work, photography and finally began to write in earnest. One day I saw the union rates for this kind of work. I applied to have my teaching license renewed. This

was allowed since I had showed such promise at normal school. Husbands and wives could not work for the same school board at that time so I applied to the only other school available on the island.

My first full time teaching position was at the Indian Day School at Alert Bay in 1957. The class was called a receiving class. It was in fact a dumping ground for 38 souls - aged 6 to 10 all of whom had repeated at least one year or more the Principal and Indian Affairs felt that if a child didn't progress satisfactorily during their first year they should repeat and that they were somehow inferior. Many were suffering from "Deprivation and Murther Love" - having been sent to an Anglican "Residence" at 5 1/2. Some didn't know English. Some did indeed have very special problems like untreated deafness, marked vision defects, staph, worms, malnutrition, etc. Only a few were dull. I was to discover that the class had "run off" five teachers the previous year. Them or me? I established order the first day by standing on the desk and talking to them in the language they understood. I did not once turn my back on them for over three months. Each day as I walked to the reservation I retched so filled was I with fear and apprehension. The classroom was very large - an old airforce building. I set up the 2nd half at the back into learning stations - unheard of in those days. Ultimately, I learned how to work with these children. I also taught music to the whole school, 10 classrooms. We won every choir and individual selection that we entered in many festivals. I aquired several gold plated inspectors reports. But my children were being affected by the low common social denominator of the area. I begged my husband to stop his missionary work and move to the city. He would not so I applied myself to Victoria and Coquitlam - two of the only three areas beginning to hold kindergarten in their schools. I received offers from both. My husband reluctantly decided to move with us and ultimately he too taught in Coquitlam in the elementary grades and as a special class teacher. I taught at Harbour View when it opened and stayed there for 4 years. I walked to school, jogged daily, had a lovely group of children and enjoyed each day. My own children took some time to adjust to city life. They were niave and it took time for them to school standards. After Harbour View I worked in the first L.A. Team, a real challenge. I looked after 167 pupils at 2 schools that year. Next I taught at Kilmer which I really enjoyed - there were 30 to 32 children in each class but I had a very large room and a nature preserve was just at our doorstep. My own children began having serious social problems. Chad fell in with the bugeoning drug world. Heather was attacked at Alloette Park. Despite this my children and I related well to each other. Heather continued to develop as an artist.

Chad became involved with a girl who wanted to get married - they became teenage parents and she, deciding to get divorced before they were 20 years old left a trail of unhappiness behind her. I learned that my mother was still living and that I had 3 half sisters. Heather graduated from high school - with art scholarships. Chad moved to Barwick, Ontario population 35 where a friend of mine set up a factory. He eventually employed Chad as the manager which probably save his productive life. Chad began writing in earnest as well. My husband was not helpful during this difficult period it seemed a non-marriage so I separated and divorced him.

I went straight into the "Butterfly Stage" I loved being single. I became myself. I offered to work at Hazel Trembath when it opened as a small school. I remember the day Hazel T. came knocking on my door. During my first year on my own Heather was involved in an industrial accident and we almost lost her. She came home to live with me again. Chad and I established our adult relationship when he returned to live at Pierce St., N.W. I really liked working at H. Trembath - it was small, next to a forest reserve, one could know the community. It grew, times changed, I taught 2nd., 3rd year primary when there wasn't a full day kindergarten. I did C.T.A. work, Phys. Ed. demos and continued to work on my B.A. until it was completed. I wrote some musicals and did much art. Then I was in a nasty car accident - I lost the hearing in one ear because of it and I had to get glasses as well. I went on dating, learned to ski and play tennis and I travelled throughout the States and Hawaii. School was always there. It kept me going. It offered the rewards of satisfaction for work well done. Finally a principal came to Hazel Trembath that was autocratic - that year I had a 3rd year class that took from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. to prepare for and too much energy to control. I had just remarried a real prince charming so we decided to take a year off. We travelled Canada and the United States for the year with our car and trailer and we both loved that life style. I visited each important Ed. Centre for about 6 months of the journey then I got interested in other things. On our return I worked between Parkland and Harbour View which was tiring. The Ed. climate was austere as well due to "restraint", etc. Then I heard that Central needed a full time teacher.

I applied and moved on to Central with it variety of challenges. I continued to work on my 5th year still taking a mixed major of English and E. Childhood - a demanding combination. I began working on my Masters as well. During the past 7 years I have been at Central except for the 2nd year when I worked between Mary Hill and Central continuing my work with the kindergarten - (now 1st yr./primary)

children. There have been changes in administration and staff as well as in the make up at the area. There has not been a year without major challenges.

My daughter now has 3 children - we really enjoy our time with these grandchildren. My son has his own ship's repair business. I look after my old mom, my dad has finally retired, hale and healthy at 85. My husband has undergone about 4 years of business failure but things are turning around, now. Next year I will retire from teaching. I look forward to that.

PART II

QUESTION ONE

Describe your current working context. (What is the nature of my working reality?)

My present teaching assignment is full time first year primary (kindergarten) at Central El. School. This program requires 5 1/2 hours in class plus 1/2 hour prior to and after class. My classroom is small but it is well equipped. As an employee of Coq. S.D. I am expected to aim for their goals as well as the Dept. of Ed. Curriculum goals and my own as well. As a member of the C.T.A. I feel bound to abide by their rules, code of ethics, etc. I am teaching in an area where the general standard of readiness is not high. There are more than the usual number of children with learning problems due to social situations, lack of experience (for the children) or undiagnosed, untreated problems. As yet there are not many E.S.L. children. I am well qualified for this work with a B.Ed. in primary studies and Master's work in Early Childhood. Even so my classes are very challenging. The morning group this year needs much enrichment while the afternoon class contains several children with marked social problems. This year I have also taken the position of school art representative - as always I enjoy this activity.

QUESTION TWO

Describe your current teaching style and the curriculum you use. (How do I think and act in the classroom?)

I use an eclectic mix of many methods. I prefer a verbal - cognitive context. I believe in including a wealth of experiences in the K. curriculum with each child moving at their own pace with many choices. Children's rights of security, respect and attention are a must in my classroom. I try to maintain good rapport with the parents. I believe in personal dignity and responsibility. I expect positive learning to happen. I see kindergarten as a foundation for learning, attitudes and coping mechanisms. I think it is important for the classroom tone to be one of enthusiasm and co-operation. I make a real effort to see that the classroom setting is functional as well as attractive.

QUESTION THREE

Describe any reflections you may have of your past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of your present professional thoughts and actions. (How did I come to be the way I am?)

I believe my past experiences have impelled me into teaching. Many life events or experiences have led to developing qualities or skills useful in the classroom.

Living with grandmother

Lady bountiful concept, nurturing, her early kindergarten's showed how things could be organized, her leadership roles a good example.

Living with grandfather

organized, a leader, hard worker, gift of music

Uncle Charlie

gift of art, self respect, love of nature

Aunt Barbara

teacher example, kindness, community worker

Uncle Jack

sense of humour, balance

Being a high school editor

organization, writing skill

Camp Leader

learned to lead

Heather's illnesses

search for remedies, many courses in special ed.

Marc's classes

learned from his Sp. Ed. experiences

Survival as a child difficult

empathy with others, coping mechanisms, sense of balance, creative approach

Some special teachers stand out as well as some professors as having taught me standards and expectations for myself. My majors in E. Childhood and English gave me "know how and a great love for learning for the classics, improved my writing and composing style. Much extra curricular reading has broadened my approach. I have learned, also, from life experience to trust my instincts. The business world taught me to be organized clerically(?). When I was ill I finally learned patience. Living in about 20 different communities over the years has taught me some social skills so necessary in dealing with parents and colleagues. Lately, necessity has helped me integrate the computer into my programs.

QUESTION FOUR

Describe your preferred personal/professional future after personally analyzing the three previous phases. (What do I want to do about it?)

Next year I will retire. I hope to complete many unfinished poems, booklets and other writings. These stem from experience and imagination (from my many experiences over the years in and out of teaching). My husband and I will become snowbirds for a few years. I will buy and sell antiques as usual. After many years we will settle down in B.C. probably in a country setting. My husband and I have planned retirement for years. I am delighted that it's all finally within reach.

SALLY

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: What made you become a teacher?

SALLY: I think I felt that it was a profession where you would always have security, the security of a type of job one had tenure. And that it was a relatively good wage, and also it fulfilled a lot of the abilities that I had and be able to use them to advantage. And also I particularly chose Kindergarten because from my reading, and from the things that I had observed, I felt that that was where you would have the most influence for good.

INTERVIEWER: Could you describe a typical teaching day?

SALLY: Well, Kindergarten, their first year, is a series of, it is like a kaleidoscope. It is always changing, and there's always bright spots. They're changing all the time, and with every child it's different, so that there is just a rainbow of colours in your spectrum. You felt the moment the children come in, from the moment they see you, you are on, as the teacher, because you have to use every moment to advantage for each child and for the class. And so it's very demanding. And also, as well as for Kindergarten as well as doing academics, you must be very aware of the children's physical growth, because it is a large growth time and so you have to make sure that at all times, the children are comfortable and if they are not well, that they're being looked after. And at the same time you are looking for all the other skills to develop, the social skills and the social responsibilities. So you are always looking for opportunities to build for each child.

INTERVIEWER: In your day is there specific times of the day that you do certain things?

SALLY: Yes, I have, I tried many different timetables, but I found that usually it worked best for to have about three quarters of an hour of playtime with some assigned play and some choice, which changes during the year. And for some children it is more structured, than some children who's social responsible and take more responsibility and have more choice. And follow that by an evaluation, where we

discuss everything they have done, so that they may share it with one another and that cements the knowledge that they have got, that evaluation, that discussion that each child does of their work and of others work. I usually follow that by some short activity. It might be music, it might be a small physical break, and then a snack. After snack they usually have a library time and sometimes they share books. Sometimes they share them with me, sometimes with others, sometimes they present something from their books. And following that, I usually have music or physical ed, depending how my schedule set up. You know, when I can get the gym, indoors or out. Sometimes in the classroom, sometimes movement to music and follow that by about a 20 minute, what I call work time. And I have, sometimes I'll take two or three days on a math project or an art project. Sometimes I'll alternate language activities, and everyday I try to have a poem or continuing story. Sometimes that time will be given over to that as well. And that's followed by a ... And then it is time for them to go home. But on Friday, I do a different schedule. There will be perhaps, two major activities. One might be a drama one, or one a games one, might be alphabet bingo, it might be something they have made up themselves. Right now I am doing collaborative games for about half an hour, follow that by maybe an art project. And then we have a show and tell, where they all discuss and they are learning to ask one another questions. This year I am quite pleased with how they are coming along and usually they buddy.. on Friday, with their big buddies and with one another. And just lately, I have been getting into little reading groups with some of them already, so that. And then usually we do some different form of physical activity, like doing frisbee...use frisbees on Friday. Soft ice cream lids so no one will get hurt, but they had a wonderful time. And usually there is, on Friday some new activity and then I try to have their big buddies come last, and the big buddies help them with anything from stories that they would read to them, to when they start to read reading back, or language activities, any number of them. Sometimes other things like they help them with their kites. One day a week also I have a little data computer...

INTERVIEWER: That's very interesting. When you, you were talking in your day, sometimes you have language arts. When you teach language arts, how do you encourage expressive writing?

SALLY: Well, I use to begin with, I develop their ability to speak before groups and speak to me, and to speak to one another. And we have a lot of themes and activities, such as Mary Wore Red., and then the next person tells the next person, their...and I

something. I... whatever it is, their theme is about and also the evaluation, they always tell about my printing is. And at first I put this story on their painting as they dictated, but gradually, around by Halloween, I take out sight words like emotional sight words, like happy, sad, may I and they start labelling things with those. And then finally add to the chart, I give them a few, start out with I am, I see, and they add those to their own sentences. And now I am labelling their art work using the typewriter, labelling at the computer, putting things on their paintings. They are up to, some of them are up to two or three sentences now. And, but verbally they're composing a lot more.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you follow the stages of the writing process?

SALLY: Well, when you look at the writing process, some of the stages are too advanced for Kindergarten. However they are, they go through the thought process first, we do brainstorm. And we discuss things. If we are going to do spring paintings, so that they got something to think about before they do that, before they put their words on. If they come and ask for words, they have to define it for me, so they are doing the brainstorming. And with the initial writing, it is very important not to be worried about inventive words or writing backwards, or things like that. I don't do that type of editing myself, until they are solid in making a sentence or two. And then we start looking at, oh, let's see what happened here. And the whole class might look at an example of that. And so, you know, group editing. Now some of the children are into, beginning to review their work themselves. They actually will look over their sentence and proof read, and they will say, oh I forgot the a. And some little ones are starting to read are learning the punctuation already. And it's much to be desired because they are very proud of the work. To be a person who can use the and word and so on. So there is that presentation at the end as well. Those are about the amount of stages that we use. Now when they make a little book, if we do it together, that's a shared experience, but if they make it by themselves they follow putting on author and title and trying to keep it on one subject. So that also adds to..

INTERVIEWER: They do the publishing stage too?

What connection if any, do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

SALLY: Not ... years ago, when I was teaching intermediate grades and primary grades, I came to the conclusion that good sight memory, of sight words could be

taught at the same time as they reading of the words. And once they had a little phonics to help them and, I already have the Kindergarten children using about, most of them using about ten words that they call their spelling. Do practice on the blackboard... of things that they could print, see, you know. And of course they haven't the phonics for that at all yet, beginning sounds. So I see it as really interconnected. Now when I have, let's see, 3's and 4's, by Christmastime almost all the children would spell really well, using dictionaries. In my, have taught, former first year secondary, now I have the children use dictionaries from the word go and I have two huge boxes of dictionaries here that the children use. And they know some of the more advanced ones. To look for a word that they might be able to find, they might be able to figure it out on the book. So I see a very close way that they can be developed. Now I don't think it is necessary to be able to spell, to write notes. I think that's second stage.

INTERVIEWER: How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing?

SALLY: Well, for Kindergarten, if I think that they might have even a glimmer of the phonetic content, I might mention it. Otherwise I don't mention because I don't want to discourage them.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else that you do to encourage standard spelling?

SALLY: Well, for their name, for instance. They have name cards and they use those to copy them exactly. And they learn the fact that specific words could be different. Like, just because it starts with j and ends with a letter, it might be different from someone else with a different word. And we have songs that..being known and so on. Jacob was his name and Valentine's time they had to match exactly, match to percolate the idea that there is something exact about words.

INTERVIEWER: To what extent do you view spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

SALLY: Well, I think there is a place for concentrating on it to a certain extent. And there comes a time as they go on, that you would expect that they would have certain degree of spelling accuracy. And that it would probably profitable in making their writing more acceptable to others who are trying to read it. And for publication, to do some special work on spelling.

INTERVIEWER: But what about specifically at the Kindergarten level?

SALLY: Kindergarten level, I would expect them to spell their names correctly and the very simplest words, you know. Like if I asked them to put an L and they put an i on, I would say, what word do you have here? Which is the beginning of noticing spelling.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

SALLY: I think if it's been a specific that is taught, they would have honed in on it. And I think that if you say they have been told they are poor speller, or if it's got in the way of their writing, it could have a negative effect.

INTERVIEWER: So do you see writing as an influence then?

SALLY: Well, not the writing itself, the discussion of the writing by others, by children.

INTERVIEWER: In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

SALLY: I don't think I would mention it to Kindergarten parents. Certainly...about Kindergarten I would, if it was a factor. Like are you saying about influence writing, there is that other thing where some children feel they can't spell the words and they are afraid of inventive words and for some children they might feel ... if they thought they couldn't spell something.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

SALLY: Got a lot more to do with memory, it's not a function of intelligence, at least ... so consequently a person could be..idiot.. and be a perfect speller, you know. So I think it has a lot more to do with hearing and the ability to have that type of memory, or the ability, or to persist and learn.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

SALLY: Oh, a lot of them today learn to spell from Sesame Street. Things are spelled out, we spell this and from the initial primary games, the preschool games and then as a factor in a language program. And often some children on their own.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the process of learning to spell, a developmental process or is it a task memorization?

SALLY: Both.

INTERVIEWER: Is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, if so why, and if not, why not?

SALLY: Ultimately, but certainly not at first. Inventive spelling, it allows them to get on with writing, just like baby talk allows them to get on with talking. You know, develop those abilities.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. thank you.

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: Sally, I understand that you believe, for initial writing, the teacher shouldn't be worried about inventive spellings and backward words and things like that. Can you say more about that?

SALLY: Well, it can be very easy to discourage a child when he's created this word and, in his mind, it says beautiful. And it may say b, u, t, f, l, and he recognizes it as beautiful. It's his first attempt. It would be like knocking down a child when it takes it's first step. Those other factors of spelling, in some cases are beyond him, so he would be criticizing for something he has no control over and you are discouraging him when he first tries, which is not the way to motivate children.

INTERVIEWER: When I asked you what connection do you see between the writing process and standard spelling, you mentioned that good sight memory of sight words could be taught at the same time as the reading of the words. Then you said that your

kindergarten children were already using ten sight words, that they call their spelling. Can you explain further for me, the connection of sight words to the writing process.

SALLY: Well, obviously, if you have some sight words, if like having bows in your arrows, or arrows in your quiver, you can't use those. You don't feel like you have to go and ask someone for a word, you don't have to figure it out, it's right there. It's a key to writing to have a few words of your own. As soon as a child can put their name on something, has a way of labelling it, as its own, it has a value. And so it gets them started, I think.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first begin to believe in this idea?

SALLY: I, when I first started teaching, I had done a lot of pre-reading, because I was home for several years. And I just knew that I was going to be teaching, so I kept on reading. I read about all the things that were happening in the States. I read about that woman in Australia, I forget her name, but she had children see their own important words in an envelope.

INTERVIEWER: Sylvia Ashton Warner ?

SALLY: Right. And I read about a variety of methods of spelling and different courses they discussed, ways into writing. And I just started using them, my very first year of teaching. I was dealing with children, who many of them didn't even have any English. It was very important that they have access to words. So I made words available, in every way I could, on the blackboard, on little papers, on big papers, on cards, attached to things, have them go around. Just as if you were learning a new language, and I know, when I was working with children who were English speaking, that in a way, those written words were a new language, so I treated it as

INTERVIEWER: Isn't that interesting. Sylvia Ashton Warner talks about key vocabulary. Is there not a difference between what you're saying and what she's saying in a sense, because you're providing them with the words that you think they should know, or you not, whereas she takes it from them, doesn't she?

SALLY: Yes, she takes it from them, and I do that too. The base vocabulary I give them. I'd experimented with over the years, and there are lists of what the base ones are, and the most popular words and so on. And I found that the feeling words, like

happy, sad, mad are very understandable to all children. And then, for instance, I think I mentioned before about starting around about Halloween once they've got established in the class, talking about things like ghosts with happy faces or sad ghosts, or mad kids, one thing or another and letting them have those few words so they get interested in something they understand. Then gradually adding the words that they want and they use. And I do have a few standard ones, like I, cause they are egocentric and they all want to have the I word. And the sensory words, like I see, or I hear. And some of the action words.

INTERVIEWER: Right. Interesting. Would you like others in the profession, other teachers, to learn about this idea of yours?

SALLY: I don't think it is too original. I simply think that it's a compilation of various things I have read about. Now the idea of using feeling words, I don't think I have actually read it as such, but it seems so obvious from any psychology courses we have taken, and watching children. You see what they're talking about. It's self and what they're reacting to is their feelings, mostly. They are still in that stage.

INTERVIEWER: Very interesting. Where does this idea lead us later in primary grades? How do you see your idea?

SALLY: Well, if they have early facility with writing they take it for granted, just like they breathe. That they can write. Children in my class all think they can write, and they can. And if they are still sort of putting things together bit by bit, children who have a little more facility help them. And because I think it is important, they think it is important. And so, as they go along, they will come to use it more freely. I have a great love of literature and include a lot of it in the class. And so they gradually, I'm sure, catch my idea that words have value in making stories come alive, making sentences come alive. And they want, they often ask for a more exciting word, or, have you got a word for. If they start that now, then they just, is second nature, I believe. And various stages in writing will just come very easily. It's like having skis on when you are three years old. You can ski very well by the time you are twelve.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. You said you don't believe it is necessary to be able to spell in order to write, and that spelling is a second stage. Could you expand on that a little, please.

SALLY: Well, I think we discussed that in our first question. When little children first do what they think is writing, they scribble. And they make marks, which they call letters or words or stories. And to them they are writing. And that could be considered one of the first stages in writing. And obviously they have no spelling then. The children in my classroom, when they begin, many of them are still at that stage. And when they dictate to me, and I write it down, that looks like so much hieroglyphics. And they are not spelling but they are in one of the first stages of writing, they are doing dictation. When they begin to label things, they may not copy exactly what the word card is that they are carrying around, or the idea they see somewhere. They are not spelling, but they are beginning to write.

INTERVIEWER: In your career, what you are saying now, have you ever had a different viewpoint of what you are saying about writing and spelling now?

SALLY: Long ago, spelling was a whole subject. And some teachers still do this and I feel that it has value. But it has more timely use to be given to it, and if a child could not spell correctly, they were considered beyond the pale. There was something wrong with their abilities, reading and writing, if they couldn't, spelling was part of it. But they had to be able to spell well. They used to have big spelling matches. And there was not a classroom you went into where there wasn't a chart about spelling. And spelling is a means to an end. It, I don't see it as an end in itself. And at one time I could remember in my first practicum, being given only the task of teaching a grade four class spelling. And it was a grade four class that had never really spelled much correctly before, in a very poor area where they didn't have much opportunity to use reading, writing skills. And I made it into a giant contest that we go to the top of Burnaby Mountain on a picnic, if the group could get this particular number of spelling correct. And they all got them all right by using a rote method. And I wouldn't be the least bit surprised, now looking back, if those children who did not get them all right hated spelling. And the ones that did get them all right may have easily forgotten them in a short time for just use of them in a functional way. So I was part of the group that started out like that, but I gradually evolved.

INTERVIEWER: How did your viewpoint, yeh you evolved, but how

SALLY: I evolved because I saw, even in my first year of teaching, when those children had another language, that that was as useless to them if they didn't have a purpose for it, and if it wasn't part of parcel of everything they were doing.

INTERVIEWER: When I asked you about what influences students learning to spell, you said that not the writing itself, but the discussion about the writing, done by the teacher and by the other children. Could you explain that idea a little bit more.

SALLY: When I said not the writing itself, I didn't mean not actually the physical writing of it, because I think that physical writing of the letters is one more way of physically to learn. Some people are very physical in their learning. And so the actual printing out of letters helps them to learn to spell. When attention is given to something by teacher or a group, then people focus on it. So that assists them in their memory of it, that's what I meant. It also gives importance to it.

INTERVIEWER: Is there anything else about the issue of spelling that you feel strongly about.

SALLY: I wish I was a better speller. I taught myself to read when I was three or four, and there was no phonics taught to me. I learned sight vocabulary and consequently, I learned to spell in a haphazard way. It wasn't until third, fourth year that someone introduced me to phonics. I can remember in fourth year, reading a book called *The Green Grocker*. And I'm wondering if that was the same as the *Green Grocer*. And I had a lot of problems with one of my majors. One of my majors was an English major. Of being a poor speller, and I sat with a dictionary on my elbow, but sometimes because also possibly the way I heard things, was slightly poor hearing even when I was young, I didn't hear the endings. And I can remember getting an essay back in university on Anthony and Cleopatra. And you can imagine how many times Anthony was in that, and I spelled it wrong every time. And the comment from the instructor was, I can give you an A+ in this essay, but I will give you a fail in spelling, and I don't know what the hell to do about it. So there at university level they were saying how important is spelling anyway, and because I have wanted to have my essay as acceptable as possible. I was ashamed of myself for spelling that incorrectly. But I had done the best I could. I even had had someone proofread it, because that I had learned that my spelling was not the best. Just like anything else in the school curriculum, I think, you know, I want it to be done well, but I don't want to make a big

issue of it. It's not the most important thing in the world. The writing, if you are thinking about language skills, and being able to read well, and being able to enjoy a story and gain the points that are there in the story. To be told that those are the important things, spelling is a means to an end.

INTERVIEWER: You said that spelling, you viewed it as both a developmental process and a task of memorization. Could you explain that a little bit more?

SALLY: As I mentioned before, the child starts out doing squiggles. And then he soon sees that this squiggle is different from that squiggle, so that is physically developmental. Then he goes on to beginning of labeling,... goes from that to dictation and adding. Adding in parts and so on. Gradually becomes aware that his name looks exactly like this, and that maybe at preschool it looked like that, but at school it looks like this. And maybe if it's done by a typewriter it looks like that, but they all mean the same thing. So developmentally, he becomes, he hones in on finer and finer points on it. I said it was developmental as well as memorized. Some people seem to have a visual memory that allows them to see around the words, see the shape of the word and memorize it. I had a pupil one time who was deaf and no one had discovered it. And she, after having been in school a year and a half, had a sight vocabulary of something like 500 words, and had gone undiscovered. And I discovered it when I was doing testing, physical testing of children, and wouldn't have known it until then. You know, and that was, I taught it as an example of the child of an excellent visual memory. People could memorize a whole page... I had known a person who could do that, and so looking at the word, and spelling it and sequential memory is part of the memory process involved.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. thank you.

(more at end not typed)

APPENDIX III

Part 6

PAUL

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

PART I

This is an interesting exercise. How does one encapsulate any life without trivializing the important or overemphasizing the mundane, typical, or obvious? Because of this paradox, I'll write "from the hip".

I was born in Medicine Hat, Alberta in 1963. On a Friday. As a child, I was shy, bright, soft-spoken and good-humoured. I had a very happy childhood with no major upsets or turns. I had an older sister who had the burden of being the oldest grandchild on my father's side of the family. This burden was further weighed by the fact that she was female. In retrospect, I feel she always had to prove herself and had to be responsible, especially as a role model to me. Things came easier for me because I was the baby, I was male, and because my parents were more relaxed in my upbringing than my sister's and thus allowed me to make more mistakes than her.

It wasn't until junior highschool, that I started to question my being. It became obvious to me and to my parents that I was becoming latently high-strung. I started to develop a mild ulcer over my grades, my appearance, etc. I was driven by a perfectionist attitude because until then, things had been so easy for me. I suppose this is typical to become concerned about such things at this age, but it was starting to take its toll on my health. That is when I had to start making compromises to preserve my sanity and my physical well-being. My marks dropped, but I was getting along with myself better than before.

After highschool, I went to UBC to become an Engineer. My experiences at UBC can be summed up by a four-letter word: HELL. I was lonely. I was bored with my classes. I lacked any motivation. I was exhausted. I was doing poorly. And I didn't like myself. Determined, I stuck it out for three years, changing my major in each, until they finally asked me to leave.

Why did I stick it out so long? Who knows! Perhaps it was implicit pressure from my parents (and the trust money they had been socking away for so long, so that I could have a post-secondary education). Or maybe it was because, even though it was hell, I really didn't know what else I could do. Going to UBC was "easy" because I didn't have to make any choices: my father was an Engineer: I had no real idea of what engineers did, but his life turned out okay, so I thought that I'd just do what he did. Simple, no choices and no responsibility. But then it blew up in my face when I flunked. I had no identity. At the time the picture was bleak, but in retrospect, it was the beginning of my life.

I spent the next year in a bunch of non-career oriented jobs; vacuum cleaner salesman, office clerk, warehouse inventory taker, busboy, waiter, etc. The job that was a big stretch for me was a fish hatchery worker.

Picture a city boy, who has never been away from home, who has never used his hands for anything, who has never been able to take care of himself thrown out in the wilderness to rise at the break of dawn to ranch salmon. After the first week of homesickness and postpartum 7-11 withdrawals, I began to really love the job. I was able to clear my mind of all the shit that I had been storing for so long. I was able to feel comfortable with myself and then even begin to enjoy my own company. I started reading novels which I had hated until then because it required too much concentration. I started to write for myself (as opposed to the letters of procrastination, desperation, and loneliness that I wrote whole at UBC and sent to people I barely knew). I learned that I could take care of myself too.

I left that job because it was only seasonal employment. I worked at a restaurant until September and by that time, I had enough money to pay for my tuition at Douglas College. I had money and I was calling the shots. I even had a girlfriend who thought I was God (or at least his younger, cuter brother).

Life was pretty good. I was taking a bunch of English classes along with an assortment of Arts courses. Douglas was a very friendly, nurturing environment and I was glad to be there. I didn't have that anonymous or invisible feeling that I had at UBC and, I realized, at highschool. I was there to learn and discuss, rather than memorize and conform.

Douglas paved the way to Simon Fraser University because I had never received anything lower than an A (as opposed to my marks at UBC) which were further down the alphabet). I enjoyed SFU because I felt ready for it. I still didn't know where I was going academically or career-wise, but I didn't really care. I was having fun just doing the student thing.

It wasn't until my last semester at SFU that I took an Education course. I never wanted to be a teacher because my mom was one and it didn't appeal to me. I took the course for a number of reasons; I wanted to get into the English Department's Children's literature course, but it was full; it looked fun and easy; I needed an upper levels course; and I heard that a lot of girls took Education courses.

Part of the course was in-class involvement, so I observed and read for my mom's class. Through her, I was able to do observation of other teachers and their classes. There had been a number of changes since I was in elementary school and I liked what I saw. I still had apprehensions about going into education. The main one was that I felt I had no aptitude. My mom always told me that I would make a good teacher, but that, I felt, was about as valid as my dad telling me that I would make a good engineer. During an interview when the course instructor evaluated what we had done, he turned to me and told me that I would make a fine teacher. I thought that he was joking, or that maybe my mom had talked to him, but he said, "No really,. In fact if you want to get into the PDP up here, I'd be happy to write you a letter of reference."

That statement was the revelation I was looking for. I applied, he wrote, and they accepted me. PDP and I got along famously, I met all challenges head-on, had a lot of success, made a lot of mistakes, and had enough fun for two people. It was like falling in love and then having it work out so much that you want to commit yourself. (If I was religious, I would have used the born-again metaphor). I could have been the poster boy for PDP.

My career since then has been challenging and rewarding. I still love it, although I have lost some of my idealism (especially about pot-luck meals). I got my first job by being in the right place at the right time.

I would like to add one more anecdote because it fits in with the general theme of my life. It is very personal but without it, this biography would be incomplete. It was the worst and best day of my life.

While I was going to SFU, I was in love with this girl who went to UBC, and things were very serious. We had a great deal in common and had a tremendous amount of fun together, but our relationship did have its faults. She had trouble communicating and I would get really frustrated by this and take it out on her by being moody and possessive. We were both busy going to school, so we decided to take a week-long break from each other to get our emotional and academic lives back on track.

Her birthday happened to fall in this week, so I decided to surprise her by putting some balloons and her present in her car and then leaving, respecting our hiatus. This, of course, meant searching every parking lot at UBC, but people in love do impulsive, impossible things. While searching a car came around the corner and collided with mine. They took off immediately. I checked my car and it looked okay, so I continued on. I thought I found her car, but it couldn't be because there were two people kissing in it. I almost continued on until my (soon-to-be ex) girlfriend recognized me and went into shock. I got out, and like an idiot carried the balloons over to her car, opened the door, and calmly asked for an explanation that I didn't really want.

Why am I telling you this? Because of self-esteem. If I had been rejected like that while I was going to UBC, I would have committed suicide (and paradoxically, this biography would be much shorter). There is no way my ego could have withstood a blow like that at that period in my life. And it was a blow to have someone whom I loved and trusted, betray me like that. That is why it was the worst day in my life.

But it was also the best day in my life for a number of reasons. I showed myself that I had strength to deal with the crap that life sometimes deals me. I proved to myself that I could love someone and still deal with the fear of rejection (as opposed to all the girls I broke up with before they could dump me). I realized that if the worst thing that ever happened to me is being dumped by a girl, then my life must be pretty terrific. I learned that I could lean on my friend in the bad times. I cherished my sense of humour to deflate the enormity of "big" situations.

As an aide to that last point, I remember that after telling him the whole pathetic story, I gave a friend the gift I was going to give my girlfriend. He had been so supportive. When I gave him the present, a Tony Onley print, he said to me, "Thanks. But I'm not sure what to say, given the circumstances".

In conclusion, my life, as I have written it here, has been an education in getting to know myself. I have been lucky; I like who I got to know. I have built up my self-esteem by accepting who I am and by working on becoming who I'd like to be.

It has been a wonderful adventure, an interesting inward journey. Of course I refer to both the life and writing about the life.

PART II

QUESTION ONE

Describe your current working context. (What is the nature of my working reality?)

Presently, I am teaching a 3 and 4 YP class of 23 students in the Coquitlam School District. It is a lower socioeconomic level than most schools in the district. It reminds me of an East Side Vancouver School where I did my student teaching. The staff is characterized by the principal who is easy-going, progressive, kind, motivated, and student-oriented.

My own class is generally like the last two I have had in this school. The students are eager, friendly, opinionated, and have been able to develop a mutual bond of admiration and respect with their teacher. It is a split class. And I use the term "split class" deliberately, rather than multi-age grouping, because there is an abyss of intellectual ability and maturity between the two levels. All my third year primaries (3 YP, what used to be Grade 2), attend the Resource Room which is a modified program of Language Arts.

Although these children are of Grade 2 age, all of them are just learning how to read. This has made me have to change my teaching style and strategies somewhat. In all of my previous classes, I have relied heavily on language activities that take for

granted that the students are able to read. Now, I have tailored my lessons to include oral reporting, artistic expression, story drama, and partner and cooperative work. It has not been without frustration, but I have been forced to stretch and change out of necessity.

My 4 YP at first were resentful that they had to be stuck with a "bunch of babies", but little by little, they have come around. The 4 YP's are very helpful and encouraging, in fact many of them volunteer to help the 3 YP's after they have finished their own work. Another thing I have learned is that you cannot force cooperation; you have to model it, encourage it, draw attention and specify the skills needed to cooperate, but most of all show that there are positive benefits to cooperation (such as a division of labour, getting to share ideas with others and listen to ideas from others, getting positive attention from the people with whom you are working).

Before the end of last year, I had spent time visiting classrooms informally. At recess, lunch, after school, before school and sometimes spontaneously during times, I went around and tried to get to know some of my future students, so that I could get a feel for what was going to happen the next year. When we had designated the make up of our classes for this particular year, I was able to choose students from the class of the previous year because of the multi-age overlap. I stacked the deck in my favour. I chose students I knew that would work. I chose students who I thought would provide positive role models. I chose students who I felt I had had a degree of success teaching. And I chose students who I liked. That was my criteria based on the challenging situation with which I was faced.

QUESTION TWO

Describe your current teaching style and the curriculum you use. (How do I think and act in the classroom?)

My teaching style and the curriculum that I use is stongly linked to the Primary Program and the Year 2000 document. On the first day of PDP, we were asked to write down what we thought schools should provide, our teaching philosophy. I wrote that schools should educate the whole child and that teachers should provide a variety of learning situations so that children could experiment. Teachers should be a medium of learning, not the only one, and teachers should not merely be trying to pour

knowledge into children like empty vessels, but that teachers should teach children how to teach themselves.

Individuality is accepted and promoted in my class. I strive for activities to be success oriented and open ended so that students may go at their own pace. I try to tap the emotional side of learning so that students are able to deal with their feelings in other situations. Empathy plays a large part in my teaching. Students are constantly "putting themselves in the shoes" of other students, characters in stories, the early settlers of Canada, immigrants, etc.

I remember when I first started teaching, I was explaining to my friends the Primary Program. They were disbelieving, no grades, no letter grades, a flexible curriculum, etc. The most common question was, "But what exactly are you teaching them?". The only answer I could give them was, "I'm teaching them how to be me". Now if I told parents's that, I think that I would be out of a job, QUICKLY: but that's basically what I'm doing. I am fostering in them a love and a curiosity in a number of academic areas that I enjoy (e.g. reading, writing, math, problem solving, science, etc.); I am teaching them to have a sense of humour and to get along with themselves; I'm trying to show them how to deal with situations and get along with others; I'm exercising their creativity and giving them opportunities to appreciate other people's art; we go out and play games that I like to play. Basically, I'm treating th Primary Program like an Elder's System. Come on kids. Let's hang out and maybe something will rub off on you.

Oddly, I feel that my style is paternalistic. I say oddly because I have no children of my own and have a naive concept of what fatherhood is all about. I feel like a father figure to these children. I don't just pour knowledge into them but listen, to them and nurture them also. I try to provide an atmosphere that makes the students feel safe, respected, important, and happy.

Inadequacy, inferiority, and insecurity are obstacles that seem insurmountable, even as an adult. Children don't yet have a clear concept of self, so these obstacles are even more frightening to them. I try to provide them with a positive role model. I try to have them make their own decisions so that they feel empowered and in control. I try to have them appreciate themselves and not feel overly pressured.

QUESTION THREE

Describe any reflections you may have of your past personal/professional life that might relate to an understanding of your present professional thoughts and actions. (How did I come to be the way I am?)

My philosophy as a teacher stems directly out of my personal philosophy based on the course of my life. As a teacher, my two main foci are self-reliance and self-esteem. After all, I spent my entire life learning those two things. Couldn't I facilitate young lives by reinforcing these ideas early? To be self-reliant is to be able to teach oneself; to learn from mistakes; to be an independent thinker while monitoring the world; to build on knowledge based on one's preformed perception of reality; to be aware of oneself and everything included in one's life; to be responsible for oneself; to problem solve and make decisions for oneself; to take care of oneself; etc. Self-esteem is to be confident, to accept oneself; to appreciate the uniqueness of oneself; to appreciate one's privacy, but not to isolate oneself; to like oneself; etc.

Thus, my classroom is based on the above tenets. Students make choices for themselves in areas including topic, form, content and products of learning. The classroom is very democratic and each vote counts. Students are responsible for themselves and to others. Discipline is consequence oriented. Assessment always includes self-evaluation.

I was smart in elementary school, but I was also unbearably slow. In drills and things that took speed, I looked like an idiot. I was smaller than the rest of the kids. I was shy. I looked different. I had people on whom I could rely, and that made all the difference. My teachers were all great that way also. I once mentioned that I did not find elementary school challenging. This is true but only in the academic sense. I changed very little academically through my early years (because most of what we did was review and I blame this on the system). However, socially and emotionally, I changed a great deal.

QUESTION FOUR

Describe your preferred personal/professional future after personally analyzing the three previous phases. (What do I want to do about it?)

As for the future, I feel that I am stuck in a dichotomy. It's fairly easy to keep children happy about themselves and their learning if they are successful, but what about those children with severe learning difficulties and disabilities? Or any other problems? What do we do with the emotionally disturbed children? Do we let them go at their own pace or whim, or do we intervene? When do we start drawing comparisons with other individuals?

I learned through failure. Isn't that slightly opposite to what I am promoting? Should my activities guarantee failure? Of course, this is ridiculous. The only reason I persevered was because I had the skills to deal with the situations. Failure awakened me and had me re-examine what I was doing, but had I not success following my devastation, I could not have gone on. Challenge is positive if one meets some success or if hope is in sight, but it can lead to frustration and failure if one feels hopeless or stagnant.

Thus my mandate is unchanged. Teach them how to learn and how to feel good about themselves.PAUL

INTERVIEW

INTERVIEWER: Paul, could you describe what made you become a teacher? Now that you have done your autobiography, had time to reflect on that, and you talked about it before, but maybe you could just ...

PAUL: O.K. I don't know. The reason I don't know is because I spent most of my life, my early life, was deciding what I was going to do, not wanting to be a teacher. Didn't appeal to me, and my colleagues thought I was going to become an engineer, so I got into it just by fluke,..wanted to be a teacher, it's like I liken it to, to falling in love. With my record, I tended not to go out and look for a relationship, but it just sort of happened and that exactly what happened with teaching. I wasn't looking to become a teacher. I took an education course to fulfil a credit, and I just happened to really like it, and the reason why I persued on with it is because I really enjoyed what I was seeing, and I was able to do it would do a bunch of different things rather than one thing.

INTERVIEWER: Describe a typical teaching day, what's it like in your classroom, how do you operate your day?

PAUL: O.K. Give an example...Usually what happens is, I do the attendance just by calling out the student numbers I have given them, the third year primary go down to the resource room, and the 4th year primary stay, and they have about 6 or 3 times the load and get ... they start on their journals or spelling or some handwriting, and then I formally introduce that into it, going to do today..They do something like that. And then when the 3rd year students come back start their journals and work on some language arts or language activity...and they..and once the... finished their journals and they will read....together... After recess we usually do some planned Social studies...hopefully some...

and then probably gym or art and then again. Oh I've been really trying to stretch... this year and have been successful. And lunch. After lunch is structure, we sharing, show and tell, and a story. I will read a, I read a lot of stories and we will discuss it. Then we'll have math. Math is it about 50-50 between grammatic things that have to do with the ... or as straight textbook kind of skill things. And then the day ends off with whatever is left, like music, or something else.

INTERVIEWER: When you teach language art, how do you encourage expressive writing?

PAUL: Expressive writing. I'll start with a kernel of an idea and/or get the children to web, and take it in any direction they want to, basically on their own. They can make it...and I figure it's my job to inspire them and to make sure that the instruction is right and...

INTERVIEWER: And you were talking about earlier about journals, you have, they do that daily, their journal writing?

PAUL: The third year primary do, and the fourth year primary alternate between... handwriting and spelling.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. To what extend to you follow the stages of the writing process?

PAUL: Actually a great deal. A great deal. Although I don't push them to publish everything, in fact I think that's wrong. Definitely. ... In recent years it has been shown that children don't learn as so I just use what works. And I start with a current date and I go through a graph and actually... through editing cause they tend to think it is perfect writing right off the bat...work with that.

INTERVIEWER: Do you have them work with buddies or with yourself or?

PAUL: Yeh, in fact it's gotta go through a couple of the people before it gets to me, and so.

INTERVIEWER: That's a good idea.

PAUL; ...I tend to, they everybody gets it at the same time, so it is kinda, gives me little lee time, leeway time.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's good. What connection if any do you see between the writing process and standard spelling?

PAUL: ...What do you mean like, spelling...not as a subject but as a skill.

INTERVIEWER: Like standard spelling meaning the correct quote "correct way" to spell. Do you see a connection between the writing process and the standard spelling.

PAUL: Well, I don't like to encumber their writing with being bogged down by spelling skills, so, of course the drafts, can write however they want and once they get up to the ending or... stage, that's when I will say, well,..go back and correct it, just for actually, as a courtesy to your readers. They get the exact meaning that you want. I'll also use the writing process as a workshop for spelling. Then it's up to them to go, like I'll circle the word, it's up to them to, if it's a word I don't think they can find, I won't say, O.K..... but if it's a word I know they can find I'll circle it and I'll put... and they can either find it by... or going to dictionaries or spell word they have already covered which is usually what happens.

INTERVIEWER: How do you handle spelling mistakes found in the student's writing? Think you just answered that.

PAUL: Yeh.

INTERVIEWER: Yeah, you just circle them and then you let them find it themselves. O.K. is there anything else you do to encourage standard spelling?

PAUL: Well, actually I do, I do have lists which are....to see if they are any good and then I've found on the whole that lists don't do very much. Although, I have been using them more as language skills, rather than spelling. Like a, I found that spelling lists don't work, but if you put them in context of a skill, then they work. Like none of them are as phonetic as, right now my ... are beyond phonetics, so it looks like wt to put on a suffix or doubling, or working with sound letters, or something like that. More of a bigger language skills rather than just spelling. Spelling is memory I think. We also have spelling bees for kids, they enjoy that.

INTERVIEWER: Oh, that's good. To what extent do you view spelling as a separate subject from other language activities?

PAUL: I don't. It ..subject, but again I, the way I teach it, I try to teach it in context of ...language.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences students in learning to spell in standard form?

PAUL: Not being able to read other people's work. They always comment on how, I think, they...that I can't read because it is not spelled the proper way. ...

INTERVIEWER: What do you think influences the students in learning to spell in standard form?

PAUL: ...Well, I guess...other authors. The authors in the classroom...except there are just some students that just can't spell, that have great language skills, except for that, and I don't think there is anybody who can figure out why that is. And I'm not taking that as a O.K. I'm off the hook and I'll teach these kids how to spell. I'll encourage them to their capacity, but I'm not going to push them into just ... do it, because it's just going to frustrate them. So it all depends on how I handle it. If they

see that it is, I like to have it spelled correctly, but it's not going to kill me if it's not spelled correctly then I guess that's, go away...O.k. I've got to spell it correctly.

INTERVIEWER: In your reports, to what extent do you specifically discuss spelling?

PAUL: Actually the only time I will ever mention spelling is if I've talked about it previously with the parents, and they have concern about that. Or if I see huge improvements in their spelling, that's the only time I will mention spelling.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think is the relationship between standard spelling and intelligence?

PAUL: Nothing. No I don't believe there is a correlation. And take for example, Jane. She's a terrible speller, but a brilliant lady. And I know a lot of people who are great spellers who can't express themselves any other way, they can memorize but ask them to come up with a thought on one thing and they can't do it.

INTERVIEWER: How do you think students learn to spell?

PAUL: It's different for each student. Some students learn by phonetics and sound out words. The problems of doing that is there are so many exceptions to the English language that that's not...learn how to spell. Some students learn how to spell by absolute memorization, and sometimes that is the only way you can do it, cause there are so many... and inconsistencies with the English language. And some people do it just by, I'm not sure. That's about the only two I can think of, of the top of my head.

INTERVIEWER: How would you characterize the process of learning to spell? Is it a developmental process or is it a task in memorization?

PAUL: Again, I have to say both. It depends on the student itself.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. is it important to you that primary children learn to spell in standard form, and if so, why, and if not, why not?

PAUL: O.K. actually I do believe it is important. The reason that I do is because it has nothing to do with them. It's got everything to do with everything else. Our society is built on the right way, convention, and I think they sense that even at that early age,

they can tell they are not quite in step with everyone else. And they want to do it the right way. It is so frustrating for them to create something, a sentence, and not have other people understand their meaning cause they have worked so hard at creating this thing. And for other people not to see it the same way they do, is sometimes devastating for them. And it's so simple. Why can't you see that? Because it is not conventional. They do not understand it is not conventional.

PAUL

FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION

INTERVIEWER: You said that you don't want to encumber writing by making the students think about spelling during the draft stage of the writing process. Am I understanding right that you believe that during the editing and proofreading stages, students should go back through their writing, and at that point, correct their spelling?

PAUL: That's correct. During the drafting and pre-writing stages, definitely. Just more creation and more putting together the idea, rather than working through mechanics and revisiting all that sort of thing.

INTERVIEWER: You said students should correct their words out of courtesy for their readers. Where did this belief come from?

PAUL: Actually I stole that phrase from somebody else,.. the teachers from my practice teaching. I thought it was great way to show how spelling is important rather than saying, we do it because that's the way it is done. There is no real reason for it,..actually gave me a reason that I could see students might say, oh's that's how, then I can justify it.

INTERVIEWER: When did you first begin to believe in this idea, that they should correct their spelling for their readers, right in the practice, when you were doing your practicum?

PAUL: The more I began to do the writing process...that's when it's part publishing, it's part of making it look good and appealing to a reader. Making it as painless as possible for the reader. So it's more focus on your audience, more than on yourself.

INTERVIEWER: Does this idea connect to your view that standard spelling is important because of society and its conventions?

PAUL: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Although you state that you don't view spelling as a separate subject, you do take time for word lists and spelling bees. Are your views changing on this? I think you already answered that, to tell you the truth, Paul.

PAUL: No. Because it's O.K. It is changing because I am trying to decentralize spelling, to make it less of a, de-emphasize spelling itself. I try to make it more to a game out of it this year and try to make it more evolved than language skills, rather than isolating it as a subject. So I guess, yes, it is changing. After I said, no, yes it is changing.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Spelling bees in focusing on word lists, are these activities consistent with your belief that spelling is part of a larger language context?

PAUL: Only in the fact that. O.K. Word lists I do, this is terrible, word lists I do seems like the more I think about it, the more routine, the more of, because it is just one more way of getting them to approach spelling. It's ... because it is a game situation that they enjoy. They enjoy that I'm not going to push them away from that.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned that you don't think that lists do very much, but that if you use them for language skills, such as teaching subjects,... rules etc., they work. What do you mean the lists work? Can you give examples of it working.

PAUL: Like lately, my class has been working on suffixes and the only reason why it's worked, O.K. I can say that their spelling has improved a great deal. But that's only because all of the words in that list had a basic pattern that they could follow. Base words they already knew, and all ..had to do was add suffixes. And to remember that some letters need to be doubled in order to get the hard consonant sound. Now I can say they worked because they all did very well in the spelling test. They are not really valid. They are libel because they are consistent over time. But they are not valid

because they don't actually test the thing that they should be testing, which is spelling itself.

INTERVIEWER: And do you mean like in the context of say, writing, or

PAUL: Doesn't, I don't think it's actually improving the spellers, but it just proves that they, they ... that double constant rule that in order to use the suffix. So I don't actually consider that they have improved on their spelling so much, as they have learned the suffix rule.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think that the word list transfer back into the writing?

PAUL: It's 50 - 50. I find that sometimes, I'll be surprised in the journals later, months and months later, these are challenging words. And, but on the other hand, lots of times they ask me how to spell words that are up on the board. So that's why I'm frustrated, that's why I'm interested in doing it.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think it could be like a reflective process so you've taught this lesson in suffixes, and maybe at the time they got it, got 100%. But they don't apply it to their writing, but later on, over time, they think back, sort of like subconsciously come back to it.

PAUL: Perhaps. Because I also include one challenge word. It's almost like a ... word you had, except these words are so beyond. In adult spelling, sometimes I can't believe they get it even after sitting for a week and the funny thing is, I don't include these challenge words as part of the ones they do the exercises on. So, for example, if I say we are going to at least twelve words, and I want you to use them all in sentences, but you don't have to do the challenge word. They don't have to write a sentence with the challenge word. And yet they will spell that word as consistently well, as the rest of them, because it is so bizaare they will remember it, like phlegm.

INTERVIEWER: That's interesting. When I asked you how do you think students learn to spell, you said learning to spell is different for each student. You gave two examples. Some students learn to spell through phonetics, others memorization. You also stated that some students can't spell and no one can figure out why that is. Could there be an explanation for why that is?

PAUL: Well, for example, I've got one girl who's very bright and very articulate. Yet she is ESL and she does have a slight speech impediment and she does not say the words properly. And so she, until she learns how to say the words properly, she will never learn how to spell them properly in English. So that's, she's an easy one, but lots of kids slip through my door and I don't understand why they are not getting the word right. Especially seeing as they have gone over, over and over and they will consistently make the same mistake, even though we have gone over that over and over. So I still can't say.

INTERVIEWER: Do you think there might be some alternate solutions to this problem for those particular students. In other words, is there something that maybe a teacher could do to help, rather than the regular O.K., the lists, the writing process, are there some things that maybe teachers could do to help those kind of students?

PAUL: I don't know, otherwise I'd be using it.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. Is there anything about the issue of spelling that you feel very strongly about?

PAUL: I do, and that's I can understand where both sides of the argument are coming from. I understand that spelling is the all and the end all, and yet it's not important with respect to one's creativity and so forth. On the other hand, if you can't spell there is that other stigma from outside, from society. And doesn't matter if you have a spell-check or what, there is a certain degree of spelling that you need to have just to work, function properly, and to communicate, to be heard.

INTERVIEWER: O.K. that will end it there.

(more on tape)

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