

NOVICE TEACHERS ENGAGED IN REFLECTIVE DIALOGUE:
A CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTION OF AUDIENCE

by

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Jennifer, and my children, McKinzie, Hunter, Braden, and Conner,

Whose greatness inspire me daily to strive for excellence.

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ABSTRACT

Novice teachers experience a unique set of challenges as they enter the field of professional teaching. While extensive research regarding the reflective practice of expert teachers exists, there has been a shortage regarding the relationship between reflective practice and novice teachers. This study investigated this relationship and how reflective practice in novice teachers is specifically affected by the novice teachers' perception of the audience to their reflective dialogues.

This qualitative study employed three case studies of novice teachers in their first year of professional teaching. Each case was constructed using data gathered through extensive field notes, in-depth interviews, and collection of written artifacts produced by the subjects. In addition, secondary subjects were observed and interviewed regarding their perceptions of the reflective process of the novice teachers. This data was analyzed in an iterative process and coded for themes to create individual cases as well as expedite cross-case comparisons.

The novice teachers in this study exhibited important commonalities in the sources they chose for reflective dialogues and their attitudes regarding those sources. Important themes emerged regarding their perception of audience that affected the topics they chose to discuss in their dialogues. In addition, the nature of the authenticity of their dialogues was investigated and findings emerged indicating various layers of authenticity including: truthfulness, relevance, timeliness, and accuracy.

Findings in this study assist in understanding the process of acclimation for beginning teachers and their progression from novice towards the tacit knowledge and

practice of an expert teacher. The investigation also drew conclusions regarding the role of administrators, mentors, peers, induction programs, and non-professional support as they related to the assistance of novice teachers.

CHAPTER ONE
STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

There has never been a time in the history of our educational system that has demonstrated a greater need for instructional expertise. The current demands placed upon our teachers regarding standards-based curriculum and accountability, multi-cultural and multi-lingual sensitivity, large classroom sizes, inadequate funding, and high expectations among stake-holders have all contributed to a heightened consciousness regarding teacher proficiency. Our educational system is confronting a serious crisis with the increasing need for expert teachers and the escalating difficulty in recruiting potential teachers (Johnson & the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004; White, Gorard & Beng, 2006). This situation is only further exacerbated by the high attrition rate among new teachers (Marshak & Klotz, 2002).

In the endeavor to meet these challenges, two foci have emerged within the current body of educational research. Research in teacher induction uncovers the challenges and perplexities novice teachers face, and proposes means to assist the novice in adapting to the complexities of the teaching environment. Research in teacher reflection identifies metacognitive decision-making as a critical component of instruction that is able to meet the challenges of the modern classroom. The present qualitative research inquiry proposes to link these independently established foci of research together. In order to accomplish this, the researcher investigated novice teachers in their typical teaching environments and created an in-depth case study that describes how

these induction level teachers engage in reflective dialogue, and how that dialogue is affected by the teachers' perception of audience.

Investigating Teacher Induction

Induction is defined as “a transitional period of teacher education, between preservice preparation and continuing professional development, during which assistance may be provided and/or assessment may be applied to beginning teachers” (Huling-Austin, 1990, p. 3). The length of time a teacher experiences induction varies, but most research indicates approximately three to four years for a teacher to acclimate to the teaching environment and attain a level of instructional competency (Berliner, 1995). Research on teacher induction grew to prominence in the 1980's and focused on the unique complexities faced by teachers during this transitional period including curriculum choices, pedagogical decision-making, classroom management issues, and student differentiation (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003).

Research in teacher induction indicates that novice teachers are extremely vulnerable and apt to sink into a “survival mode” (Berliner, 1995). The classroom is a complex and shifting environment fraught with challenges that can perplex even the most accomplished instructor; however, this fluid environment is especially difficult for the novice teacher to navigate. Faced with these realities, novice teachers often react in ways that are contradictory to effective teaching. They frequently view their students as adversaries in the instructional process, become obsessed with management issues, and

focus their efforts on generating lessons that will create the least likelihood of classroom disturbance rather than utilizing sound instructional strategies (Kagan, 1992).

Successful induction is best supported when teachers are surrounded by a culture of expert instructors (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Johnson & the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004). It is during this vitally important developmental stage that novice teachers develop practical, tacit knowledge of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Research has called for quality induction support aimed at aiding teacher development, encouraging expert pedagogy, and quelling teacher dissatisfaction and the resultant attrition. This same research in the last two decades has energized a movement to accommodate the beginning teacher's unique needs through the following career course: preservice – induction – inservice (Peterson & Bercik, 1995).

Investigating Teacher Reflection

All teachers, whether novice or highly experienced, are aided in their instructional efforts by reflective practice. Teaching embodies more than a mere dissemination of information; it consists of intricate and complex systems of communication bounded by equally rich and multi-layered decision-making and reflection (Clark & Astuto, 1994). Most research concludes that reflective teachers, i.e., teachers who employ metacognition in their teaching efforts, are more adept at the various skills and attributes associated with teacher effectiveness, and consequently, teacher reflection has become a popular topic within both preservice and inservice teacher education (Conway, 1999). Implemented in teacher preparation programs, reflection plays a central role in assisting the potential

teachers to begin to think like teachers (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Reflection has also been successfully applied to mentoring and professional development programs, supervision initiatives, mastering of new teaching skills, active listening, scaffolding, and the practice of thoughtful and empathetic responding (Reiman, 1998).

With regards to the complexity of the modern classroom, there exists a great demand for teachers who are able to reflect on their practice in meaningful ways, be thoughtful regarding the effects of their instruction on student learning, and make this custom of reflection a career-long pursuit towards excellence (Ward & McCotter, 2004). Reflective dialogue may exist between teachers and their superiors, mentors, peers, subordinates, and notably within their own consciousness. These opportunities to engage in metacognitive discourse with others are an essential part of teacher inquiry and reflective practice (Rust, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999).

Within the body of research regarding teacher reflection, there exists a concern surrounding authenticity. Valuable teacher reflection is both complex and explicit. Guiding another through this process and ultimately enabling that individual to become an independent reflective practitioner requires an even higher level of expertise (Reinman, 1998). For example, new teachers bring with them a variety of personal, familial, religious, political, and cultural values and experiences to their teaching methodologies and philosophies. Korthagen (1993) describes this phenomenon as “preprogram beliefs.” In addition, when reflecting alone, one risks reconstructing ideas with personal bias (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Personal reflective narratives may often fall into the tradition of story-telling, where we tend to draw upon grand narratives and

culturally acceptable storylines used as a means of presenting self in a positive light (Conway, 1999). When confined to purely personal reflections, teachers risk a lack of attention to the social context of their teaching and a shallow idea of the relationship between themselves and other teachers or the structure of the school and the school systems (Zeichner, 1993). Yet, when we collaborate with others, we may exhibit the tendency of group-thinking (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Zeichner (1993) contends that the assumption that teaching is better merely because we have been thoughtful and intentional regarding our actions ignores that fact that greater reflection may encourage, in some cases, to further solidify and justify teaching practices that are actually harmful to students.

Statement of the Problem

While there exists a plethora of research regarding teacher induction and teacher reflection, there also endures an obvious dearth of knowledge that links the two topics. It is interesting to note that while much of the research suggests that reflection is an integral part of a teacher's development towards professional expertise, very little of this research focuses on the application of this information to the very fragile period of teacher induction. Even more obvious is the deficiency in research regarding the authenticity of the reflective dialogues novice teachers engage in, most notably in the realm of perception of audience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this case study is to describe the nature of reflective dialogue as it exists in induction level teachers and the characteristics of this dialogue as it relates to the teacher's perception of audience.

Definitions and Research Questions

The term reflection and its inherent components have multiple definitions and understanding throughout the breadth of educational scholarship. In order to provide clarity for the research questions and subsequent discussions, the following definitions will be adopted for this study.

Definitions

Audience: Those individuals or entities, real or perceived which encourage, engage, and/or observe reflective dialogue with the induction level teacher.

Novice: A beginning level teacher. While this universally takes place at the beginning of the teaching career, it may also reoccur with subsequent job responsibility or environment changes.

Reflective dialogue: Interactive meta-cognitive discourse a teacher engages in with self and/or others (i.e. administrators, peers, or mentors) relative to pedagogical decision-making consideration of instructional options, evaluation of personal beliefs, or assimilation of new knowledge.

Reflection: A thought, idea, or opinion formed as a result of meta-cognition or consideration of some subject matter, idea, or purpose. In the educational setting, reflection may occur previous to, during, and subsequent to actual pedagogical tasks.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this investigation of how novice teachers particular to this study experience reflective dialogue.

1. What opportunities for reflective dialogue do these novice teachers recognize and utilize?
2. How do these novice teachers perceive audience when engaging in reflective dialogue?
 - a. How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes concerning sources of reflective dialogue?
 - b. How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes regarding topics of reflective dialogue?
 - c. How does this perception of audience affect the authenticity of the novice teacher's reflection as determined by the novice teacher and the researcher?

Scope

This study was an examination of multiple case studies of novice public school teachers within their first year of classroom instruction. The study took place in a public

school district located in an urban, southwest city where a well-established induction program already exists. The researcher intended to engage in an in-depth investigation of the perceptions of novice teachers and therefore employed three case studies.

Limitations

The design of this investigation was concentrated on a sample of three teachers, as observed and analyzed by a single researcher. Therefore, the conclusions of this study can neither be generalized to a large population of teachers, nor precisely replicated by other researchers. However, instrumental case studies are intended to produce “a particular case” which “is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization” (Stakes, 2003, p. 137). Furthermore, the intention of this research was to gain further insight into the reflective practice of novice teachers and provide suggestions for the support of reflective practice in other novice teachers.

While the methods of data collection were intended to produce authentic, rich information, data is also subject to various interpretations. Participants and the researcher may produce biased data based upon personal beliefs and opinions regarding the subject of the interviews, data collection methods, and the researcher. Accordingly, every effort was made to encourage and facilitate authentic and meaningful conversations and interviews by fostering trust between the participants and the interviewer. These methods will be further described in the methods chapter.

Significance of Study

Research regarding teacher induction and reflection is copious; however, there remains a deficiency in linking the two topics together. In the domain of cognition and reflective thought, contemporary research is recommending that more accurate ways to encourage authentic and meaningful reflection be explored and a consensus regarding the connotation and denotation of the term, “reflection,” be established in the literature. This study will add to the body of knowledge regarding these two domains of teaching research by linking them together and establishing an interactive relationship. In addition, it may be consequential to a variety of scholars and practitioners. It has the potential to aid in teacher education as methods are determined to encourage the development of reflective skills and the meaningful implementation of the process. Furthermore, it can aid the practitioner, (i.e. administrator, mentor, supervisor, or educator) in methods that can engage novice teachers in meaningful and beneficial reflective practice. Finally, this study’s findings provide valuable information regarding reflective tools that are especially useful in encouraging professional growth in new teachers. These results could aid university preservice programs, mentor teachers, administrators, and others who assist in the training of teachers.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The review of literature will be divided into three main sections. The first section will review studies regarding teacher induction. The second section will focus on research surrounding teacher reflection and the body of work describing the cognitive processes associated such reflective practice. Finally recent and pertinent research on the use of narratives and their attendant issues of authenticity will be addressed.

Teacher Induction

Research regarding the transitions that novice teachers experience during their first years in the classroom grew to prominence in the 1980's. These studies focused on identifying induction specific challenges and the unique needs those complexities created (Eldar, Nabel, Schechter, Talmor, & Mazin, 2003). Continuing teacher induction research has heightened our awareness of this critical developmental interval where novice teachers are in particular need of intervention, and has provided us with some conceptual models of support (Johnson & the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004).

The term “teacher development” implies that teachers, throughout their career, will experience opportunities for professional growth, challenges in meeting the demands of the occupation, and the necessity of adaptation to meet those challenges. In recent decades, a significant amount of research has been dedicated to the identification of

environments and educational programs that foster valuable teacher development.

Within this body of research, a few models are notably appropriate and accurate in defining the specific stages of teacher development and ascertaining appropriate teacher-education support systems.

Frances Fuller (1969) developed a Model of Teachers' Concerns. Fuller's model defines a continuum of foci that a teacher experiences throughout his or her professional development. Early in this development, teachers tend to center their attention on their personal responsibilities in the classroom with an emphasis in classroom management and "checklist tasks" (e.g., taking roll, seating charts, grading work, adhering to schedules, etc.). The next level of cognition that a teacher reaches concentrates on their role as a teacher. They begin to evaluate their own adequacy as a teacher as they further recognize the demands of good instruction. The final level of teacher concern that Fuller identifies is a concern focused on the students. This stage is marked by an increased sensitivity to the individual educational needs of each student in the classroom. Teachers at this level are able to identify the discrete needs of students and determine an approach to administer to those needs. Other researchers (Feiman-Nemser, 1983; Pigge & Marso, 1997) have conducted additional research that has further substantiated Fuller's theory that the focus of a teacher's concern has a direct impact on the effectiveness of the teacher in the classroom.

David Berliner (1995) developed the Model of Instructional Expertise, synthesizing empirical research on classroom instruction. This model focuses on five stages of instructional proficiency ranging from "novice" to "expert." Stages 1, or

Novice Level teachers, are described by Berliner as teachers who are just learning the basic rules and vocabulary of education. They are often overly focused on the daily realities of the classroom experience and view “textbook information” as not being very relevant. The Stage 2, or Advanced Beginner Level teacher, is depicted as one having a few years of classroom experience and having developed a bridge between “book knowledge” and practical teaching. Stage 3, or Competent Level teachers begin to feel more control of the learning process and are increasingly cognizant of their own influence in the instructional objective. Stage 4, Proficient Level teachers have reached a certain level of automation in their instructional skills, allowing them to focus on the effectiveness of their instruction and make necessary course adjustments. They have acquired a sufficient level of classroom experience which allows them to quickly and effectively ascertain the needs of a class and determine which specific instructional strategies need to be employed. The final level Berliner identifies is Stage 5, or the Expert Level teacher. This level of teaching is marked by instruction that focuses on the needs of the students. The expert teacher feels a sense of coherence with the curriculum, instructional strategies, and her or his pupils. This teacher can use her or his high level of experience to improvise solutions that meet the needs of students.

A synthesis of similar research that Berliner and Fuller’s models are based upon is found in Ryan’s (1986) definition of teacher development. Ryan defines the first stage of teacher development as “fantasy.” In this stage teachers are still motivated by altruistic expectations of teaching. This period is then followed by a harsh realization that there are many bumps on the road to good teaching. Teachers at this stage switch to a survival

mode, marked by an increased focus on classroom management and curriculum specifically adjusted to create the least amount classroom disturbance. As teachers move into the next phase of development, they begin to sense a certain mastery of instructional skills and techniques. These skills become tools to be used at the teacher's discretion in order to accomplish specific instructional goals. The final stage of teacher development Ryan identifies is "impact" (on students). As seen in previous models, this higher level of teacher metacognition enables a teacher to place their attention on the students and create a rich and differentiated curriculum.

As research has exposed these levels of teacher growth, the goal of teacher development programs, both preservice and inservice, has shifted to more effectively move teachers from the basic, rudimentary levels of teaching to higher levels of effective instruction. In order to accomplish this, Kagan (1992) identifies the basic components of effective teacher development programs. They are:

1. Increase in metacognition: Novice teachers must become more aware of their knowledge schema regarding students and instruction as well as how their knowledge and beliefs are evolving.
2. Knowledge of pupils: Teachers must adapt their attitudes and understanding concerning their students. Often their initial ideas are overly optimistic and inaccurate. This must be replaced with a more realistic concept of their students, which then enables the teacher to understand their personal role in the instructional process.

3. A shift of attention: A novice teacher's focus must shift from self to instruction design and then to pupil learning.
4. Development of standardized procedures: Routines that integrate both instruction and management need to become automated and fluid.
5. Growth in problem solving skills: Beliefs associated with classroom problem-solving grow to be more differentiated, multidimensional, and context specific.

While identifying what teachers must know and do in order to promote classroom effectiveness is relatively unproblematic, the process of development towards implementation of these attributes is often fraught with challenges.

Perplexities of Early Teaching Stages

Teaching is a complex system and array of contexts which require multiple layers of decision based upon continual reflection (Clark & Astuto, 1994). Most novice teachers face a sort of “shock” or realization of the complexity of teaching as they move from the idealisms of textbook-philosophies concerning teaching to the realities of the dynamic, real-life classroom environment (Morine-Dershimer, 1992; Concoran, 1981). The professional and emotional disturbances that a novice teacher experiences during the induction process are often difficult to distinguish from each other (Eldar et al., 2003). Novice teachers experience a set of unique needs and concerns which are best addressed with support and assistance specific to the induction process (Kagan, 1992).

Sandra Odell (1986) observed seven categories of support required by new teachers:

1. System Information: Procedures, guidelines, or expectations of the school/district.
2. Resources and Materials: Gathering and disseminating necessary teaching materials.
3. Instructional: Teaching strategies and instructional processes.
4. Emotional: Support through sympathetic listening and sharing of experiences.
5. Classroom Management: Ideas related to discipline and scheduling regular tasks.
6. Environment: Physical arrangement or milieu of classroom.
7. Demonstration Teaching: Conferencing and observation of expert teaching.

Much of the reality-shock that novice teachers face results from the perceived incongruities of preservice training with actual classroom instruction. Kagan (1992) reviewed 40 empirical studies on teacher professional development and concluded that university courses fail to provide novices with sufficient procedural knowledge of classrooms, enough knowledge of pupils, or a realistic understanding of teaching in its full context. Consequently, as Kagan further concludes, this inadequacy produces teachers who have difficulty in adapting their image as a teacher and individualizing instructional approaches to meet the needs of students.

Additionally, novice teachers often feel frustration when they are expected to transfer new ideas presented in the university classroom to a prefabricated school system. Berson and Breault (2000) found that most teachers preferred real, experiential learning to the structured, philosophical university lecture. The real conflict arises when student teachers attempt to meet the expectations of university professors/supervisors in implementing “cutting-edge instructional strategies,” while at the same time trying to satisfy site-school administrators and peer/team teachers who constitute a potential source of employment. The result is aggravation and a sense that neither interest is being successfully attended (Berson & Breault, 2000).

Eldar et al., (2003) found six areas of anxiety that new teachers confront, which, if left unattended, often result in the novice teacher leaving the profession. They are:

1. Class discipline: Teachers become dissatisfied when they feel the majority of their energy is directed toward classroom management.
2. Conflicts with superiors/colleagues: Some teachers felt that they were overly supervised and creativity was obstructed while others felt that too little support was offered.
3. Difficulties in coping with large number of classes: This research was done with secondary education instructors. They felt that too many preparations made it difficult to focus on advancing any one course curriculum towards excellence. They also felt that they had been handed the “leftover” courses that the more experienced teachers refused to teach.

4. Age levels for which they are not trained: Again, new teachers felt that expectations did not meet their preservice training. Many teachers are hired and expected to teach grade levels or curriculum they were not trained to teach.
5. Frustration: This stems from the need to adapt to the school's approach and being unable to implement the advanced ideas and systems learned in the college. This research corresponds with the research conducted by Berson and Bereault as noted earlier.
6. Fear and feelings of isolation: Novice teachers often feel left alone without adequate support from either their preservice faculty or their school administration/faculty.

Faced with these realities, novice teachers often react in ways that are contradictory to effective teaching. They frequently view their students as adversaries in the instructional process, become obsessed with management issues, and focus their efforts on generating lessons that will create the least likelihood of classroom disturbance rather than utilizing sound instructional strategies (Kagan, 1992).

Statistics of inductees leaving the profession of teaching are indicative of the difficulty, discouragement, and anxiety many teachers may feel during their first years of teaching. Recent data has revealed that of the estimated 3.1 million teachers in the United States, approximately 11 percent (341,000) quit after only one year of teaching. An additional 651,000 (32 percent total) will quit after their second year and before they reach their 5-year mark of teaching, an added 1,209,000 (71 percent total) teachers will

leave the teaching profession (Marshak & Klotz, 2002). In light of our current shortage of proficient teachers, this is a substantial cause for concern.

Resultant to research conducted within the last two decades, there has been a movement to accommodate the beginning teacher's unique needs through the following career course: preservice – induction – inservice (Peterson & Bercik, 1995). Recent research has also verified that these induction-related challenges can be more easily surmounted when specific intervention is employed by the university system, school administrators, and peer faculty.

Support Systems for Teacher Induction

Gall and Vojtek (1994) reviewed literature on teacher development to determine the array of methods available to promote teacher development. They found six methods commonly used:

1. Expert Presenter: Teachers are brought together to listen to an expert lecture on a particular topic. This can be used effectively to augment teachers' knowledge and to change their attitudes.
2. Skill Training: An expert trainer is utilized to present theory supporting the skill, explain the skill, and model the skill. Teachers ideally have the opportunity to practice the skill and receive feedback. This can promote the teacher's instructional skills, ability to develop curriculum, and his or her ability to reflect and make sound decisions in the classroom.

3. Action Research: Teachers conduct independent research on questions or topics they produce. This is beneficial in changing teachers' attitudes toward instruction and encouraging teacher reflection (Liston & Zeichner, 1990; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1999).
4. Organization Development: A specialist assists teachers and administrators in determining a school's strengths and weaknesses, formulating a plan of action for improvement, executing the plan, and evaluating its success. This method encourages teachers to develop and implement curriculum.
5. Change Process: Staff developers assist teachers in adopting a school-wide innovation and implementing the innovation. This encourages teachers to engage in school restructuring.
6. Clinical Supervision: A supervisor assists a teacher in identifying instructional concerns and goals, collects objective classroom data, reviews data with the teacher, and assists the teacher in making goals for improvement or change. This is useful in encouraging a teacher to develop instructional skills and to reflect on their classroom teaching (Acheson & Gall, 2003).

While all of these methods have an appropriate place within a teacher development program, some are more conducive to providing support and assistance specific to novice teachers. These teachers are in special need of onsite support and experience (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). Programs that have been specifically developed to

assist the novice teacher through the induction phase include, but are not limited, to the following: teacher buddy systems including mentoring or peer-tutoring; group tutoring; guidance visits/supervision; and, time planning (Eldar et al., 2003).

The following is a limited review of the most common types of teacher induction programs being implemented currently. The purpose of this review is to provide a broad perspective of the variety of induction programs, and each program's general strengths and limitations.

Mentoring

The term "mentoring" entered the education vernacular during the 1980's. Its definition was originally limited to assistance and support offered through the first year of teaching; however, more recently it has been broadened to include preservice teacher development as well as training during the early years of teaching (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). This method's basic purpose is to provide new teachers an opportunity to conference in a one-on-one setting with a knowledgeable and skilled mentor teacher (Drafall & Grant, 1994).

Many states have adopted as part of their teacher induction programming some sort of mentoring (Angelle, 2002). Most mentoring programs define a mentor's role to include the following responsibilities:

1. Coach: A mentor is responsible to analyze new teacher's instructional skills, encourage expansion of repertoire of instruction and management

skills, and conduct advisory interviews and observations with feedback for the assessment program.

2. Model: A mentor is responsible to model skilled instruction, guide new teachers in the management of their professional responsibilities, and supply professional encouragement and support.
3. Professional Development Specialist: A mentor should help the novice teacher reflect on and resolve classroom problems, direct the teacher to appropriate resources, help the teacher develop a professional development plan, and assist the new teacher in analyzing student performance data and student records to plan classroom instruction (Angelle, 2002).

As with any program, its effectiveness is based largely on how well it is implemented. Mentorship is enhanced when goals and skills are clearly identified to both the mentor and the teacher. Ellsworth and Monahan (1998) conducted research on a mentoring program conducted at Northern Arizona University. Both mentors and novice teachers were taught four levels of teacher development. With this model in mind, mentors expressed a feeling of empowerment and relief at having concrete objectives to aim for while the beginning teachers expressed sentiments of feeling safe to share concerns and feelings.

Effective mentoring relies on the mentor understanding good teaching and good teacher learning. Mentors must receive training to help them expertly measure needs and facilitate learning opportunities. Effective mentors help novice teachers probe their

knowledge of teaching strategies and reinforce and understanding of theory. They encourage teacher reflection and model a “wondering about teaching.” Well-trained mentors can also provide the needed emotional and professional support required by novice teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). However, “A good teacher does not necessarily make a good mentor” (Moir, 2003). It appears that there is a shortage of research regarding effective training of mentors and there are some growing concerns in the education community regarding the implementation of teacher mentoring. Some of the most significant concerns include lack of time for the mentors, poor planning of the mentoring process, unsuccessful matching of mentors and novice teachers, a lack of understanding about the mentoring process, and a lack of access to mentors from minority groups (Long, 1997).

Peer Tutoring

Peer tutoring closely resembles mentoring (Munson, 1998). Its purpose is to provide a positive collegial relationship that will aid in the integration into the school and also provide a support for socialization (Eldar et al., 2003). An induction tutor’s responsibilities may include providing daily monitoring of the novice teacher, providing professional and emotional support, organizing the induction programming, and providing instructional assessment (Heilbronn, Jones, Bubb, & Totterdell, 2002).

As with mentoring, induction tutors need to be carefully chosen from among the best qualified teachers. They should possess qualities that lend to being both an assessor and a support system. They should have instructional knowledge and experience as well

as evidence of proven professional skills. In order to realize this, tutors must also have adequate access to professional support and development (Heilbronn et al., 2002).

Peer tutors may be chosen from the ranks of expert teachers and required to function as a mentor while they continue to assume their responsibilities as a teacher of their own classroom. However, ideally, peer tutor teachers should be relieved of their other professional duties and allowed to focus on the teachers they are assigned to assist. Heilbronn et al., (2002) suggest that an induction tutor's workload should be adjusted to allow time to observe the novice teacher's class, assess, supervise, and conference with the teacher. Preparation periods should be adjusted to overlap with the novice teacher's schedule. "Time to fulfill the role as a tutor should not be considered an extension of the preparation necessary for his or her own teaching. These are two different roles" (Heilbronn et al. (2002), p. 384).

Additional Support Systems

Aside from the above mentioned support systems, there exist extensive research and review articles regarding other, less utilized support models. These programs range from orientation weeks to in-service classes and workshops (Drafall & Grant, 1994). Those models that produce long-term, successful results in aiding and supporting a novice teacher through the induction process exhibit commonalities which include:

1. Reception at school: New or student teachers are introduced to the school's administration and faculty and oriented to the resources available,

school policies and procedures, and currently accepted and employed instructional and assessment programs.

2. Continued involvement with administrators and teaching staff: Novice teachers are provided continued professional and emotional support throughout the school year by both supervising administrators and full-time faculty.
3. Developing attitudes towards profession: Most models contained some aspect of instruction and reflection that assisted novice teachers in advancing their understanding of the intricacies of classroom instruction and promoted the concept of long-term professional growth and career planning (Eldar et al., 2003).

Conclusions on Teacher Induction

The induction period is an impeding mountain common to all teachers. However, far too many novice teachers quit the climb and fall out of the teaching profession in part because of our current systems' inability to provide the necessary support and encouragement these new teachers require. Within the research of various intervention programs utilized to assist novice teachers, some common themes emerge.

Eldar et al. (2003) in review of various induction programs conclude that there is an absolute correlation between a positive, consistent support system of college faculty and the success of a novice teacher navigating the induction period. Research by Peterson and Bercik (1995) found that induction programs needed to be both "tight and

loose.” Summarily, induction programs need to be formal in their procedures, organization and evaluation, yet accommodating to innovation and change. The induction program’s framework needs to be founded on solid research. Furthermore, success is largely based on strong leadership from those who direct the program, providing new teachers personal and professional support and a sense of community with administrators and fellow faculty members. In addition, effective induction programs must encourage teacher reflection and equip teachers with the knowledge-base and skills necessary for classroom success, allowing them opportunity to practice and receive constructive feedback. There is no single model of teacher development that is exclusively supported empirically. The real focus of induction support must remain on the actual needs of the novice teacher (Odell, 1986).

Teacher Reflection

The expectations placed upon those who enter the teaching field spans an entire professional spectrum. Teachers are required to be skilled professionals, competent, and equipped with a deep knowledge-base in subject content, child development, and administrative duties. On the other side of the spectrum they are expected to be capable artisans, creative, innovative, and adaptable to the needs of individual students. All of this is to occur in the unpredictable environment of the modern classroom (Doyle, 1986). Needless to say, these expectations can be troublesome for even the most expert teachers, but are especially overwhelming for the new, inexperienced teachers entering into today’s educational system. Surprises and uncertainties in the classroom are almost a daily event

as these novice teachers are faced with the unpredictability of the teaching profession (Freese, 1999).

Teacher reflection has become one of the most popular topics within both preservice and inservice teacher education (Conway, 1999). Implemented in teacher preparation programs, reflection plays a central role in assisting the potential teachers to begin to think like teachers (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Reflection has also been successfully applied to mentoring and professional development programs, supervision initiatives, mastering of new teaching skills, active listening, scaffolding, and the practice of thoughtful and empathetic responding (Reiman, 1998).

As the concept of reflection has taken hold in the educational world and beyond, it has assumed many different meanings, all dependent upon one's frame of reference. However, it generally is considered to be the act of thoughtfully considering one's actions and perceptions in an attempt to improve teaching (Freese, 1999). Schon, a pioneer in the conceptualization of educational reflection, describes reflective thought:

There is some puzzling or troubling or interesting phenomenon with which the individual is trying to deal. As he tries to make sense of it, he also reflects on the understandings which have been implicit in his action, understandings which he surfaces, criticizes, and restructures, and embodies in further action. (Schon, 1983, p. 50)

Simply stated, our educational needs demand teachers who are able to reflect on their practice in meaningful ways, be thoughtful regarding the effects of their instruction on student learning, and make this custom of reflection a career-long pursuit towards excellence (Ward & McCotter, 2004).

Historical Perspective

Since the inception of our modern didactic system, scholars, teachers, administrators, and the public have sought ways to improve our ability to educate the next generation. John Dewey (1933) noted our (human-kind's) ability to think (or reflect) separates us from the rest of the animal world. It is this ability to reflect that allows us to plan for future activities with foresight.

By putting the consequences of different ways and lines of action before the mind, it enables us to know what we are about when we act. It converts action that is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action. (Dewey, 1933, p. 17)

Dewey further expounded on the topic of reflective practice by identifying three main facilitators of valuable reflection: *Open-mindedness*, a willingness to consider other perspectives, theories, and postulates; *Whole-heartedness*, a sincerity of purpose and commitment to positive growth; and *Responsibility*, an acknowledgement of one's duty and purpose regarding the educational process (Dewey, 1933). These three attributes further aid in the description of the teaching event or situation, surfacing and questioning initial perspectives and assumptions, and transforming the teaching practice (Jay & Johnson, 2000).

Donald Schon made major contributions to the modern perspective of teacher reflection. Schon (1983) described the spontaneous, intuitive nature of experienced teachers as being extraordinary. "Our knowing is ordinarily tacit, implicit in our patterns of action and in our feel for the stuff with which we are dealing. It seems right to say our knowing is *in* our action (p. 49)." Schon differentiates between reflection-on-action, which is the exercise of contemplating events in a retrospective attitude, and reflection-

in-action, which is a teacher's ability to understand a situation, make an influential decision, and carry-out that decision for the betterment of the classroom all instantaneously. He states:

Much reflection-in-action hinges on the experience of surprise. When intuitive, spontaneous performance yields nothing more than the results expected for it, then we tend not to think about it. But when intuitive performance leads to surprises, pleasing and promising or unwanted, we may respond by reflection-in-action. (Schon, 1983, p. 56)

Synthesizing Schon's work, Jay and Johnson (2002) summarized the cycle of reflection as appreciation, action, and reappreciation.

The work of Kenneth Zeichner further enhanced the conceptualization of reflective practices by focusing on teacher reflection's relationship with the social context of educational practices. Central to his conception of valuable reflection is the belief that reflective teaching includes a recognition, examination, and cogitation over the consequences of one's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, knowledge, and values including the constraints and opportunities provided by the social circumstances in which the teacher works (Zeichner, 1996; Jay & Johnson, 2000).

Theoretical Framework of Reflective Practice

As research and its subsequent body of knowledge surrounding teacher reflection has increased, so has its description grown in scope and consequence. Most would agree that there is a need for teacher reflection; however, there appears to be a divergence of ideas and definitions concerning it (Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996). In

order to grasp the conceptual moorings of teacher reflection, it is valuable to consider some of the rationale supporting its usage.

The classroom is replete with complexities. Each day, even each hour, a teacher must cope with such ambiguities as multidimensionality, simultaneity, immediacy, and the unpredictability of classroom instruction (Doyle, 1977; Doyle, 1986). In order to navigate through these uncertainties, teachers must learn to automate much of their teaching processes. Non-rational, right-hemisphere processing is central to everyday teaching and necessitates the existence of teaching routines which are immediately prompted by classroom environment (Korthagen, 1993). Carter (1990) further comments regarding this phenomenon of reliance on non-rational behaviors by proposing that teachers' actions are, in reality, governed by rules and routines, with decision-making in a studied, deliberative process taking a minor role.

It is, however, in the realm of metacognition that great potential for advancement and transformation occurs. Teachers should move beyond the simple questions of whether or not a teaching practice is working to the greater comprehension of how it is working and for whom. However, the art of comprehending one's own teaching is complex and can be difficult to articulate. Often it is reduced to a mere set of steps and techniques that fail to assist novice teachers in true instructional reflection. Jay & Johnson (2000) observe:

It helps students look at a situation thoroughly by present a broad range of questions. Second, it helps students consider issues deeply by present the three dimensions of thought (descriptive, comparative, and critical). Taught as a process, reflection can result in powerful understanding, for when students' ideas are thorough and complex, they discover deeper levels of meaning. However, the process is not as linear as the typology might suggest; rather, it involves

contemplation, inspiration, and experience. Reflection should not be constrained to a formula, but allowed to evolve in its own loops and leaps over time. (p. 80)

Simply put, reflection is the act of making sense of one's teaching by deliberately and dynamically examining one's own thoughts and actions to arrive at fresh ways of understanding oneself as a teacher (Freese, 1999).

In order to ponder more deeply one's actions and/or perceptions as a teacher, one must first probe and question those very actions and perceptions. A number of definitions and models of reflections articulate this examination. Table 1 compares some of the predominant models' stages of teacher reflection. Most models include the following as aspects of valuable teacher reflection:

- A level of cognitive dissonance which encourages a teacher to contemplate the educative process.
- An effort to collect and evaluate potential solutions to the perceived dilemma.
- An evaluation of the implemented solution.

Table 1

Comparison of Predominant Models Defining Stages of Teacher Reflection

Researcher(s)	Stages of Reflection				
Dewey (1910)	Identify a difficulty	Define nature of difficulty	Suggestion of possible solutions	Determine implications	Acceptance/ rejection of potential solution
Pugach & Johnson (1990)	Framing the nature of the problem	Summarizing the redefined question	Identify potential solutions	Evaluate the outcome	
Ross (1990)	Recognize dilemmas	Recognize commonalities and differences	Framing the dilemma	Considering various solutions	Considering implications
Copeland, Birmingham, De La Cruz & Lewin (1993)	Determine problem solving strategies	Generate solutions	Test solutions	Learn from reflective practice	

Within the conceptualization of reflection, some common strands emerge. First, there is an acknowledgement of at least three main forms of reflection: anticipatory reflection (postulating the future and preparing for it), contemporaneous reflection (thinking about teaching while in the act of), and retrospective (historical reflection, or considering one's actions) (Freese, 1999; Russell, 1993).

Secondly, most would agree that valuable reflection should include:

- Some dimension of their pedagogy
- Viewing that dimension from a variety of perspectives using techniques of reframing and reflective listening
- Engaging in dialogue with their peers in order to understand the limits and frames of thought which reduce their current perspective, with the goal being to take action based on a thorough and reflective understanding of events, alternatives, and ethics. These match up to the notion of three levels of reflection, namely, descriptive reflection, comparative reflection, and critical reflection. (Jay & Johnson, 2000)

Adhering to these ideologies, reflection has within it four important themes: reflection as a means of self-evaluation; reflection for spontaneous, on-the-spot decision-making; reflection as part of a community; and reflection as an integral part of the teaching profession (Freese, 1999). In a cyclical way, reflection can lead teachers down a path of scholarship and self understanding towards productive, well crafted professional development and ultimately, consistent student achievement.

Methods of Encouraging Reflection

Valuable teacher reflection is both complex and explicit (Russell, 1993). Guiding another through this process and ultimately enabling that individual to become an independent reflective practitioner requires an even higher level of complexity (Reinman, 1998). New teachers bring with them a variety of personal, familial, religious, political, and cultural values and experiences to their teaching methodologies and philosophies. Korthagen (1993) describes this phenomenon as “preprogram beliefs.” Instructors of reflection must guide the novice through the channels of reflection by skillfully matching and mismatching these preconceived beliefs. Matching denotes to start where the learner is, and mismatching implies providing additional challenges or what Piaget calls disequilibrium (cognitive dissonance). It is this very dissonance that motivates a person to make their belief structure more complex and applicable to the introduced construct (Reinman, 1998).

Reinman (1998) found that in order to encourage valuable reflection, it must first be operationalized. Second, it has to be guided, and lastly, it has to be developed through education. Various structures and systems, as will be noted later, have been employed to engage the novice in meaningful metacognition. Research has shown that this process of reflection takes time to master and mature. Reinman (1998) found that at least one semester, preferable two were needed to exhibit significant structural growth in the reflective process.

There is a vast body of research regarding methods of encouraging reflective thought. Reflective seminars in preservice training programs encourage students to

engage in educational ideas they find perplexing and worth celebrating, and then take them apart to better understand them (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Metaphors have been used to encourage professional reflection as well as drawings, paintings, photo presentations, and “guided fantasies” (Korthagen, 1993). Parsons & Stephenson (2005) found that working with a close critical partner or collaborative group encourages reflective thought and creates an atmosphere of critical thinking. Portfolios are often used as a culmination of reflective practice (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Case based pedagogy and written analysis of cases are also a valuable way to enhance teachers’ understanding of the complexity of classrooms (Carter, 1988; Carter & Richardson-Koehler, 1989; Harrington, 1991). In the tradition of case pedagogy, Tremmel (1993) applies the philosophies of Zen to educational reflective thought. He advocates heuristic “freewriting” exercises, free of editorial commentary; responding directly to students’ teaching and class work at the moment of action; and informal writing assignments that Tremmel calls “slices of life.” Slices of life exercises consist of, first, writing a detailed narration of some specific and limited event. Part two is given over to reflection and thought, perceptions, and feelings regarding the event. This concept of case-study has been taken to a new level in the new millennium with the advent of web-based technology. Virtual classrooms and web-based communities allow teachers to develop their problem solving skills (Hsu, 2004; Hough, Smithey, & Evertson, 2004; Dede, 2004). Technology also allows for electronic portfolios, online research, and video taping (Romano, 2005). Much of current research indicates teachers’ appreciation for and inclination towards these technology-based

reflective exercises (Stanley, Marlow, Miller, Owens, & Sorenson, 2003; Babinski, Jones, & DeWert, 2001).

Finding ways to encourage the habits of mind and temperament towards critical reflection on the practice of teaching is increasingly important (Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996; Russell, 1993); however, arbitrary reflection does not constitute valuable reflection. Ward & McCotter (2004) developed a reflection rubric which fosters meaningful reflection in preservice teachers. Students are instructed in the “Dimensions of Reflection” – *Focus* (What is the focus of concerns about practice?); *Inquiry* (What is the process of inquiry?); and *Change* (How does inquiry change practice and perspective?) These are cross-compared with the following “Levels of Reflection”—*Routine* (self disengaged from change); *Technical* (instrumental in response to specific situations without changing practice and perspective); *Dialogic* (inquiry part of a process involving cycles of situated questions and action, consideration for others’ perspectives and insights); and, *Transformative* (fundamental questions and change). Ward & McCotter found this rubric equally valuable in evaluation strategies. While implementing this rubric, teachers were observed to reflect Fuller’s Theory (1969) of Teacher Concerns, focusing first on themselves as a teacher, next on the curriculum, and finally on their students’ needs. In addition, even though the transformative and the dialogic levels encouraged deeper reflection, they were not always observed to be the most needed form of reflection, especially for novice teachers. Reflection on self and practice can encourage competency and proficiency in classroom performance as teachers move through levels of expertise.

Deterrents to Quality Reflection

Zeichner (1993) observed:

Despite all of this high sounding rhetoric about the values and commitments associated with the reflective inquiry movement in teaching and teacher education, we get a very different picture when we look more closely at the ways in which the concepts of reflection and the reflecting practitioner have been employed in teacher education programs. (p. 7)

Along with the growing body of evidence supporting reflective practices in education, there is also an ever increasing acknowledgement of potential difficulties and dangers. Some of the difficulties lie in the fostering spontaneity and creativity where rationality can potentially interfere (Korthagen, 1993). However, on a much more serious level, one may produce reflections that are skewed and do little to enhance the understanding of one's own teaching practices.

When reflecting alone, one risks reconstructing ideas with personal bias (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Personal reflective narratives may often fall into the tradition of storytelling, where we tend to draw upon grand narratives and culturally acceptable storylines used as a means of presenting self in a positive light (Conway, 1999). When confined to purely personal reflections, teachers risk a lack of attention to the social context of their teaching and a shallow idea of the relationship between themselves and other teachers or the structure of the school and the school systems (Zeichner, 1993). Yet, when we collaborate with others, we may exhibit the tendency of group-thinking (Jay & Johnson, 2000). Zeichner (1993) contends that the assumption that teaching is better merely because we have been thoughtful and intentional regarding our actions ignores that fact

that greater reflection may encourage, in some cases, to further solidify and justify teaching practices that are actually harmful to students.

It is for this very reason, that reflection, if it is to be of value, must be created in the context of a moral dimension (Harrington, Quinn-Leering, & Hodson, 1996).

Reflection on our teaching practices cannot be separated from an ethic of care, for these tensions between social, cultural, and political contexts and academic traditions must be presented in preservice programs and preservice students allowed to grapple with their opinions concerning the teacher's role in quality education (Conway, 1999; Liston & Zeichner, 1990). Zeichner (1993) observes a problem with recent teacher education materials and literature, finding a focus on teachers' reflection inwardly regarding their own teaching and/or their students to the neglect of any contemplation of the social conditions of schooling that influence the teacher's work within the classroom.

Liston & Zeichner (1990) have commented:

Few, if any, identify meaningful criteria for discerning what counts as good reasons for educational actions. Lately, the sense with teacher education seems to be that as long as teachers 'reflect' on their actions and purposes, then everything is all right. When this is the case, calls for further reflection become groundless, that is, such proclamations lack any substantial basis for discerning what will count as good reasons for educational action. We sense that teacher education ought to aim at developing teachers who are able to identify and articulate their purposes. (p. 236)

Another barrier to quality reflection that will be discussed is couched in the temporal placement of the reflection. This barrier does not necessarily impede valuable reflection, but rather narrows the focus and application potential to reflection. Conway (1999) contends that most discourses and training surrounding the reflection movement emphasize retrospective reflection or the remembering of past events and examining prior

knowledge. He argues that the focus of anticipatory reflection, or future-oriented reflection, needs equal time. “The presence and usefulness of attending to anticipatory reflection in understanding the phenomenology of learning to teach is compelling” (Conway, 1999, 101-102). Certainly there are new and innovative ways we can apply principle of reflection to assist teachers in being thoughtful educators.

Finally, the realization of authentic and valuable reflection may be impeded because of the difficulty we face in capturing and evaluating this very transparent, internal element of teaching (Valli, 1997). Within the broad definition of teacher reflection there exists numerous subcategories and varieties of reflection which may further exacerbate the issue of accurately identifying and properly promoting relevant reflective pedagogy, especially when the sole source of detection is self reporting (Hatton & Smith, 1995). Current research regarding teacher reflection is encouraging more in-depth and critical treatments of reflective practice (Hatton & Smith, 1995; Smyth, 1992).

Conclusions on Teacher Reflection

Considering all of the complexities of the modern classroom and the expectations and standards placed upon our teachers, now, more than ever, teachers and administrators need to be thoughtful, cognizant, and deliberate in every aspect of their profession. Diversity in the classroom has always existed, but today’s schools must accommodate a greater number of students manifesting diversity not only in ethnicity, gender, and language, but also in socio-economic status, micro-cultures, and learning abilities. It will

require a tremendous amount of contemplation to address the needs of our diverse population.

All teachers benefit from thoughtful consideration of the art and skills of instruction, but preservice and novice teachers will especially be aided in their professional growth as they learn the process of reflection. These novice teachers will require the expertise of teacher educators, mentors and administrators to guide them through the practice of reflection, analysis of their reflection, and application of the insights gained through reflection. It will incumbent that these experts be well founded in research and the best practices surrounding reflective techniques, all the while ensuring that the resultant reflective products are both accurate and valuable.

There is an ongoing need to continue research in the many facets of teacher reflection. We need to understand more deeply how teachers reflect and what incites meaningful reflection. Investigation into the effects of predispositions and how reflection might effectively substantiate valuable beliefs and displace incongruent ideas will also be indispensable. Research regarding how teachers make sense of reflection and how they instigate change and sustain those efforts of change will continue to assist our efforts in the education of all students.

Narratives and Issues of Authenticity

Reflection requires a teacher to discern an experience with instructional significance, bounded by time and replete with pertinent details. This depiction usually emerges and is communicated in the form of a story or narrative. It is for this reason that

a review of literature regarding narrative usage and authenticity is appropriate and meaningful.

Research on teaching has experienced significant transformations in recent years, and along with those changes, growing pains. In decades past, research aimed at teaching complied with scientific inquiry norms of the day. This methodological paradigm fueled much of the process-product research common in late 1960's and early 1970's. This research attempted to isolate unique teaching variables and determine their individual impact on teaching in an attempt to establish a set of best teaching practices. However, a significant imperfection in this form of research emerged: one of the key tenets of the scientific method employed, isolation of an independent variable, did not lend itself well to the dynamic, intermingling variables of the classroom environment. The process-product standard answers came under attack and the paradigmatic bounds of research in teaching were forced outward (Carter, 1988).

Narratives

As researchers grew evermore cognizant of the complexity and multidimensional nature of the modern classroom (Doyle, 1986), new forms of research constructions and methodologies surfaced. Among this new breed of qualitative inquiry, the use of narratives, or story, emerged as one way of managing the intricacies of the classroom setting (Gudmundsdottir, 2003; Goodson, 1997). This approach suggested a significant shift in basic research values and in the language of research (McEwan, 1997). McEwan (1997) stated:

It is associated with a relaxation of the conviction that the role of the researcher is simply to represent the truth and an emerging awareness that narrative research introduces a more complex set of functions relating to such ideas of community, practical reasoning, personal perspective, and semantic innovation. (p. 86)

The classroom is an environment replete with dialogic interactions and rich experiences, difficult to structure. Narratives, or stories, are one way of creating a meaningful, researchable unit (Gudmundsdottir, 2003). The very nature of story allows researchers to observe and interpret the classroom events and phenomenon “up close” (Carter, 1993, 1995; Gudmundsdottir, 2003). It is this exceptional ability of capturing the unique and contextual dynamics of the classroom that has enabled the continuing success of narratives (Gudmundsdottir, 1997).

The sudden surge in narrative usage created a sense of conceptual confusion and spurred a cry from the research community for definition and specificity regarding its utility (Gudmundsdottir, 1997). While many concepts continue to circulate, most literature regarding narratives share a basic common definitional premise: an oral, written, or enacted account of events or thoughts (Conroy & Dobson, 2005); “a temporal range which marks the beginning and end” of the unit (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7); a temporal ordering of these events implying significance and causality (Carter, 1993; Polkinghorne, 1995); and, a narrator, presumably one who understands intentions and motivations and who speaks to a particular audience (Doyle & Carter, 2003). Adherents and skeptics alike recognized the power narratives possess in transmitting voice and teaching instructional theory and pedagogy. Acknowledging this power, researchers have called for careful scrutiny of this methodology:

Anyone with even a passing familiarity with the literature on story soon realizes, however, that these are quite turbulent intellectual waters and quickly abandons the expectation of safe passage towards the resolution, once and for all, of the many puzzles and dilemmas we face advancing our knowledge about teaching. Much needs to be learned about the nature of story and its value to our common enterprise, and about the wide range of purposes, approaches, and claims made by those who have adopted story as a central analytical framework. What does story capture and what does it leave out? How does this notion fit within the emerging sense of the nature of teaching and what it means to educate teachers (Carter, 1993, p. 5)?

Authenticity

Central to the concerns regarding the use of narratives in research is the standard of authenticity. Bold declarations regarding the narrative tradition's inherent value and authenticity (Frank, 2002) have only further exacerbated the issue. Other proponents are careful to acknowledge story's inherent constructive nature which cannot guarantee reproducible data (Carter, 1993), thus making fallibility not only plausible, but probable.

Authenticity does not necessarily align with absolute truth. Authenticity, by definition, denotes genuineness rather than universal certainty. Certainly a quest to discover absolute truth concerning human behavior will be thorny indeed. Responding to critical expectations regarding the quest for absolute truths in education research, Doyle (1997) responded by stating, "Truth is an elusive goal that underlies all scientific inquiry. On various occasions, the community comes to accept certain formulations as true in terms of the prevailing arguments. But truth is a floating value achieved communally" (p. 99). As will be seen in the following review of literature, the definition of authenticity is an elusive goal as well. There is a wide range of expectations and spectrum of stringency regarding the notion of authenticity in qualitative research

designs. It is my intent, therefore, to render a brief survey of recent literature surrounding the use of narratives in research on teaching, focusing on its strengths and limitations regarding issues of authenticity and audience as represented in the research.

First, research regarding the utility of narratives acknowledges the complexity of the classroom instructional environment. As noted previously, narratives are especially useful in creating a situational scaffold, allowing researchers and practitioners opportunities to view conflicts, obstacles, motives, and reactions close up. “In creating stories, we are able, therefore, to impose order and coherence on the stream of experiences and work out the meaning of incidents and events in the real world” (Carter, 1993). Storying classroom events, therefore, becomes a powerful tool to unravel the multiple layers of the art and craft of teaching. Story “represents a way of knowing and thinking” (Carter, 1993) that allows researchers the ability to delve into complex decision-making processes and their motivating belief systems. Teacher education, for example, utilizes this authentic representation of the multidimensional and contextual nature of teaching as it acquaints and orients novice teachers to the varied classroom scene, allowing them to develop a “broader and more fluid way of thinking about teaching” (Carter, 1988). Story allows novice teachers the opportunity to embark on an understanding of classroom environments and the specialized language of practice associated with those events (Gudmundsdottir, 1998; Nilsen, Gudmundsdottir & Wangsmokappelen, 1998). Furthermore, it is in the context of cases and narratives that novice teachers can begin to create understandings of moral and ethical issues encountered in everyday classroom life (Frank, 2002). Truly, proponents would argue,

this is a much more authentic representation of teaching. Doyle (1997) would go as far as to argue that “teaching can only be known through story” (pp. 98-99).

Voice

Another important issue regarding the authenticity of narrative based research involves the notion of voice. Here, voice will be divided into two conceptual units. At this point, it will be treated as a mode of communication, allowing teachers and researchers common language and context. Later in this response, voice will be discussed in terms of power.

Teaching is anything but sterile; rather, it is filled with meaningful moments, difficult decisions, and joyful opportunities. Stories empower teachers, enabling them to articulate the nature of teaching with tone, language, quality, and feeling (Anderson, 1997). Polya, Laszlo, and Forgas (2005) remark that many research traditions in psychology suggest that the way something is communicated can often be more powerful than the actual content of the message. It is this voice, afforded to teachers through the use of narratives, that communicates significant information about the narrator to her or his audience (Polya et al., 2005). This ability to communicate the “whole” of the teaching experience is important both to the teller and to those who are members of a specific knowledge community, enabling fluent communication through common terminology and conceptual framework (Anderson, 1997). In other words, stories allow teachers to converse about teaching, capturing both the lucid details and veiled nuances of the classroom.

Proliferation of qualitative research has spawned critical voices demanding concrete evidences and measurable veracity. Narratives have fallen under the scrutiny of many who insist on measures of validity and reliability common to the quantitative research they have acclimated to. Phillips (1997) in a response article regarding the use of narratives in research finds fault with the narrative's inability to ensure verifiable truth. He makes distinctions between stories that attempt to offer a causal account of why an individual acted in certain ways and stories that present a justification for the action. He asserts a parallel distinction between stories that capture the reasons why a person believes they acted a certain way and stories that give the truth behind the motivation of an individual. Phillips contends that individuals cannot always discern the true reasons behind their actions, often clouding them with their own misperceptions, inattentiveness, or determination to present one's self in a certain light. And while Phillips (1997) does not claim to expect narrative research to be held up to the standard of absolute truth with 100% generalizability, he does quip, ". . . on some important occasions (such as when policy or future weighty actions hang on acceptance of the narrative) it might be important for the account in the narrative to be true; plausibility, coherence, and so forth just do not 'cut the mustard'" (p. 102).

Phillips demands for more than mere "plausibility, evocativeness, presence of an engaging plot, and the ability to generate playful exploration" (p. 101) to determine a story's utility and authenticity. And while he does concede that untruthful narratives may demonstrate relevancy, he stipulates all researchers who employ narrative-based methodologies specify whether or not it matters if the narratives they draw upon are true,

and if not, he demands that they explain *why* not. Furthermore, he contends that even though the pursuit of truth may be difficult at times, it is no reason to abandon the quest and “settle for accepting narratives that only are credible when there are better tests available” (p. 108).

Other researchers/commentators question storytelling’s ability to produce truth when it is based entirely on an individual’s perceptions. Of foremost concern is the inclination for humans to use story to construct or reconstruct meanings and memories. Various research shows that men and women tend to be less than consistent in reconstructing memories, becoming less reliable the greater the passage of time. We, as humans, also have a great tendency to create story that, through organization and consolidation, promotes a “preferred version of events.” Furthermore, recounting of a story, even if it is less than accurate, tends to create a “canonization” of the events (Diamond, 2006). Research regarding emotional mood’s effect on truth in narratives indicates that when the mood of the narrative counteracts the master narrative, it results in a general rejection of the perceived authenticity by readers (Conroy & Dobson, 2005). Certainly, if a narrative is regarded as unauthentic by its target audience, it loses much of its potential for influence and education.

Other scholars have defended the narrative’s ability to capture classroom realities authentically or genuinely. Gudmundsdottir (1997) admits that it may be impossible to accurately capture any absolute truths regarding the contextual and social features of the modern classroom; rather, these complexities that are captured so well in narrative forms can be submitted to various interpretations by those participating in the process, thus

creating “not one ‘truth,’ but many ‘truths’” (p. 1). Doyle (1997) argues that the demand for absolute truth in narratives may be more of a political or pedagogical concern than a research issue.

Traditionally, scientific communities have prized universal ‘truths’ as the most important outcome of inquiry. Within education, these truths, in turn, have typically been interpreted by school officials and policy makers as an important foundation for the remote control of teaching, i.e., for prescribing practices and judging the adequacy of what teachers do. Practice, on the other hand, is, as Carter (1995) has argued, a local event with particularistic features that seem to defy both universalistic understanding and extrinsic regulation. Herein lies, the crux of an understanding of the value of narrative as a source of knowledge (Doyle, 1997). Carter (1988) further asserts that grasping knowledge concerning complex situations, by necessity, departs from the pursuit of one-answer type truth, and begins to construct pedagogical puzzles through which the multifaceted possibilities of teaching can be approached.

In his response to Doyle (1997) and Phillip’s (1997) articles on the significance of truth in narratives, Fenstermacher (1997) attends to both sides of the issue and lands somewhere in the middle of the argument: “As poor as the pun may be, I believe that the truth lies between these two positions” (p. 121). Fenstermacher proposes that it would be for the general educational community’s interest to further define what constitutes a narrative or story and how they are affected by their recitation. He further encourages greater accountability to those who tell stories and those who gather stories for research

or education purposes to substantiate any claims made, thus guarding the readers or listener against “deception, illusion, or falsehood” (p. 121).

Creation of self

By definition, stories are bounded by time; however, “real time” is only bounded by eternity on either side. It is through human imposition that we create these so-called boundaries, thus producing smaller units of knowledge we can are capable of effectively processing. In so doing, the teller of the story constructs and creates a story, one that they are most interested in telling or one that is elicited by particular audiences (i.e. researcher, interviewer, peer, etc.) In this context, stories are more authentic that they are true (Nunksoosing, 2005). Cultural and linguistic assumptions and conventions may also shape the nature of narratives in both content and form (Frank, 2002; Nunksoosing, 2005). Haug (2000) elucidates:

[E]very author of a scene from everyday life must, if she wishes to be understood, write in the dominant language, at an appropriate emotional pitch, in a generally comprehensible fashion, logically and without obvious contradiction, and produce a coherent narrative with a beginning, a climax, and an end. . . (pp. 173-174).

As people create personal stories, they must, out of necessity, attend to what is remembered and what is not remembered. Nunksoosing (2005) proposes that it is in the construction of the details of the narrative that a person makes specific choices pertaining to how they will represent themselves. Frank (2002) boldly states that “stories, as dialogues, do not present a self formed before the story is told. Rather in stories the person ‘becomes for the first time that which [she or] he is – and we repeat, not only for others but for himself [or herself] as well’” (p. 15). Other researchers have

acknowledged and commented on the effect of story telling in creation of identity or self (Meiners, 2001; Polya et al., 2005).

This tendency results in implications worth serious consideration. Anderson (1997) summarizes how story allows teachers to communicate about their practice, formulating and reformulating conceptual frameworks for their practice.

1. Teachers tell “sacred stories” in teacher education programs and schools with long histories. These stories, passed from generation to generation, are assumed to be true and universal. They create the notion of what good teaching should be.
2. When teachers encounter events that are at odds with sacred stories, “competing stories” emerge. These stories tend to encourage discussion and dialogue.
3. Left unattended to, these stories become “conflicting stories,” generally causing uncertainty and distress.
4. One means of relieving this distress is to create a “cover story.” These stories are constructed to appease the expectations of those in power, whether administrator or member of the community. In essence, the story teller portrays herself or himself as characters in the story that possess expertise and direction.

Illustratively, Nelson and McGillion (2004) produced an article investigating the use of narratives in the field of nursing education. Recently, narratives have been extensively used to both educate and assess nurses who are entering into the professional

field. However, despite this growing trend towards narrative usage, there has been little deliberation regarding its utility or authenticity. In this research, nurses were required to produce a narrative regarding their practice which would demonstrate both knowledge and competency. Nelson et al. suggest that when used in this setting, potential nurses used the process to establish an acceptable self, always selecting the “preferred self” over other versions. In their research, they determined that when expected to produce narratives which exemplified knowledge and attendance to procedure, nurses tended to construct narratives that were highly selective and structured to promote the acceptable self. Again, this approaches the issue of authenticity versus absolute truth. In spite of their research findings and concerns for the ethical training and assessment of potential nurses, Nelson et al. concluded by stating:

Despite these concerns, with which we are in agreement, we do not doubt the ‘authenticity’ of these narratives as rehearsals of nurses’ perspectives on expertise. Nor do we wish to refute narrative as a worthwhile method for articulating practice. One could hardly discount the major pedagogical contributions that Benner and other narrative researchers, such as Purkis and Parker, have made to our understanding of the nature of practice and the connections between practice, knowledge and ethics (p. 637).

Power and voice

Another significant issue associated with authentically representing the experience of teachers focuses on the concepts of power and voice. Speaking on the importance of story, Carter (1993) noted, “I come away. . . convinced that the analysis of story is of central importance to our field as a framework for reorienting our conventional analytical practices and for attaching many of the basic issues of interpretation, meaning, and power we face” (p. 11). Research, by its very nature, has the power to give voice to

teachers; however, quantitative statistics only give voice to general populations and cannot describe localized concerns and difficulties fluently. This type of research, in an attempt to create universal truths, has silenced voices, distorting their real stories in order to comply with the “power elite” (Carter, 1993). First, the question must be asked, “Whose voice is represented in the narrative?” (McEwan, 1997).

Feminist epistemology and feminist postmodernism make a persuasive case regarding the oppressive control of paradigmatic forms of knowing that reinforce the interests of dominant social groups (Diamond, 2006). The narrative approach is viewed as an appropriate and valuable mode of giving voice to women and a means to circumvent the dominant mode of educational discourse (Carter, 1993). Past educational research has emphasized empiricism, thus considering reflexivity, or bidirectional influence between the researcher and the participant, a threat to the data collection process and neutrality of the researchers. In contrast, feminist epistemology embraces reflexivity as it disrupts power imbalances in research, counters the traditional Western dichotomization of self and others, and engenders a deeper, more accurate comprehension by participating in empathetic relationships (Diamond, 2006).

There are some, however, who believe narratives may actually run counterproductive to the aims of creating voice for long silenced populations. Goodson (1997), in a critique on narrative, argues that stories are subject to interpretation by researchers, and therefore end up as second generation accounts highly subject to authenticity concerns. Goodson reproves those who claim to represent the oppressed:

There is a belief that we can facilitate the genuine voice of the oppressed subject, uncontaminated by active human collaboration. Teachers talking about their

practice – providing us with personal and practical insights into their expertise. Ere maybe then a sanctuary, an inner sanctum, beyond the representational crisis, beyond academic colonization. The nirvana of the narrative, the Valhalla of voice; it is an understandable and appealing project (Goodson, 1997, p. 112).

Goodson continues in his article to suggest that the real danger in narrative research is that the educational community may be lulled into a false sense of empowerment when in reality narrative research, unchecked, may only further endanger marginalized societies in new ways, reinforcing or re-writing dominating discourses. Is narrative discourse serving these communities of teachers, lending authentic vehicle of voice to them?

Limitations and Concerns

In spite of the utility of narratives in promoting authentic educational research data, even the most devote adherers to the methodology would admit potential limitations. Carter (1993) admits that the use of story in research on teaching and teachers is a gateway to potentially “turbulent intellectual waters” (p. 5). Others struggle with the paradigmatic shifts that narratives promote, warning that such a shift will only widen the chasm between teachers and the wider picture of education (e.g. political structures, theoretical and critical analysis, and maps of power) (Goodson, 1997). Critics of narrative, and even qualitative research methodologies in general, focus on the issue of generalizability (Goodson, 1997). Stories, by their nature, resist this notion of universal truth and application (Carter, 1993). However, the power of narrative lies not in its ability to create a fundamental truth; rather, it acts as a lens, allowing the reader to engage in a complex, shifting environment, and encourage reflection upon a myriad of potential

actions and their consequences. Story also creates a mode of communicating teacher knowledge and understanding which normally exists only tacitly. Still others, like McEwan (1997), sense the difficulties relative to narratives lie not in the production of the stories, but in the systematic interpretation of them. They call on aggressive development of qualitative data collection and interpretation proficiency benchmarks.

While much has been said in recent years regarding the authenticity issues of narratives, the surface of this difficult, yet important topic has only been scratched. Researchers, administrators, practitioners and lawmakers will all have to continue to grapple with this issue for many years to come. McEwan (1997) suggests that the process of narratives needs to be scrutinized and the following questions asked:

1. Whose voice is represented?
2. What procedures were followed in its composition?
3. What agreements were made in terms of selecting the narrative elements (p. 91)?

Summary of Research Pertinent to this Investigation

This review of literature surveyed theoretical and analytical frameworks appearing in educational research as it pertains to this current study. There is quite an extensive amount of literature concerning teacher induction and teacher reflection; however, research on narrative authenticity is still in emergence. The author was unable to identify any research that links teacher induction, teacher reflection, with regards to audience perception, and authenticity together.

Hatton and Smith (1995) identified potential problems revolving around demands made on teachers regarding reflective practice and the potentially negative outcomes associated with these demands. Foremost among these, Hatton and Smith specify the potential for teachers to feel vulnerable as they share personal beliefs and perceptions with others, especially if they do not sense the locus of control within themselves, rather, in an authority figure. This research sought to investigate and add to existing educational literature base regarding the influence of audience perception on novice teachers' reflective practices in an effort to subvert potential impediments to reflection and support effective teacher training. In addition, it sought to provide valuable and practical information to the both the teacher practitioner and those who aid in the induction of new teachers.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The first section of this chapter presents an overview of the qualitative research approach that frames case study research design. The subsequent four sections describe the exploratory multi-case research approach that was employed to investigate novice teachers' reflective dialogue as it was associated with perceived audience. In the second section the researcher's role is described, providing personal background and addressing ethical issues inherent in the research topic including steps necessary to obtain permission from the Institutional Board of Review and gatekeepers. The subsequent section will bound the study by defining the research setting, selection of participants, and use of a pilot study that refined data collection tools. The fourth subsection, data collection strategies, will identify the methods employed to collect data and the rationale. The final subsection, data analysis, will address the issues of data organization, coding, compilation, interpretation, and validation.

Qualitative Research and Case Study

The qualitative research paradigm facilitates the investigation of teachers' cognitive processes (Van den Berg, 2002) and how they "make sense of their world" (Merriam, 1988, p. 6). This approach promotes a naturalistic, interpretive collection and analysis of data. As Creswell (1998) wrote:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15)

The qualitative research approach, by nature, encourages a high level of interaction between theory, research design, data collection, and analysis (Berg, 2004). Some of the unique characteristics of qualitative research design that define its utility are described by Rossman and Rallis (1998):

1. Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting, allowing the researcher to deeply observe details surrounding the complexities of participants and their surroundings.
2. Qualitative research methods involve data collection procedures that are both interactive and humanistic. Researchers seek the involvement of participants in the data collection process and encourage positive rapport and credibility with study participants.
3. Qualitative research is emergent rather than preconceived. Research questions, data collection foci, and general theory may transform and coalesce during the study.
4. Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive. The researcher assumes an active role in the selection of the data and participants, analyzing data for themes and categories, and drawing conclusions based on emerging themes. It also means that the research will filter data through a subjective lens situated in a sociopolitical and historical frame.

5. This research paradigm seeks to view social phenomenon in a broad, holistic approach rather than pursue a micro-analysis.
6. The researcher involves himself or herself in the investigative process, acknowledging personal biases, values, reflexivity that shape the study. This aspect of the research methodology represents an honest and open attitude towards inquiry, recognizing its innate correlation to personal values.
7. The researcher uses both inductive and deductive reasoning throughout the research process. This reasoning is complex, multi-faceted, cyclical, and simultaneous.

Case study, as an analytic technique, has a long history in the fields of medicine and psychology (Berg, 2004). More recently it has been employed as a means of systematically gathering information about a particular person, group, social setting, or event in education (Creswell, 1998). Case study is not a method of data collection; rather, it employs a number of data collecting techniques including: in-depth interviews, observations, and document and history analysis (Berg, 2004).

Descriptive case study involves a theory that establishes the overall framework which guides the researcher through the investigation. Yin (1994) describes the five elements of this type of case study research:

1. Research questions
2. Theoretical framework
3. Identification of the unit(s) of analysis

4. Logical connection of the data to the theory
5. Criteria for interpretation of the findings

The inherent framework of qualitative research and the detailed examination afforded by the employment of case study methodology mesh well with the objectives of this study. It allowed for the observation and recording of record novice teachers' reflective practices in a naturalistic, interpretive setting emphasizing an ethical and caring attitude towards participants.

Researcher's Role

Qualitative research necessitates the active participation of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument, and therefore, the researcher must acknowledge personal values, assumptions, and biases which will inevitably affect the study (Rossman & Rallis, 1998). My perceptions of teaching, teacher reflection, and teacher induction are founded upon my own experiences as a teacher, mentor, and researcher in education. Upon completion of a preservice program, I began my teaching career as a ninth-grade teacher for a private religious-education institution. For the first five years of teaching, I worked closely with both a mentor teacher and administrators who encouraged reflectivity in my teaching practices through regular observations, conferencing, summative evaluations, and informal discussions.

For the next four years (1997-2000), I taught for the same institution at a high school grade level, additionally acting as a mentor teacher for preservice student teachers. During this time I worked closely with both administrative and preservice personnel, and

actively observed and conferenced with the preservice teachers. It was during this time that I became aware of the innate capacities for some new teachers to think more deeply about their role as an instructor in the classroom. It seemed, to me, to have great an impact on their ability to adapt to the complex settings of classroom instruction, and guide their pedagogical and curricular decisions. I also recognized that, at that time, the institution that I worked for provided only rudimentary and sporadic interventions to encourage reflective practices in new teachers.

Since 2001, I have been teaching college-age students with an assignment to instruct a preservice class for the same institution. In recent years, this institution has recognized the need to provide support for new teachers and encourage reflectivity in all teachers. Accordingly, various programs, policies, and inservices have been implemented and utilized to instruct in and support the practice of reflective thought. However, in doing so, I have noticed an interesting phenomenon among both novice and experienced teachers. In my interaction with them and in my own practices, I have observed that the evidences of reflectivity (e.g. discussion or written documentation) are often affected by: 1) who the teacher believes the audience is, and 2) how his or her reflective discourse will affect the said audience's perception of him or her, the teacher. For example, I have noticed that teachers would produce reflective journals, assigned by administrative personnel, which, in the end, promoted the slant of *best self* and ignored other critical pedagogical issues that the teachers discussed and grappled with in the safer environment of peers. Due to my previous experiences as a teacher and mentor, I will inevitably bring certain biases to this study. Although efforts will be made to promote

objectivity, as discussed in the validity section of this chapter, these biases will certainly shape the way I view, understand, and interpret the collected data.

Researchers have an obligation to anticipate and address ethical issues that may arise in proposed inquiry (Creswell, 2003). While this research attempted to be minimally intrusive and respectful of vulnerable populations, it is not without ethical considerations. Classroom observations and contingent field notes, as employed by this study, focused entirely on the teachers and were utilized to elicit deeper discussions in subsequent interviews. Children, a population deemed vulnerable, were purposefully present during classroom observations; however, they were not a major focus of this investigation and no data was directly collected from them. Appropriate steps were taken to obtain permission for research from the Internal Review Board. In addition, proper procedures were followed in accessing entry to research sites through the appropriate district and school gatekeepers.

Participants were introduced to the investigation with an informed consent form and retained voluntary right to withdraw at any time during the research. Efforts were made to respect the research sites so that the classrooms and their activities were minimally disturbed. All collected data respects the privacy rights of participants, support personnel, and schools by maintaining confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms. Data was properly stored and protected in order to assure the privacy rights of all participants. Both gatekeepers and participants retained the right to ask questions and obtain a copy of the results throughout the research project. Additionally, I consulted

with both gatekeepers and participants in determining appropriate and meaningful ways to communicate the findings of the inquiry.

Bounds of the Study

Setting

This study conducted data collection on three K-6 public school campuses in an American southwest urban and rural area. The sites were in a school district which implements policies, procedures, and expectations relative to teacher induction and teacher reflective practices, e.g. mentoring program, teacher orientation seminars, and new teacher inservicing, thus facilitating many opportunities to collect data regarding multiple sources of reflective dialogue. The district that was chosen for this study demonstrated a number of attributes that facilitated the collection of valuable data for this research. First, it has implemented a formal two- year teacher induction program which includes a new teacher orientation seminar; a year long, novice teacher cohort inservicing program which meets on monthly basis and is supervised by a district facilitator; a site-based formal mentoring program with mentor-specific training and expectations. Its purpose is:

- To provide instruction in classroom management for novice teachers.
- To provide instruction in effective teaching techniques.
- To become proficient in the state teaching standards.
- To ease the transition into teaching and a new district.
- To retain highly qualified teachers

The school district's various elementary and secondary schools service a wide array of socio-economic demographics including urban communities, suburban and rural areas.

Participants

The primary informants in this study were three novice teachers in their first year of career teaching. Multiple individuals, each defined as a case and then considered in a collective case study, is accepted as a reliable means of exploring both typical and atypical human behavior (Creswell, 1998). A district director of research and evaluation assisted in identifying and obtaining appropriate permission for the research project. The participants were purposefully selected by:

1. Identification of appropriate research settings. All elementary schools in the chosen district were potential research sites; therefore, the district director of research and evaluation and the researcher determined that it would be most appropriate and efficient to first determine potential subjects before contacting potential on-site gatekeepers.
2. Identification of novice teachers who meet the aforementioned criteria and who were willing to participate in the data collection procedures of this study.
3. Identification of appropriate gatekeepers (e.g., administrators and mentor teachers) who were willing to facilitate and even potentially participate in the study.

Official identification of potential subjects began in the first month of the school year. Both the district director of research and evaluation and the researcher wanted to encourage strict volunteerism in the research, and therefore, every effort was made to reduce any perception of district or site-based expectations regarding participation. Under the direction of the district director of research and evaluation, an email was sent to all of the first year teachers in the district, not including first year teachers who had prior teaching experience in other districts or at different grade levels. Included in this email was a cover letter from the district director of research and evaluation, explaining the district's support in the research, its potential contributions to teacher education, and an explanation that participation in the study would neither enhance nor diminish the participants' professional standing in the district or their school. A copy of the email was also sent to all elementary principals to inform them of the research project. The district director of research and evaluation determined to not divulge the actual number of potential participants that received this letter and their identities to the researcher in order to protect the privacy of the novice teachers of the district. The district director of research and evaluation requested that no contact be made with potential subjects or their principals for two weeks, thus allowing potential participants and their administrators to determine involvement in the research without additional pressure from the researcher or district overseer. At the end of the two week period, no responses had been received. Further investigation revealed that a "crash" in the district's computer server had caused the loss of many email messages sent during that time period, including the one sent regarding this research project. Another similar message was then sent to the same

audiences. Unfortunately, the same problem with the district server caused this recruitment email to be delivered to only about half of its intended recipients. Because of the uncertainty of the district's email and the time restraints of the proposed research's intention to observe novice teachers at the beginning of their first year of teaching, the district director of research and evaluation and the researcher determined that a brief presentation should be made at a district-wide novice teacher inservice meeting. The researcher did so, explaining the proposed research, and its implications and expectations for those who volunteer to participants. Questions were fielded and the names and contact information from teachers willing to volunteer were collected. Eight novice teachers, in all, volunteered to participate in the study.

From that list, participant selection process proceeded. The researcher determined that in order to reduce the number of variables and ensure some commonalities in the cases, kindergarten level teachers and special education teachers would not be utilized. Also, the researcher's prior connections to one school in the district was determined to be a conflict of interest, so volunteers from that school were eliminated from the list of potential subjects. Next, principals of all of the remaining potential subjects were contacted by email, informing them of the teachers on their faculty who had expressed interest in participating, and requesting their permission for inclusion in the study. Each principal responded by email granting access to their campus for research purposes.

Finally, from the remaining list of prospective subjects, three were chosen. First was Charles, a white, male sixth-grade teacher. This subject was the only male teacher remaining on the final potential list, and in order to include some diversity in subjects,

was selected for participation. He was also the only teacher on the final list that taught in an upper-elementary grade level and taught in a rural school setting, both variables adding potential depth and richness to future data collection. The second teacher chosen was Cynthia, a white, female first-grade teacher at an urban elementary school with mid to lower socio-economic demographics. This teacher was the only candidate to make it to the final potential list that taught at a school that fit this description. The final subject selected was Samantha, a white, female first-grade teacher at a suburban school in an upper-middle class community. While there were a few other potential subjects whose descriptors were similar to the subject chosen, the location of the school between the two previously chosen sites made it ideal for the intended observation schedule, thus allowing the researcher to be in the classrooms and observing the teachers as often and for as long as possible.

Secondary sources of data were opportunistic (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and included assigned mentor teachers and professional associates associated with the primary informant. All three subjects' mentor teachers emerged as secondary subjects, and when approached, agreed to an interview as well as allow the researcher to observe their interactions with the novice teacher assigned to them. In one case, a peer teacher was also identified as a secondary subject, and she was included in the research. Data was sought from these secondary subjects as they emerged as sources of reflective dialogue for the primary informant and will be discussed further in the data collection section.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was employed during the summer of 2006 to test and further hone data collection methods, specifically interview questions. This study included two novice teachers who have taught between one and three years, constituting a convenience sample.

Data collection of the pilot study included in-depth interviews with participants focusing on the personal perceptions and attitudes participants experience and have experienced regarding reflective practice in their first years of teaching. Interview questions were utilized to elicit conversation regarding this topic; the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were then coded and surveyed for emerging insights into the participants' perceptions and practices. A final analysis determined if the interview questions elicited information that is both rich and significant to the study. This analysis was based upon 1) clarity of the questions (i.e., is the participant able to comprehend and appropriately respond to the question without requiring further clarification?); 2) relevancy of the answers to the study; and 3) absence of questions that could or should be asked (i.e., what did the participants want to share or need to share that the researcher didn't ask about?). Information gained from this study helped hone interview questions and promote effective data collection in this research.

Data Collection

The original proposal for this investigation determined to collect data during the first quarter of the 2006 school year. This time period is full of opportunities for

reflective thought as new teachers face an array of cognitive dissonance and must grapple with solutions (Dewey, 1910; Pugach & Johnson, 1990; Ross, 1990; Copeland, Birmingham, De La Cruz & Lewin, 1993). However, as explained earlier, circumstances regarding subject recruitment prevented the study from beginning early in the school year. At first, the researcher was very concerned about the delay in the timing of the study; however, as the necessary permissions were granted from district and site-based gate-keepers and the study was cleared for commencement, it became evident that with some adjustment not only was the investigation still able to collect very valuable and relevant data, but actually more of it than the original plan would have produced. The actual data collection began the second week in November. With two major holidays in the months of November and December, this required the study to span an eleven-week period in order to capture the intended eight weeks of active data collection on school sites. The additional three weeks of non-active data collection fell in the middle of the study and was comprised of school vacations and three days where the researcher was ill. While no data was actively collected during the three additional weeks, they still provided rich data as subjects reflected on their thoughts and decisions they had made during that time. Originally, an eight-week time period was chosen as it represented a traditional school quarter. It was proposed that this time period would be sufficient to allow for appropriate data collection and observe changes over time. The time period also limited the data collection to the beginning of a school year when novice teachers experience a high amount of cognitive dissonance, thus encouraging reflective dialoguing.

In addition to the extended duration of the study, another benefit was realized. While the researcher was not able to observe first-hand the classroom activities and reflective dialogue of the novice teachers during their first months of professional teaching, reflection on that time period was elicited. Many of the stories and examples that the teachers referred to in their interviews referenced occurrences in those first two months of teaching. The teachers were able to contrast and compare their attitudes and actions relative to teaching and teacher reflection at the beginning of the school year to their current beliefs towards the middle of the school year. In all, this created a wealth of data that spanned a greater time period than was originally anticipated and captured not only current attitudes and beliefs, but also uncovered the progression of those thoughts and decisions.

Case studies require a broad amount of background information and a collection of detailed information pertinent to the research question in order to facilitate representation of diverse cases and to fully present multiple perspectives about the cases (Creswell, 1998). A number of data collection procedures were employed in order to obtain expressive and authentic information and facilitate appropriate data triangulation. These procedures will be described in subsequent sections. Permission was requested to observe participants in their natural teaching, observation, and conferencing environments, focusing on those settings when interactive dialogue between the novice teacher and others (i.e., other teachers, mentors, or administrators) was most likely. Semi-formal interviews were conducted with all participants during the eleven week period. These interviews were conducted with the primary participants approximately

weekly based upon the observation schedule and the subject's availability. Interviews with secondary informants were held once towards the end of the study. In addition, documents (e.g., reflective journals or written objectives and goals) as they naturally emerged were being collected and analyzed, as well as utilized to elicit information during the interviews.

Observations and field notes

Observations occurred over an eleven week time period during the second quarter of the school year. The observations usually took place two times a week during the eight weeks of active data collection. This provided sufficient data to analyze and compare the participants' attitudes and perceptions without creating an undue burden on the novice teachers and their classrooms. Most reflective dialogue takes place when novice teachers have the opportunity to interface with peer teachers, administrators and/or mentors. These opportunities most often spontaneously occur before school, during breaks, and after school. They may also occur more formally in scheduled observations and evaluations. Considering this, observations were conducted during those times when reflective thinking and dialogue were most likely to take place (e.g. after school, preparation time, teacher-mentor conferencing periods). Weekly routines may also encourage or inhibit opportunities for reflective dialogue (i.e., weekly team meetings, preparation periods, assembly days). Therefore, observation periods were originally varied according to days of the week and times of day in order to broadly capture and record teachers' opportunities for reflective dialogue.

During the course of the study, it became apparent that certain time periods in the subjects' daily or weekly schedules were conducive to pertinent data collection while other time periods were much less productive. For example, two of the subjects always ate lunch by themselves in their own classroom while they worked on the computer or graded, while one subject almost always ate lunch with her grade-level team and engaged in valuable reflective dialogue. One teacher left the workplace as soon as school let out twice a week in order to go to a tutoring job, while another teacher usually arrived just before school started and had little time for interaction with anyone. Also, certain events (e.g., a teacher-administrator post-observation conference or a grade-level team planning meeting) often occurred outside of the originally planned observation schedule. Based upon these realities, and in order to facilitate collection of relevant data, the observation schedule was allowed to remain flexible, thus accommodating these individual variables. In addition, during the third week of data collection, the researcher became ill and reduced interfacing with the subjects and their students. Accordingly, an additional week was added onto the study to make up for the lost observation appointments. The actual observation schedule as it occurred in the study is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Actual Observation Schedule

Week	Samantha	Cynthia	Charles
November 13-17	Th/F PM	M PM -- W AM	T/W/Th AM
November 20-22	M/W AM	M/W PM	T AM
November 27-	W PM	T AM	F PM
December 4-8	T PM -- Th AM	W AM -- Th/F PM	M/W PM -- F AM
December 11-15	Th/F PM	M/W AM -- T PM	M PM -- T/Th AM
December 18-22	M/W AM	M/W PM	T PM
January 8-12	M/W PM	T/Th PM	M AM -- F PM
January 15-19	T/Th AM	Th/F PM	T/W PM -- F AM

Table 2 -- continued

Week	Samantha	Cynthia	Charles
January 22-26	M/W PM	Th Am -- Th PM	F PM

Careful and detailed field notes were recorded during the observations, noting instances of dialogue participants engaged in with others regarding teaching. Topics of conversation, questions asked, observations made, or intentions voiced were important foci of the research observations. The field notes had to be detailed enough to capture the context and content of the dialogues. The data gathered was then followed up with interviews intended to elicit further information regarding the perceptions and purposes of the novice teachers as they engaged in the reflective dialogues. During the observations, the researcher not only logged occurrences of participants' reflective dialogues, but also personal thoughts, perceptions and experiences regarding the emerging data. In addition, audio recordings of teacher/mentor conference sessions or teacher/administrator conferences sessions were utilized as they naturally occurred. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed.

In-depth Interviews

Semi-structured and informal, open-ended interviews were utilized to capture thoughts, feelings, perceptions and experiences of the participants. Semi-structured interviews took place throughout the same eight-week period of observation and usually occurred following an observation or soon after, thus allowing the participant and the researcher to discuss recent occurrences related to reflective dialogue. These interviews were conducted usually after school, when the participants had the most time and usually lasted between thirty-minutes to one-hour. These interviews grew in depth and clarity as a trusting relationship was fostered and as the subjects became increasingly cognizant of the nature of their reflective dialogues. While the original intent was to conduct one interview per week with each primary subject, various circumstances did not always allow that. In order to accommodate these fluctuations, additional time was occasionally added onto subsequent interviews. The actual interview schedule is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Actual Interview Schedule

Week	Samantha	Cynthia	Charles
November 13-17	F PM	--	Th AM
November 20-22	W PM	M PM/W AM	T PM
November 27- December 1	--	T AM	--
December 4-8	T PM	F PM	--
December 11-15	T PM	--	Th PM
December 18-22	--	M PM	T PM
January 8-12	Th PM	T PM	F PM
January 15-19	--	--	W PM

Table 3 -- continued

Week	Samantha	Cynthia	Charles
January 22-26	W PM	Th PM	F PM

The initial interviews included conversations between the participant and the researcher in order to establish a common definition of reflective dialogue and how it might manifest itself. All three of the participants were very familiar with the concept of reflection and had participated in various exercises aimed at promoting teacher reflection in their preservice training. The following questions guided our interview conversations:

1. What opportunities do you have to talk about teaching?
2. How often do these opportunities occur?
3. What aspects of teaching do you discuss?
4. With whom do you discuss teaching?
5. Are there others, outside of the education profession, with whom you discuss issues regarding your teaching?
6. (If yes) In what ways do those discussions with individuals outside of the educational profession differ?
7. Is what you discuss affected by the person you are talking with? If so, how?

8. Are there issues or circumstances regarding your teaching that you would be hesitant in discussing with a mentor? Administrator? Peer teacher?
9. Are there any issues that you would be more likely to discuss with the above individuals?
10. How comfortable do you feel in an observation/conferencing setting? Are there certain topics you tend to focus on or avoid? Why?
11. (If a reflective journal or the like exists) How is what you write about similar to or differ from what you talk about? Is it similar with certain people and different with others? Why or why not?
12. With regards to your classroom instruction, have you ever purposefully avoided discussing certain events or circumstances? Why or why not?
13. Have you ever altered information regarding your teaching/classroom when you have discussed it with another person?
14. Have you ever deleted certain classroom events or aspects of classroom events when you spoke about it with another person? Why or why not?
15. Did the person with whom you were discussing the events have an influence on why you made these choices? Explain.
16. Were there any occasions when you desired more opportunities to discuss your teaching practice? Explain.
17. Are you required to produce any reflective documents (i.e., reflective journal, portfolio, or web-based discussions groups)? Did you participate

in any of these activities on your own volition? If so, why? And how did these dialogues differ from the face-to-face discussions?

In the course of the interviews, not every question was discussed at each interview. The early interviews seemed to focus on the first six questions. While this was not the original intention, it seemed to assist the subjects in becoming familiar with the terminology and the focus of the interviews. Later interviews increasingly included the remaining questions. As situations arose and topics emerged we would revisit all of the questions to determine if there had been any changes in the subject's perceptions. In addition, discussions were not limited to the proposed interview questions alone; rather, the researcher would often ask additional follow-up questions to uncover further descriptive explanations of the participants' experiences and beliefs. On occasions, the subject's responses would encourage further discussion regarding their motives, thoughts, or decisions in that moment. For example, in one of the final interviews, it had become very apparent to both the researcher and Cynthia that throughout the course of the investigation, Cynthia had relied heavily upon her mother as a source of reflective dialogues. Her mother is a veteran elementary-level teacher who provided Cynthia a source of meaningful reflection. The researcher followed up with that realization with an additional question specific to Cynthia: "What if you hadn't had your mother as a resource? What if she weren't an educator?" (Interview, January 31, 2007). As the teachers became increasingly comfortable in the interview setting, they would frequently share stories to illustrate their responses, express frustrations and joys, and confide fears and disappointments. It was recognized that, as an increasingly active participant in the

reflective process for these teachers, the researcher had become a welcomed addition to all three of the subjects' small circle of trusted confidants.

In addition, secondary participants were interviewed as they emerged as sources of reflective dialogue for the novice teacher-participant. These included mentor teachers as well as others who engaged in less formal reflective dialogue such as other teachers and even the researcher. As these additional sources of data were realized, access was obtained from appropriate gatekeepers and proper subject consent forms were acquired prior to any direct data collection. The following is a list of the questions discussed with the secondary subjects in their interviews:

1. What is your relation to the primary participant?
2. If you act as a mentor/supervisor/peer coach, is this part of your job description? Do you receive compensations (time, salary) for your efforts? How were you assigned to assist this person? By whom?
3. (If not part of formal job description) Why do you choose to discuss aspects of teaching with this person
4. Who initiates these interactions? Why do you perceive it happens this way?
5. What is the normal context of these interactions?
6. How common is it for this person to discuss their teaching with you?
7. What is the nature of those discussions? (i.e., descriptions of classroom events, complaints, questions, advice seeking, etc.)

8. Why do you think this person chose to talk to you about it?
9. (If appropriate) Are there certain aspects of his or her teaching (the novice teacher) that you would feel appropriate he or she discusses with you, but you find they don't? What do you perceive to be the cause of this?

Because each secondary subject was only interviewed once, each question from this list was discussed in every interview, and as necessary, further follow-up questions were proposed and discussions elicited. No data was directly collected from those people with whom the primary subjects engaged in reflective dialogue but were not directly affiliated with the site-school (e.g., parents, friends or spouses); however, information regarding the nature of those dialogues was elicited and gathered from primary participants in their interviews. All interviews of both primary and secondary participants were recorded and transcribed verbatim and then analyzed.

Document Analysis

Documents (i.e. reflective journals, lesson plans, and goals) can also be a source of reflective thought and dialogue. It was intended to collect these types of reflective documents throughout the study, and with the permission of the participants, copy, and code them. Because this qualitative study seeks to observe, in as much as possible, the reflective dialogue of novice teachers in a naturalistic setting, I decided to not request the teachers to produce any reflective artifacts specific to this study. The only documents I collected were those that were genuinely produced by the subjects during the eleven-week research. The main purpose of document collection and review was to determine

aspects of reflective dialogue that exists between the teacher and his or herself or between the teacher and others. In each interview, each participant was asked if they had produced any sort of reflective document. Disclosure and inclusion of these documents in this study remained at the discretion of the participants. None of the three participants kept a reflective journal or produced any artifacts for a portfolio during the course of the study. None of them kept any sort of reflective notes as it pertained to lesson plans or curricular issues. Some reports of student issues and concerns had been produced, but inclusion of that type of sensitive and confidential material was deemed as potentially harmful to the students' best interest, and therefore, did not request them. One teacher produced a written lesson plan, fully detailing the teaching methodology as it related to standards-based education. Another subject was required by their site-school principal to produce a weekly reflective summary of the previous week and submit it by email. Other than email, none of the teachers utilized additional electronic means of reflective dialogue such as web-based discussion boards/groups or list-serves. These documents, as they naturally occurred, were reviewed for information pertinent to the study and were further discussed during subsequent interviews regarding the nature of the reflection and its intended audience.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an ongoing process of continual reflection about the emerging data, notation of ideas and observations throughout the process of inquiry, and perpetual posturing of analytical questions (Rossman & Rallis, 1988). Qualitative case studies

require the construction of a detailed description of the case and its settings (Creswell, 1998). Stake (1995) advocates four modes of analysis in case study research:

1. Categorical aggregation: the researcher hunts for reoccurring instances from the data and issue-relevant meanings.
2. Direct interpretation: the researcher also considers single instances that seem to have powerful import to research questions.
3. Pattern identification: The researcher considers correspondence between two or more categories.
4. Naturalistic generalization: the researcher creates generalizations that people can learn from the case either for themselves or apply it to a larger population.

Creswell (1998) adds an additional component to case study analysis

5. Description: the researcher produces a detailed description of the case, its major players, settings, occurrences, and activities.

Addressing Research Questions

In order to determine answers to the first research question, “What opportunities for reflective dialogue do these novice teachers recognize and utilize?” three sources of data were analyzed. First, field observations were employed to understand the opportunities for reflective dialogue that exist as compared to the opportunities novice teachers utilize or even possibly create. The observations allowed the researcher to see what opportunities the participants utilized and how that changed during the course of the

study. Collected documents gave insights regarding reflective thoughts and dialogue that the teacher metacognitively communicated with himself or herself as well as in one case, communicated to an administrator. Finally, the in-depth interview was designed to draw out information regarding the novice teacher's perception of opportunity for reflective dialogue. The following interview items were employed to determine participants' perceptions concerning opportunities for reflective dialogue:

1. What opportunities do you have to talk about teaching?
2. How often do these opportunities occur?
4. With whom do you discuss teaching?
5. Are there others, outside of the education profession, with whom you discuss issues regarding your teaching?
17. Were there any occasions when you desired more opportunities to discuss your teaching practice? Explain.

The second guiding research question, "How do these novice teachers perceive audience when engaging in reflective dialogue?" is divided into three subsections, each of which was addressed separately.

"How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes regarding sources of reflective dialogue?" will be explored primarily with the interviews. The following questions investigated this aspect of the research:

4. With whom do you discuss teaching?
5. Are there others, outside of the education profession, with whom you discuss issues regarding your teaching?

7. Is what you discuss affected by the person you are talking with? If so, how?
11. (If a reflective journal or the like exists) How is what you write about similar to or differ from what you talk about? Is it similar with certain people and different with others? Why or why not?
18. Are you required to produce these reflective documents (i.e., reflective journal, portfolio, or web-based discussions groups)? Did you participate in any of these activities on your own volition? If so, why? And how did these dialogues differ from the face-to-face discussions?

In order to address the second sub-question, “How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes regarding topics of reflective dialogue?” data was collected during the field observations specific to the types of topics they discuss with various individuals. Furthermore, specific interview questions are intended to focus on this question:

3. What aspects of teaching do you discuss?
6. How do your discussions with these individuals (outside of the teaching profession) differ from those with educational faculty members?
7. Is what you discuss affected by the person you are talking with? If so, how?
8. Are there issues or circumstances regarding your teaching that you would be hesitant in discussing with a mentor? Administrator? Peer teacher?

9. Are there any issues that you would be more likely to discuss with the above individuals?
10. How comfortable do you feel in an observation/conferencing setting? Are there certain topics you tend to focus on or avoid? Why?
11. (If a reflective journal or the like exists) How is what you write about similar to or differ from what you talk about? Is it similar with certain people and different with others? Why or why not?

This was further followed up in the interviews with secondary participants. Interview question five, “What is the nature of those discussions (with the secondary participants)? (i.e., descriptions of classroom events, complaints, questions, advice seeking, etc.)” specifically examines this research question.

Finally, the third sub-question, “How does this perception of audience affect the authenticity of the novice teacher’s reflection as determined by the novice teacher and the researcher?” was investigated primarily by comparing observations of reflective dialogue and artifacts of reflective dialogue with interviews of the primary participants. Interview questions that helped the researcher and participants focus on this aspect of the study included:

6. How do your discussions with these individuals differ from those with educational faculty members?
7. Is what you discuss affected by the person you are talking with? If so, how?

8. Are there issues or circumstances regarding your teaching that you would be hesitant in discussing with a mentor? Administrator? Peer teacher?
9. Are there any issues that you would be more likely to discuss with the above individuals?
10. How comfortable do you feel in an observation/conferencing setting? Are there certain topics you tend to focus on or avoid? Why?
11. (If a reflective journal or the like exists) How is what you write about similar to or differ from what you talk about? Is it similar with certain people and different with others? Why or why not?
12. With regards to your classroom instruction, have you ever purposefully avoided discussing certain events or circumstances? Why or why not?
13. Have you ever altered information regarding your teaching/classroom when you have discussed it with another person?
14. Have you ever deleted certain classroom events or aspects of classroom events when you spoke about it with another person? Why or why not?
15. Did the person with whom you were discussing the events have an influence on why you made these choices? Explain.

This was followed up in interviews with secondary participants when they were asked, “Are there certain aspects of his or her teaching (the novice teacher) that you would feel appropriate he or she discusses with you, but you find they don’t? What do you perceive to be the cause of this?”

Reliability and Validity

The data collected in this study was organized and categorized both categorically and chronologically, reviewed multiple times, and coded accordingly. The overall process was reiterative, moving repeatedly through steps of data collection, coding, and synthesis of case studies with generalizable and interpretable meaning.

In order to promote validity in the study, the following steps were taken to promote accuracy of the data, its analysis, and conclusions.

- Data sources were triangulated, using observations and field notes, in-depth interviews, stimulated recall, and document analysis.
- Participants were asked to check the accuracy of the specific descriptions and themes as perceived by the researcher.
- The researcher utilized “rich, thick descriptions” (Creswell, 2003, p. 196) to convey research findings.
- The researcher clarified and conveyed inherent personal bias brought to the study.
- Any negative or discrepant information was appropriately communicated and assimilated into the study in order to produce findings that accurately portray the complexities of real life.

Peer debriefing, mainly from the researcher’s doctoral advisor, was utilized to enhance the accuracy and applicability of the account (Creswell, 2003).

Data Coding and Presentation

Findings were aggregated into a case study for each teacher-participant. These case studies were then compared and contrasted in order to draw conclusions and propose implications and suggestions regarding teacher induction and reflection. As part of the analysis, the cases were coded (Berg, 2004) to allow cross comparison of the cases and identify similarities and differences within and across the cases.

Where substantial frequency occurred, as determined by the researcher, in a single case or across cases, it was recorded as a significant finding. In other instances, when an event or response was determined to be of singular significance, it too was recorded as an important finding. The process was reiterative and occurred throughout the entire data collection, compilation, and analysis process and was consistent with the tradition of the constant comparative method of qualitative research where, “Selective or focused coding uses initial codes that reappear frequently to sort large amounts of data” (Charmaz, 2003, pp. 260). This method employs the comparison of participants, throughout the investigative process, associating data at different points in time, comparing events with other events, creating categories within the data, or comparing the categories with other categories.

A case was constructed for each individual participant. As the cases were organized, various themes began to emerge. These themes were further examined and used to create a scaffold for understanding the nature of the teachers’ reflective dialogues. These findings were then compared to this investigation’s guiding research questions. During the analysis process, it became apparent that there were four major themes into

which the novice teachers' reflective dialogues fit. These themes included: classroom management issues, procedural topics, curricular topics, and dialogues involving emotional support.

Classroom management issues included any topic regarding behavior issues of the class, including classroom procedures such as lining up and asking or answering questions. It also included how the teacher prevented and handled misbehaviors. Procedural topics included school policies and procedures that the teacher is expected to understand and comply with. This could include the referral of a student to a specialist, communications with parents, proper use of school provided internet and email, reporting of a student injury, and such. Curricular issues encompassed two main concepts: the actual curricular materials like textbooks, worksheets, or computer programs; and instructional techniques or methods, such as methods of engagement, transitioning, anticipatory sets, guided practice, and the like. The final theme was dialogues for emotional support. These conversations might contain any of the above topics in addition to many different topics related to education with which the novice teacher is feeling strong emotions. While emotional support often occurred when the novice teacher was feeling negative emotions of frustration, fatigue, or fear, it could also include moments of joy, success, and relief. In each of the cases, the novice teachers' reflective dialogues are organized according to these subcategories and are discussed relevant to each of the identified audiences to that particular novice teacher's reflective dialogues.

As the individual cases were constructed and then cross compared, it became apparent that certain attributes of the novice teachers' reflective dialogues were fitting

into a pattern of categories. These categories correlated with the sources that novice teachers chose for reflective dialogue and the topics they chose for those dialogues. Five factors were identified as having a significant impact on the participant's attitudes regarding sources of reflective dialogues. These factors included: a mutually trusting relationship, availability, familiarity with their classroom, a valuable knowledge-base, and relevance of the audience. A brief description of each as it surfaced in the investigation is listed below:

1. A mutually trusting relationship: This factor was based on the novice teacher's attitude and perception regarding the level of trust and respect between themselves and the potential source of dialogue. This relationship was usually developed over a period of time through successive experiences.
2. Availability: The teacher's perception of approachability and accessibility of the source determined their perception of availability. For example, a source that is not often on-site would be considered less available. Likewise, person that is on-site, but is perceived by the novice teacher to be extremely busy may be accessible, but not approachable, and therefore lacks availability.
3. Familiarity with the classroom: This factor was based upon the teacher's perceptions of a person's understanding and knowledge of their classroom and its students. This was usually enhanced with personal, first-hand experiences and observations of the class.

4. Valuable knowledge-base: This feature is founded on the novice teacher's perception of both the tacit and deliberate knowledge a potential source possesses. The value of the knowledge was a relative assessment and was generally viewed by the novice teacher as beneficial when it was pertinent to their specific need or circumstance.
5. Relevance of audience: This factor precipitated from the participants' perception of the potential audience as being fit for reflective dialogues they, the novice teacher, were most likely to engage in. This usually was determined by grade level, school, and level of experience.

In a similar fashion, three factors were identified in the cases of this study that affected the topics of reflective dialogues the novice teachers were most likely to engage in. These factors were: knowledge-base, authority, and emotional support. The knowledge-base factor, as it affected attitudes regarding topics of reflective dialogues, was defined essentially the same as in the source factor categories above. As was the case in perceptions that affected sources novice teachers utilized for reflective dialogue, the perception of knowledge-base also affected the topics the novice teacher was willing to discuss with a particular audience. The factor of authority emerged as participants described how their perceptions of power and authority influenced the topics that they were willing to address in their dialogues and how they were willing to discuss those topics. Finally, emotional support emerged as an understanding that often the intent of novice teacher's dialogue was to garner sympathy, understanding, or support as they faced the demanding circumstances of their teaching assignment.

In the execution of this investigation, it became apparent that the concept of authenticity is very esoteric and slippery, and the measurement of it is a very difficult venture. While the reviewed literature did provide some ideas of features to observe, it wasn't until the study commenced and data began to be collected that the features which would shape this study's theoretical framework of authenticity began to emerge. This occurred in the tradition of grounded theory (Cresswell, 1998; Berg, 2004). As the researcher discussed the idea of authenticity with the subjects and as they collaborated on ideas of how authenticity might be compromised, additional ideas beyond the basic premise of "truthfulness" surfaced. In addition to the concept of truthfulness, three other concepts were identified: relevance, timeliness, and accuracy. In order to utilize these concepts as part of the research, it became necessary to clarify the meaning and usage of each term:

1. Truthfulness: Are the details of the dialogue, as it is communicated, factual? Is the communication devoid of fabrication or deceit?
2. Relevance: Is the topic of the dialogue meaningful or appropriate to the novice teacher? For example, a novice teacher may be struggling with specific classroom management difficulties. In a conference setting, an administrator may initiate a conversation about various alternatives to traditional assessment. The novice teacher may engage in the conversation out of a sense of social duty, but finds a lack

of relevance to immediate needs, and therefore lacks what Dewey terms, “whole-heartedness” (Dewey, 1933).

3. Timeliness: Does the novice teacher postpone a reflective dialogue due to lack of opportunity or on own volition? Does that postponement rob the later dialogue of immediacy and relevance?
4. Accuracy: While the details might not be fabricated, are they exaggerated or embellished? Are there certain components that are omitted for a specific purpose?

Once these definitions were established, they were discussed with the subjects, creating a common understanding of the terms. Throughout the rest of the study, this created a comprehensible scaffold, allowing the researcher and subjects to discuss the abstract concept of authenticity. To additionally assist subjects in evaluating the abstraction of authenticity, it was deemed helpful to create a Likert-scale, allowing participants to rate authenticity with a certain degree of qualification. The scale was established as a five-point, traditional Likert-scale with the following definitions for each gradation:

1. No amount of authenticity in any of the four identified factors.
2. Occasional authenticity in the four factors.
3. Regular authenticity in most of the four factors, but perceptible lack of authenticity in at least one factor.
4. Consistent authenticity in all four factors with only an occasional violation in one or more of the factors.

5. Nearly always authentic in all four qualifying factors.

The scale was used in some of the final interviews with each participant as a means of assisting them in their evaluation of the authenticity of their dialogues. In some cases, they did not respond with a scaled number, but instead decided to talk about their perceptions of authenticity with that audience. The researcher deemed this information of equal value and submission to the rating scale was not pursued. It was also recognized that the implementation of this tool did not address issues of inter-rater reliability, and therefore it is not used in cross-case analysis; rather, it was a means to allow participants to think about and clarify the understanding of their own authenticity. In the final analysis for each case, the four facets of authenticity identified in this study were used to summarize the subjects' reflective dialogues.

In the final chapter, the three cases are cross compared, sources of reflective dialogues and topics of those dialogues are examined side by side and fundamental similarities and differences are examined. In this examination, occurrences that appear with high frequency are recognized and addressed. The aligning of the three cases along with the various methods of data collection encouraged proper triangulation of the data and helped to establish sound conclusions. Following the cross-case comparison of the themes, those conclusions specific to this study are presented along with recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FOUR
THE CASE OF CHARLES

Introducing Charles

Charles is a twenty-seven year old, Caucasian male who is in his first year of teaching, and has been assigned to a sixth grade classroom. He is married, has two children and one on the way. Charles grew up in suburban southwest areas, and attended a community college. He interrupted his education for two years and later returned, eventually transferring to a large southwestern university where he earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education. He has always enjoyed being with children and teaching them, which he found to be his main motivation for entering into the education field.

While in his methods program at the university, he spent time in both a fifth-grade and a second-grade classroom. Charles did his student teaching at the fifth-grade level at a suburban school in a community of higher socio-economic status. Upon graduating, he decided to only apply for a teaching position within the same school district where he had been a student teacher because he had enjoyed his experience there very much. Charles was hired by the school district to teach at an elementary school located in a rural community, about thirty minutes away from the suburban school where he had student taught.

School Description

The twenty-four year old, public K-6 school where Charles teaches sixth grade is nestled in a small housing area consisting mostly of trailer homes and prefabricated

homes. The housing area is surrounded by agricultural land and state-owned land. Approximately seven percent of the student population is English language learners (ELL) and fifty-eight percent of students are on the free or reduced-price lunch program. The administration and staff at the school includes a principal, an assistant principal, and eleven other professionals including, a librarian, a computer lab specialist, PE and music teachers, office staff, a school counselor, and a school psychologist.

Charles teaches in a room situated next door to his assigned mentor teacher. There are two additional sixth-grade teachers on their team besides his mentor teacher and himself. Charles' classroom walls are constructed of cinderblock, painted off-white and are decorated with colorful posters, including two student-created ones that read, "Mr. C is awesome," and, "Mr. C is totally cool." There is a small window in the room and two large chalkboards on opposing walls, both boards displaying various agendas, lists, and explanations written in Charles' hand with yellow chalk. There are two desktop computers for student use and one computer for the teacher. Class desks were originally grouped into pods of four; however, during the study the configuration changed twice, finally resulting in straight rows all facing the south wall chalkboard. By the classroom sink there sits a large glass aquarium containing the class pet, a snake.

Charles teaches twenty-four students in his class with about one-third of the class representing ethnic minority populations. The socio-economic status (SES) of the school is such that every student in Charles' class is fed breakfast in the classroom each day.

Teaching Situation

In accordance with the district induction program, Charles has been assigned a mentor teacher. His mentor is a fifteen-year veteran teacher who has been teaching for eleven years at this site-school. She has been utilized as a mentor for first-year teachers for the past four years, sometimes mentoring two teachers at a time. This year, she has been assigned only one novice teacher to mentor, Charles. The mentor is married and has school-age children which she must drop off at school and pick-up after school, causing her to arrive just before school starts and leave soon after school ends. Charles tutors privately two days each week and also has to leave right after school is let out on those days.

Charles and his mentor share responsibilities in teaching their classes; the mentor teaches math and science and Charles teaches social studies and language arts, therefore, both teachers are very familiar with each others' students. While the mentor discusses the various mandated topics assigned by the district in their monthly mentor/teacher meeting, she generally tends to take a "hands-off" approach to mentoring, allowing Charles to approach her with topics of discussion as he deems it necessary and as questions arise. In an interview with her, she explains:

. . . I know from experience in the past. . . I wanted to help that person so bad that I felt I was imposing my own ideas on that person. Not reasoning, 'Hey, he or she may have their own teaching style.' And so, I initiate when the time comes that I need to, or when certain things just come up, not just the check list, but certain, you know, pertinent things come up (Interview, January 12, 2007).

Charles has also been assigned to be part of a small cohort of teachers who gather approximately monthly for additional novice teacher training. Charles' cohort consists of

six teachers; Charles is the only male. Of the six teachers, there is one fourth-grade teacher, one sixth-grade teacher (Charles), and the remaining members teach kindergarten. The district-appointed mentor for this cohort class is a reading specialist at an elementary school within the district. In addition to this monthly cohort meeting, Charles also attends the large first-year teachers' meeting held by the district where general topics including resources, curriculum, and district programs are introduced and discussed.

Beginning of the School Year

Charles began his first year of teaching experiencing the emotions common to most beginning teachers:

When I first started, I was just nervous; very nervous and very, I don't want to say scared, but just kind of unsure. . . I guess of myself and being a teacher and just kind of . . . I'm in my career this is my job right now. This isn't just a part time [job] to get through school, this is it. But it was kind of scary to me (Interview January 26, 2007).

Charles commenced his new career by attending classes and new teacher orientation seminars the week before school began. Although he had been assigned a mentor teacher to help prepare for the upcoming school year, she was on vacation and did not return until two days before school started. He was receiving textbooks and other curricular materials and was growing increasingly anxious about "figuring out what [he] was going to be teaching" (Interview January 26, 2007). Only days before school started, Charles and his mentor sat down and divided the curriculum between themselves. Charles would teach language arts and social studies and his mentor would take math and science. Being able to hone his focus to a few curricular topics helped ease some of the anxiety;

however, Charles was still unable to get all of his books until a couple of days before school began because the campus had been closed for cleaning. Charles describes his apprehension:

I was getting very nervous [and] still didn't even know what to expect. [I] hadn't been in a new first day of school . . . since I was in sixth-grade. It's so much different from high school and middle school. I don't even remember the first days of school in middle school or high school, and so . . . I didn't know what to expect . . . didn't know anyone here . . . didn't know who to go to (Interview January 26, 2007).

These feelings of anxiety and isolation created a barrier, discouraging Charles from establishing connections of collegiality with his peers. He admits that his own personality played a part in how he interacted with his fellow teachers during the first weeks of school and how it has continued to affect his interactions with other staff members:

I guess it's my own personality. I just haven't made as many friendships on campus as a new person. I'm not the most outgoing person that just can kind of walk into a crowd and feel comfortable . . . get into a conversation. That's just not who I am. I just am usually more timid and reserved. . . I don't know half of the people here still, and so, I haven't engaged . . . talked with them or anything like that. . . I've learned some names and, "Hey, how's it going?" and, "It's cold outside," but nothing really substantial . . . to build a relationship on (Interview January 12, 2007).

Charles also describes how the sheer mountain of work including grading papers, preparing lesson plans and materials, and other classroom administrative responsibilities discouraged him from engaging in spontaneous conversations with fellow teachers. He always felt like there were deadlines he had to make and work to be done, so small talk with others was a luxury he couldn't enjoy.

Charles had been interviewed for his teaching position by the principal and two of

the sixth-grade team members. He tells of an experience which helped open some doors of interchange with other teachers:

Thankfully, at one of our first staff meetings . . . one of those sixth-grade teachers said, “Oh, you’re the new sixth-grade teacher. OK, come and sit with us.” Kind of said, “If you need anything, let us, you know, don’t feel shy.” So, I kind of relied on them for the first few days. Before school and at the beginning until, kind of got to know you know [my mentor] a little bit better, and so, that was, yeah, that was a stressful, scary, you know, up in the air time for me (Interview January 26, 2007).

In retrospect, Charles acknowledges that these genuine emotions affected his attitude towards engaging in reflective dialogue with others, especially about his own teaching.

When at the beginning of this school year, maybe I was too nervous trying to get my bearing in this new school, you know, feeling my way around with my mentor teacher, the rest of the sixth-grade [teachers] and the rest of the staff. You know, kind of protecting my image or whatever, and just didn’t want to lay it all out on the table (Interview January 12, 2007).

During the first half of the school year, Charles has established both professional and social relationships to varying degrees which allow him to discuss his classroom instruction and investigate his own pedagogical decisions.

Sources of Reflective Dialogue

At the time that this study was conducted, Charles recognized multiple sources of reflective dialogue available for himself. These sources include his mentor, principal, grade-level team, novice teacher cohort group, other school personnel, his wife and other family members, himself, and during this investigation, the researcher. In the following sections, each of these sources will be examined in detail along with Charles’ attitudes

regarding these sources of reflective dialogue and the topics of dialogue he engages in with each source.

Mentor Teacher

Although the beginning of the school year was somewhat troubling for Charles, he quickly learned to appreciate the teacher assigned to be his mentor. She has many years of teaching experience and the majority of those years have been at the site-school, thus enabling her to be very fluent in the policies, procedures, and expectations that exist district-wide as well as those unique to the site-school. Her classroom's close proximity to Charles' room and the fact that they exchange students for classroom instruction has also encouraged regular planning and reflection between the two teachers.

On one particular day, Charles was informed by a student that her parent would be stopping by after school and wanted to speak with Charles. Charles was rather apprehensive about the meeting. His mentor stayed a little longer than usual on that day, and, after the meeting, asked Charles how it went. This opened up an opportunity for Charles and his mentor to discuss future plans and assist both the student and her parents. In addition, it also allowed Charles to learn how to best prepare for and conduct parent-teacher conferences effectively.

Charles' contact with his mentor falls into three categories: congenial greetings (i.e., greeting each other in the morning), scheduled monthly mentor-mentee meetings, and on an as-need basis. The as-need dialogues are usually initiated by Charles, according to his mentor, upwards of two-thirds of the time. However, physical proximity

is not the only variable that affects potential frequency of contact; availability is possibly just as critical. As stated earlier in the case description, Charles' mentor, due to family obligations, tends to arrive just before school begins and leaves fairly soon after school is let out. Charles, himself, also tutors privately after school two days each week, causing him to leave within 15 minutes after school is let out. This does not allow much opportunity for spontaneous reflective dialogue between mentor and mentee.

His mentor is a very capable and an organized teacher. Charles admires her teaching skills and her competency. Charles tends to enjoy his autonomy, and views his mentor as a resource that is available when he perceives he has a specific need.

She has not come in [to my classroom] more . . . to observe, taking time from her class to do that. I don't believe that that's part of the [mentor's] job description. She has been very helpful, as a resource . . . an ear to listen and for me to fall back on if I need some help or assistance or anything. She has been very open and very willing (Interview, November 11, 2006).

While Charles mentions that he can go over during lunch to engage in discussions with his mentor, he, in other interviews has indicated and in observations has exhibited the tendency to use his lunch to either catch-up on grading homework or supervise students who are completing make-up work or are remaining in the classroom for disciplinary reasons. On one field observation, Charles discussed a procedural question with his mentor in the five minutes they both had as they were walking to their cars.

Charles' discussions with his mentor tend to fall into three main categories of reflective dialogue: classroom management, procedural discussions, and curricular discussion. There was an obvious absence of dialogue regarding emotional support, and this will also be addressed in this section.

Classroom management dialogues. Charles indicated in an interview at the end of the study that the most common topic of reflective dialogue between his mentor and himself focused on classroom management issues. When Charles was asked which of all of the sources available to him he would go to in order to discuss classroom management issues, he responded:

My mentor. It's nice because we share classes and so we know and we see a lot of the same behaviors within the same students and so we can kind of tag team how we are . . . going to curb this behavior this kid is doing or that this small group is doing. So, it's more practical I think to talk with my mentor in that sense because we've got the same problems with these same kids it's the same behaviors (Interview, December 14, 2006).

In an interview with Charles' mentor, she concurred that one of the most common topics in their conversations is classroom management issues, but topics regarding school procedures emerge with equal frequency.

Procedural dialogues. Charles felt overwhelmed at the beginning of the school year with not only having to organize his classroom time effectively in order to cover a wide range of curricular expectations and maintain appropriate classroom management, but also fulfill regular administrative duties such as grading and correspondence with parents. His mentor, knowing that most new teachers would feel overwhelmed even with these regular expectations, provided opportunities to discuss ideas for accomplishing these necessary duties. When asked when she might approach him and initiate a discussion, she responded:

Usually at times when maybe he's felt he's struggling a little bit. You know, maybe he feels bombarded with grading papers. I can give him in classroom strategies, in classroom activities that he can kind of use for a couple of days to help him get through something. Or a different way to grade that's actually quicker or easier . . . certain techniques or ways that, "Let's try this," not that it's

going to be an answer to all, but, “Hey let’s give it a try and let me know how it works,” and I try as possible that if he comes to me with a concern or a struggle that I try to follow up with it too (Interview, January 12, 2007).

In addition to standard classroom procedures, there also arose specific circumstantial issues that needed to be addressed in a timely manner, for example, students who exhibit unusual emotional behaviors in class, or a new student to the class. Each of these situations required Charles to act in a very precise manner, filling out appropriate documentation, contacting the correct specialists, and communicating with parents or guardians in an appropriate, timely manner. This was the aspect of teaching that Charles hadn’t considered when he entered the profession, and the part which caught him most off guard. His mentor has been a very convenient and effective resource to help him learn proper protocol. Charles’ mentor, with her years of teaching experience and tenure at the site-school was an ideal source of knowledge and was able to provide Charles with not only the procedural steps, but also able to deepen Charles’ awareness of the implications of the procedures for his students, their families, school and district resource personnel, and for himself.

Curricular dialogues. The third type of reflective dialogue that Charles identified having with his mentor centered in curricular issues. Most of these discussions were initiated by his mentor as they discussed the district-mandated topics in their scheduled monthly meeting. Charles explains:

Since she’s my mentor she has her own agenda that she needs to follow also for helping me as a first year teacher. And so we go through some different things, you know curriculum maps, you know the planning . . . the students, my planning book, grades and different things like that (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Charles and his mentor also discuss the importance of covering objectives and assessments as they align with standards-based curriculum. Charles describes how they regularly discuss teaching methods to assist him in his classroom instruction including class projects and group work. Charles feels comfortable in sharing teaching ideas he has and receiving feedback from his mentor, thus allowing him to engage in anticipatory reflective practice and adjust his instructional methods accordingly.

In regards to curricular-themed reflective dialogue, Charles identifies an apparent deficit. Because Charles and his mentor have divided the curriculum and exchange classes, it has allowed each of them to experience a reduction in their lesson preparation; however, it has also reduced the opportunity for Charles to discuss curricular objectives and content with his mentor, which otherwise would allow him to deepen his knowledge-base and potentially encourage more thorough reflection on classroom instruction.

Emotional support dialogues. Charles describes in his interviews emotions that are common to most beginning teachers. They enter the classroom with aspirations to educate children and help them sense the joy of learning. They want to establish strong bonds of mutual trust. Most understand that there will be challenges and difficulties along the way, but the reality of those challenges seem distant and they are hopeful that determination will surmount those obstacles. Usually within the first months of school, the new teacher will confront a greater variety of challenges and classroom issues than they ever thought possible, ranging from the unexpected classroom management issues, to students' learning and physical disabilities, additional school assignments, becoming

familiar with new district adopted curriculum, undergoing evaluations and working with parents.

As Charles faced these emotions, it was obvious in his interviews, the interview with his mentor, and in the field observations that he did not perceive his mentor as a primary source for emotional support. His mentor mentions:

I haven't felt that it's been too emotional. But then it might be very emotional for him, and he's just not a person to show it. . . He hasn't come across to me as you know, "Why did I get into teaching?" . . . in fact, I told him personally that he is like ten times way beyond what I ever was as a first year teacher only because he kind of goes with the flow and doesn't stress out on the little things. . . I've told him, if you looked at him you wouldn't even think he was a first year teacher (Interview, January 12, 2007).

As seen from the previous description of Charles' emotions at the beginning of the year, Charles, while exhibiting an easy-going personality, was inwardly struggling with genuine anxieties and feelings of isolation. It appears from observations and interviews with Charles that the limited time available for his mentor and him to engage in spontaneous dialogue has funneled their discussions to more "task-at-hand" issues and allowed less sharing of personal emotions.

Authenticity of dialogues with mentor. When asked to evaluate the authenticity of his dialogues with his mentor, Charles felt that on the five-point Likert scale, five being the most authentic, the majority of his dialogues scored in the three to four range. He communicated his comfort level with his mentor and didn't feel any need to adjust the truthfulness or accuracy of his dialogues with her. He felt that most all of their dialogues had relevance to his work in the classroom and as a contributing member of his school faculty. The one area of authenticity that Charles did acknowledge as being affected was

the timeliness of his dialogues with his mentor. This was generally affected by the limited availability for spontaneous dialogue between Charles and his mentor. There times that he desired to discuss various aspects of his teaching with her, but had to postpone the discussion or decide to discuss it with an other source because of his mentor's absence or because he perceived other instructional topics as taking precedence.

It also became obvious through the course of the interviews conducted for this study, that Charles' willingness to openly engage in reflective dialogues developed over the course of time. His initial reservations affected what he was willing to discuss and with whom he was willing to discuss his teaching practices with:

I think I omitted than shared initially. But as I feel more comfortable in a setting, you know I share more things and start to ask more questions even, so I can get a better feel where I'm at. As the year has gone on, from the beginning because I was so reserved or quiet or didn't really go out of my way to find out certain things, or you know, ask certain things. So, I think [my willingness to discuss] has gone up (Interview, January 26, 2007).

He recognizes that as his perceptions of his mentor as an evaluator have faded, his desire and ability to fully disclose and discuss moments of cognitive dissonance with her have greatly increased.

Administrator

Charles' principal is an enthusiastic, dynamic individual. In each of the field observations where he was present, he exhibited charisma and was complimentary of his staff and faculty. Charles indicated that he had developed a good rapport with the principal and felt very comfortable interacting with him. Charles received his first formal observation and evaluation from the principal at the beginning of this study, and both the

pre-observation and post-observation conferences are included in the data.

Charles' opportunities for reflective dialogue with his principal were much less frequent than with his mentor. During two quarters of the year, the principal would regularly observe Charles' class for short periods of time. Charles appreciated these opportunities to receive brief feedback and support. The first formal observation and conferences occurred about three months into the school year. Towards the end of the study, Charles made the following comments regarding opportunities to engage in reflective dialogues with his principal during an interview with the researcher:

I do have an observation that is coming up, so we'll have more time to sit down and talk for longer [than] just a minute or so. I have had more last semester. He would stop more and kind of just make unscheduled visits for five minutes and I'd just ask him, you know really briefly, about what he liked or didn't like or whatever. But, that hasn't happened so far this semester, these unscheduled walk-throughs. And so, time-wise it's been difficult finding time with him this semester (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Charles indicated that the majority of his discussions with his principal centered on issues of behavior management. In addition to discussions regarding classroom management, Charles' conversations with his principal also included curricular issues. During the study, Charles was not observed to have engaged in dialogues that focused on school procedures or emotional support.

Classroom management dialogues. Although Charles mentions classroom management as the most frequent topic of discussion with his principal, it does not necessarily indicate that those conversations are frequent or that Charles makes it a point to discuss each incidence of classroom management difficulty with his administrator.

The reverse is actually true. Throughout the course of the study, Charles was observed to have very few opportunities for reflective dialogue with his principal. Most interactions were of a cordial nature. Because the significant interactions were atypical, they almost always resulted from a unique need, usually something that Charles decided as significant enough to merit attention from the head administrator of the school.

One such case arose towards the end of the study. A student of Charles had written a threatening note to another student. The note had been given to Charles, and after reading it he decided to talk to the school counselor. While speaking with the school counselor, the principal walked by and Charles decided to speak with the principal. In the interview where he shared this experience, he stated:

So, I didn't really talk with my mentor. I mentioned it to my mentor, but not really "What should I do with it?" I didn't hang on to it very long, immediately passed it on to someone who could deal with it much more thoroughly (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Generally, Charles takes classroom management issues that he is struggling with to his mentor. In the above case, Charles decided to bypass his mentor and go directly to an administrator because of the severity of the infraction and his concern for the safety of his student. In the only other similar case that occurred during the study, Charles' decision to approach the principal resulted in repeated classroom disturbances and a mutual decision with his mentor to consult with the principal.

Curricular dialogues. Charles engaged in many more reflective dialogues that addressed curricular topics including teaching methods and classroom processes than he consciously realized. During the first semester, Charles noted that the principal would observe his classroom for just a few minutes on a regular basis, and Charles used this

opportunity to request brief feedback. In early November, Charles also received his first formal observation and evaluation. The principal scheduled both a pre-observation conference and a post-observation conference.

Both of these conferences were recorded and transcribed verbatim for this study. In the process of analysis, it was noted that the principal appeared to have very specific objectives during the conferences. One of those objectives was to encourage Charles to reflect on his teaching both in anticipation and in contemplation of instructional tasks. In the pre-observation conference, the principal did very little talking; rather, he encouraged Charles to explain not only what he intended to do in his lesson, but give reasons why and what he expected the results would be because of his instructional decisions. Charles was encouraged to do the majority of the speaking in the pre-observation conference, while most of the principal's responses were short responses like, "Yes," or, "I see," followed by probing questions such as, "Is that going to be your assessment of whether or not they learn the objective?" or, "How are you going to check?" (Pre-observation conference, November 15, 2006). Each of these probing questions encouraged Charles to explicate his plans, look more deeply at his intentions and consider possible results as well as anticipate potential difficulties.

In the post-observation conference, the principal reviewed his observations with Charles, discussing the actual events and outcomes that occurred during his visit to Charles' classroom. The principal had carefully scripted the lesson and had since reviewed and highlighted certain incidents that he wanted to discuss. Charles listened to the evaluation and recommendations, nodding and occasionally writing down brief notes

in a notepad he had brought to the conference. The principal covered topics like anticipatory sets, lesson transitions, instructional “hooks,” class participation, seating arrangements, methods of distributing papers, and specific interventions for a student with special needs. It appeared that Charles was accepting of the feedback as he parroted comments made by the principal and recorded them in his notepad. However, in subsequent interviews, as Charles reflected on his experience in the observation and conferences with his principal, it was unclear if he had truly grasped the deeper instructional implications of the philosophies that the principal was attempting to convey.

Procedural dialogues. Charles did not specifically identify any conversations with his principal that focused on school or district procedures. In fact, he indicated that he most often would approach his mentor with questions regarding policy and procedure. In the field observations and interviews there were no incidents of conversations with the principal that were purely of a procedural nature; however, there were a few exchanges within the conversations that did exhibit procedural themes. For example, in Charles’ post-observation conference, the final topic of discussion regarded a student with special needs. The principal asked questions that verified the employment of certain interventions for the student, and the documentation of it.

In the case of a threatening note passed by one of Charles’ students to another, the principal discussed with Charles’ the steps he had taken and would take to address the issue. While this conversation was not intended to instruct Charles in proper procedures, in reflection, Charles felt he had learned from his principal how to handle sensitive issues in a way that protects both the students and the school.

Emotional support dialogues. Throughout the study, Charles was not observed to approach his principal for emotional support, nor could he recall ever seeking emotional support from his principal. Even during the stressful events surrounding a student threatening the safety of another student, Charles' conversations with his principal were strictly aimed at diffusing the problem appropriately; he had no intention of sharing his personal anxieties with his administrator. In all of his observed interactions with his principal, Charles maintained an optimistic and enthusiastic demeanor. In a similar fashion as with his mentor, Charles chose not to divulge any negative emotions regarding his teaching experience to his principal.

Authenticity of dialogues with administrator. When asked to rate the authenticity of his dialogues with the principal based upon the five-point Likert-scale, Charles responded:

A four, probably. You know, he's not the first go-to person, nor does he want to be, obviously. So, but he is available to talk about things. I've talked with him more about future career moves within education, more than just daily routine things. He comes in every once in a while, sticks his head in to observe for about five minutes and then moves on. . . Usually in those circumstances he doesn't stop me and say, "This is what I observed. Maybe you could do this." Simply, that hasn't been our relationship through the school year. I've talked to him more about, "I'm interested in going into administration and becoming a principal" (Interview, January 12, 2007).

Charles has appreciated the positive and friendly relationship that he and the principal share. Much of this has been engendered by the supportive attitude the principal demonstrates for his faculty and staff. This supportive relationship has encouraged Charles to be open and willing to approach his principal when necessary and to welcome feedback from him.

In light of this collegial relationship, an interesting observation was made during Charles' pre-observation conference on November 15, 2006. Towards the beginning of the conference, the principal probed to see if there was anything specific that Charles wanted the principal to observe and give him feedback on. Charles initially responded that he couldn't think of anything special. The principal then restated the question and Charles responded, in very general terms, that he could use work in all areas. The principal then decided to pose questions regarding two specific aspects of Charles' teaching practices. Charles responded to both questions by admitting that he wasn't satisfied and could use work on them.

Later, in a subsequent interview, Charles was given the opportunity to reflect on the occurrence. He remembered it well, but had difficulty determining exactly why he had responded the way he did. His first thoughts upon reflection focused on his desires to ensure the observation and conferences went well and to maintain his positive relationship with the principal. When further questioned, Charles admitted that he had really never considered potential improvements in those aspects of his teaching. He assumed that if the principal wanted to discuss them, they must be important and applicable to him. Charles decided to engage in that reflective dialogue, not because he had chosen the topic, but because he perceived that his principal felt it was important. Charles' response in this interaction is a prime example of his perception of the audience, in this case, his principal, affecting the topic of the dialogue and his willingness to engage in the conversation. Charles also confided later, that while he had considered some of the principal's recommendations and tried a few of them out, for the most part, he did not

feel that the conversation had greatly affected his classroom processes.

Other Teachers: Team Members

Charles is one of four sixth-grade teachers at the site-school. These four teachers form a team and have opportunity to collaborate on issues affecting the sixth-grade classes including, among many topics, curricular materials, instructional methods, field-trips, classroom management issues, and funding. It is with these four teachers among the site-school's entire faculty and staff that Charles interacts with the most frequently. Aside from his mentor, Charles has also developed a relationship with the two other team teachers as they were on Charles' job-interviewing committee and also have provided support and assistance to Charles when his mentor is not available. Most of his conversations with his team members, excluding his conversations with his mentor, focus on curricular issues and interpersonal relationships.

Sometimes I'll bring up some issues or some things or ask for advice on behavior management or a lesson or something. But usually it's just kind of getting to know each other still. Talking about, you know, what our likes and dislikes are and stuff that's been going on outside of school, and kind of more friendly relationship instead of just colleagues all the time (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Charles meets with his team usually once a week, during their half-hour preparation period while students are attending music class. On occasion, they may also use their Friday afternoon preparation time to meet and plan, but it doesn't occur as often as Charles would prefer. In addition to the formal meetings, Charles, on occasion, has opportunity to interact with his team in a more casual setting. While he usually spends his lunch break in his room monitoring students completing make-up work, Charles will

occasionally join the other teachers during lunch time.

Classroom management dialogues. Charles indicates that conversations regarding reflection on classroom management are uncommon between him and his team. While stories of events may be shared between the teachers, the purpose of these exchanges is primarily for conversation rather than a deeper look at causes for the misbehavior and possible solutions. Charles explains:

I mean, there is the sixth grade team, there are two other [teachers], but I think it's more kind of the same as with my mentor teacher. I don't talk to them as often, but it's just kind of redundant. I don't mean to make that sound negative (Interview January 12, 2007).

Charles typically will use his mentor as his primary source for reflection regarding classroom management issues.

Classroom procedures. Charles did not perceive that he used the other team teachers to discuss procedural topics. In the field observations, Charles did not engage in any conversations with his team teachers other than cordial greetings. However, in the analysis of Charles interviews, it was noted that he on a few occasions said that he felt comfortable approaching his fellow team members with questions regarding school/district policy and procedure if his mentor were not available. That fact that his mentor was only minimally available during the before and after school hours and that Charles had not approached the team members with his procedural questions was indicative of his preference to discuss those matters with his mentor.

Curricular dialogues. The majority of Charles' reflective dialogues with his fellow team members revolve around curricular issues. In regular planning meetings, instructional materials and methods are discussed and evaluated and plans for

implementation are established. Charles describes some typical exchanges between his team members and himself:

Yesterday, when we met, it was just kind of an opportunity to talk about concerns. And we all had concerns, especially with kind of district curriculum book sets or curriculum sets or maps or reading programs so that's kind of been a concern. . . . So I wanted to get a worksheet about ancient China and couldn't find the worksheet that the curriculum gives us, so I asked another teacher. "Do you have anything on ancient China?" And she said, "Do I have anything?" And she pulled out this packet of stuff that you can go through and make copies of whatever pages you want. And you can keep it. So that was nice to have to fall back on, especially with veteran teachers and keep it and continue on with it (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Charles senses support and open collegiality between his team and himself. His mentor teacher has taught professionally for fifteen years and the other two team members have taught at least seven to eight years according to Charles. This has enhanced Charles' trust in his team and his willingness to approach the other teachers with questions. In spite of this approachable relationship, Charles admits that he still prefers speaking with his mentor.

Emotional support dialogues. As discussed previously, Charles did not perceive the teachers on his team as sources of dialogue for emotional support. He could not identify an instance where his discussions with them were intended to release negative emotions or garner positive support regarding his teaching. However, the friendships that he has developed indirectly provide him with a sense of belonging and become a potential source of emotional support.

Authenticity of dialogues with team teachers. Charles did not rate the authenticity of his dialogues with fellow team members on the Likert-scale tool; however, field observations and interviews revealed that he adjusted the topics and timing of his

discussions with those teachers based on the norm set in the team environment. Certain topics were reserved for his mentor and Charles delayed addressing them until he could meet one-on-one with her.

Other Teachers: Novice Cohort

Charles is expected by his school district to participate in both of the district initiated induction classes. He is assigned to work with approximately five to six other first-year teachers in a cohort group that meets approximately once per month.

Assignment to these groups is based upon school location. He also is expected to attend the monthly class for all first-year teachers.

On January 16, 2007 the monthly meeting of the novice cohort group Charles attends was observed and detailed field notes were taken to obtain descriptive data. At that class session the female mentor, a district appointed expert teacher, facilitated a class made up of six female teachers and one male teacher, Charles. As stated earlier, with the exception of Charles and one other upper-elementary level teacher, all teachers in the class teach kindergarten. It was noted in the observation that Charles was more likely to participate in reflective dialogues when he perceived participation was part of the structure of the class and an expectation of the instructor. When a question was posed by the mentor, he would answer. When a specific example of a teaching method was requested, he was able to share one. However, he did not engage in unrelated side conversations with the other teachers and did not share personal stories of teaching to the extent that other class members did. During the one and a half hour observation, Charles

had approximately twenty-six distinct opportunities provided to him to respond and share reflective insights. These opportunities were open to all class members. Charles responded to ten of them. One half of his responses were short answer responses (i.e., “yes,” or a simple answer to a “fill in the blank question.”) In all, less than one-fifth of his responses articulated any evidence of deeper reflection into his teaching; this was verified in a subsequent interview. When asked if he had reflected on the class topic of engagement as it related to his current teaching, he responded, “Um, . . . no. (chuckles) I mean, a little, some. I’m not going to say it is completely no, but it did have some, but not, not as much [effect]” (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Types of dialogues. Opportunities to discuss classroom management concepts, curricular issues and procedural themes are available in the novice teacher cohort setting. In each class session various instructional topics are discussed with specific reflective activities assigned to the novice teachers as homework. Only one class session was observed for this study and it was predominantly curriculum and classroom processes themed.

One event relative to this class did produce meaningful reflective dialogue for Charles. As part of the class homework, Charles was assigned to choose another teacher to observe. Charles chose the only other male teacher at his school, one who is well-known by other faculty at the site-school as an excellent teacher. Charles chose this teacher not only for his reputation, but because he is male. Charles wanted to see how another male teacher instructed. He explains his experience:

This morning I had an interview with that teacher who I observed, and we just talked for about fifteen minutes about his teaching style and stuff. And some of

his philosophy on what he thinks and it was really interesting to hear his view point, especially at this type of school where it's so far out and the teacher turnover rate is so high (Interview January 26, 2007).

In this setting, Charles was able to engage in reflective dialogue that was purposeful and meaningful to him. He seemed enthusiastic about what he had learned and observed and looked forward to implementing some of those practices into his own teaching.

Authenticity of dialogues with novice cohort. In the actual cohort setting, Charles' dialogues, by his own perceptions, were truthful but lacked relevancy. He engaged in the classroom dialogues only as much as he was expected to, and the depth of his responses was minimal at best. He explained in a later interview:

I guess sometimes during that class, I tend to zone out sometimes 'cause a lot of times, maybe it's just me, or maybe, I don't know, the time of day. . . I tend to sometimes zone out. A room full of girls and it's kind of difficult to sit through that for two hours, two and half hours, so, I mean there are some things [that are valuable]. But I have found it more beneficial through colleagues here on-site, at the school here, than to meet with a small group (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Because Charles perceived his discussions with the cohort as lacking relevancy to his circumstances, it made little impact on his comprehension of the teaching process and even a lesser impact on his ability to bring instructional theory into fruition in his classroom.

Other Teachers: Non-team and Non-cohort

Throughout the study it was observed that Charles also engaged in regular reflective dialogue with other teachers not assigned to his sixth-grade team or his novice cohort group. Of these teachers, the most significant source of dialogue is a female fourth-grade teacher at Charles' school. She and Charles graduated from the same

preservice program and have known each other for about three years. The fourth grade teacher also has a son who is in Charles' class, giving further reason for the two of them to discuss classroom events.

It is not an unusual occurrence for the fourth-grade teacher to stop by Charles' classroom before school starts or right after school to check in. In one instance the teacher peeked into Charles classroom and began a discussion regarding various seating configurations and their inherent advantages and disadvantages. Following their conversation, Charles turned to the researcher and said, "It's so nice having another newbie here" (Field Observation, November 11, 2006).

Charles has enjoyed having another first-year teacher with whom to share experiences and problem-solve. Most of their conversations focus on classroom management, procedural, and emotional support issues. Because this friend/teacher instructs in a different grade level, Charles has not found much need to engage in conversations regarding specific curricular issues, other than feedback to her as a parent of a student in Charles' class.

Classroom management dialogue. Charles converses with this fellow teacher about classroom management often. They share stories of classroom events as well as discuss possible solutions. Charles must be careful in the details of his descriptions because his friend's son is in his class, and while not a serious managerial problem, does need discipline occasionally. Charles reports that he doesn't want to implicate the child with discipline at home simply because his parent is privy to additional information.

Charles prefers to handle normal classroom management issues between his students and him.

Through discussions, this teacher and Charles have worked out an interesting management treatment. This fellow teacher noticed that a few of her students would become so restless that even with reminders from the teacher, they could not contain themselves from fidgeting. After discussing the issue with Charles and requesting his permission, she began calling upon the restless children occasionally to “take a note” to Mr. C. They would dutifully take the note to Mr. C which read, “Thanks, they just needed an opportunity to get out and walk.” Mr. C. would then write back a short message in response and send it back to the fourth grade teacher with the student. Upon returning, the students were prepared to settle down again and resume their classroom work. Charles remarked that he hadn’t had to use the technique too many times, but it did seem to work.

Procedural dialogues. The relationship that Charles and his friend have established over the years encourages Charles to share procedural information with her and to request her advice when he faces new experiences.

Sometimes I’ll even ask her for procedural things, that she’s already experienced with for some reason or another then, um, you know, “Oh yea, I did this. And this is what happened,” or, “This is what I did.” Or maybe I’ve experience it and it’s brand new to her so I could let her know too. So, for whatever reason it’s just nice to have that friendship. I don’t know I think it’s more trusting in that way than in the team sometimes (Interview, December 14, 2006).

It is interesting to note that even though Charles did not perceive his friend as an expert or one who would necessarily be knowledgeable in school or district policy and procedure, he still perceived her, because of their mutual friendship, as one he was

willing to discuss procedural topics with, sometimes prior to posing questions to more reliable sources of information.

Emotional support dialogues. These well established friendships became important emotional moorings for Charles in the early part of his first year of teaching. During this time he was still establishing his relationships with his team, his mentor and his administrator. Charles' friend provided an immediate source of emotional support from one who understood from current first-hand experience the rigors of teaching. Charles describes how he relied upon this relationship, especially at the beginning of the school year.

Charles also relied upon another friend who is a teacher. While his contact with this teacher was not to the extent of the fourth-grade teacher/friend, Charles reported that this friend provided much emotional support at the beginning of the school year when he struggled with feelings of isolation. This friend also teaches the sixth-grade at another elementary school. Charles and she would email approximately weekly to check in on each other and share their recent experiences in the classroom, including struggles. At times they have entertained the idea of inviting all of the first year teachers in the district together just to share ideas and provide support, but as yet have not acted on that idea. As the school year has progressed, Charles has relied less upon this second friend for support and the emails have reduced in frequency.

Authenticity of dialogues with other teachers. When asked to evaluate the authenticity of his dialogues with these teachers, he gave them the lowest score of all of his ratings, a three. The justification for his rating was not based upon his willingness to

share truthfully and relevantly his questions or frustrations. In his response, he does not even take these variables into consideration. He seems to base his evaluation upon his interaction with his fourth-grade teacher/friend regarding his classroom and her son.

It's unique because her son is in my class, so she's always kind of prying. "How is he doing? Is he not doing this? I need to know." And so sometimes, I feel for the protection of her son, I need to protect him sometimes; she's going to pound you when you get home if I give her everything that you have done in my class. And so, you know, sometimes I will omit some things. I don't embellish to her (Interview, January 12, 2007).

While the omission of some information in his dialogues with this friend may justify the lower authenticity rating, certainly his willingness to discuss other issues, including his own frustrations or concerns regarding his teaching, would defend a higher valuation in authenticity. It is interesting to note that this group of people is the first group discussed in this study that Charles has reported confidence in sharing personal emotions with regarding his teaching experiences. The absence of perceived evaluation also encouraged Charles to openly discuss with these the problems he was dealing with and consider solutions.

Family Members

This is the first group of people considered in this study that do not represent sources of reflective dialogue directly associated with the Charles' school environment. Because all data collection was conducted on school premises, interaction between Charles and his family was not directly observed and could only be documented as Charles discussed his conversations with his family members in the interviews. Charles and his wife have two children, and part way through the study found out that they were

expecting their third child. They were also in the process of purchasing their first home. These additional variables affected the topics of conversation between the two. The conversations they do have, tend to focus on emotional support, curricular topics, and classroom management topics. Because his wife is not a professional teacher and is not familiar with district or school policies, Charles does not engage in reflective dialogue regarding procedures.

Charles also identified two other individuals with whom he engages in reflective dialogues on occasion. His mother was once a school teacher and his sister, who more recently has also worked as an educator. Again, Charles seemed to employ these resources more frequently at the beginning of the year, and reduced his usage of these resources as the year progressed and he began to establish other sources of reflective dialogue. Most of the dialogues he did report with them centered on both curricular issues and emotional support.

Classroom management. As the freshness of the new school year wore off and classroom realities set in, Charles found himself feeling frustrations that most new teachers face, mostly in the realm of classroom management.

I also talked with my wife about some different struggles . . . you know this kid that doesn't listen he doesn't do anything or whatever. Usually it's a behavioral management kind of thing. . She's a natural teacher. She's an excellent teacher and she wants to become one and so it's nice too. It makes it kind of beneficial for her also to hear that and kind of talk about maybe different ideas or kind of things we can, I can do to change (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Charles noted that because she was an outsider, he was able to share his personal feelings about the issues more freely and describe the situation more accurately without concern for how his wife would feel about him as the teacher or identify a specific student. She

was able to, at time, assist him in identifying potential interventions for management issues and reflect on their potential effect in the classroom.

Curricular dialogues. Charles also found his wife to be a good source of reflective dialogue concerning curricular issues. While she was not necessarily familiar with curriculum materials such as specific textbooks or school programs, Charles found value in explaining his lesson plans to her and receiving her feedback.

Again, these curricular centered reflective dialogues, while they continue to take place, greatly reduced in frequency during the second half of the study due to circumstances at home.

Emotional support dialogues. Charles identifies his wife as the number one source of reflective dialogue for emotional support. The trusting relationship they share and her distance from the profession allowed him to share freely and seek support and approval from her. However, in the study, although he was posed questions numerous times concerning his reflective dialogues with his wife, he spoke of his discussions for emotional support very infrequently and gave no specific examples of it. Charles also reported relying upon his mother and sister for emotional support early on in the school year, but acknowledged that his dependency upon them had diminished.

Authenticity of dialogues with family members. When asked to rate the authenticity of his reflective dialogues with his wife, Charles gave them between a three and a four. This was somewhat surprising as he certainly was truthful in his conversations with her and because he could choose the aspects of his teaching he wanted to discuss, it was very relevant to him as well. When asked to explain his reasoning for

the rating, he replied:

I think a big thing is omitting. With my wife, she is interested in coming into this field as well in the future. So, I was going to say I try to protect her. And sometimes I will tell her how I see it. Maybe I will embellish it a little bit, and say, "Well, this is what you're getting into. This is the nature of the beast." Kind of thing (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Charles also mentioned on two other occasions that he omitted certain aspects, usually the more difficult challenges of his teaching experiences, in conversations with his wife. He expressed his desire to not discourage her from pursuing a career in public teaching. He does not try to portray teaching as an easy task, but reported that he did not tell her everything that caused him anxiety or discontent.

Charles rated the authenticity of his dialogues with his sister as a three. He did not rate his dialogues with his mother. It appears that earlier in the school year, his dialogues with both his mother and sister were very truthful, relevant, timely, and accurate; however, that changed as the year progressed. The discussions became less frequent, and Charles began to omit certain topics for reflective dialogue. This may in part be due to his sister's response to previous dialogues.

I mean we don't talk as often now. So it's hard to base a judgment on that. I try to be truthful. . . [But she's] not too interested from you, because [she] hears it every day from every other teacher [she] works with. So, you know, so I guess that's part of the reason we don't talk a whole lot, as the school year has gone on (Interview, December 14, 2007).

It appears that because of a perceived lack of interest or sympathy, Charles began to omit sharing his feelings of frustrations or stories of difficult moments with his sister.

Written or Electronic Reflections

Charles does not regularly use written forms of reflection or use electronic means of reflection or reflective dialogue. When asked in multiple interviews, he admitted that he probably should write reflectively more often, but just hasn't found the time to do so.

I do need to keep that journal or a journal aid, reflective journal . . . to look back on, or to get a little tape recorder or something. . . (Interview, January 26, 2007).

He recalled using reflective writing in his preservice experience and found it to be very helpful, but without any requirements to do so currently, he lacked the motivation to produce written reflective documents. He had also not utilized any internet discussion groups, message boards or listserves specifically designed for teachers to share ideas and address educational issues, although he is aware that they do exist.

One exception that he did recall only further verified that he isn't using electronic means to truly engage in authentic reflective dialogue:

Yeah, I mean there's been one teacher, new over at a different school in sixth-grade that we hadn't talked all semester. And a couple of weeks before the last semester, it had been about two months or so that we'd been in contact, but we emailed, I had emailed to her this week and she responded back today, you know, "How are things going? Are things going OK?" I talked more about personal life things. I told her my wife's pregnant, we're buying a house. But nothing, but no specifics about in that class, or "I had this situation this is how I handled it." Or I know that she's having a tough time where she's at, so I know that things are still going rough, but that's about, we left it at that. But as far as kind of anonymous or big group message board kind of things, I haven't participated more. [I focus more on} who do I have a sort of real relationship with, through school, through student teaching, and here on campus? (Interview, January 26, 2007)

Dialogue with Self

This study also recognizes the reflective dialogues a teacher has with self as a valuable tool to guide the teacher to deeper understandings of educational processes.

Charles knew that he would have to think extensively about his teaching, but was quite caught off-guard by the frequency he found himself contemplating future lessons and evaluating past classroom experiences.

I'll catch myself thinking about maybe a couple of students that need some extra reinforcement in one thing or another. And I'll just be thinking about them and what can I do, what kind of lesson, or what can I do to reach them to teach them about whatever. And I guess a lot of people said, "Oh yea, you will be thinking about them and doing that." It's just kind of the nature of the beast. I don't know, it's kind of . . . I guess it's caught me by surprise in a positive way that it would have happened already, I guess. Um, to care about these kids and really want the best for them is kind of, maybe it's just come on stronger than I thought that it would. I don't know, but yea, I guess that would be one thing right now that's caught me by surprise (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Charles acknowledges that he reflects on his teaching throughout the day, but finds that his half-hour drive home to be an ideal time to think about, ". . . What went good or what didn't go good? What's going on tomorrow? How can I change this? You know, lots of different things (Interview, December 14, 2006)."

Researcher

Throughout the course of the study it became apparent that Charles was becoming increasingly comfortable with sharing feelings and ideas with the researcher as well. Obviously, in the interviews, Charles reflected upon his teaching and emotions in response to research questions. These cues created opportunities for Charles to engage in reflective dialogue that he otherwise would not have access to. Charles indicated that he felt comfortable speaking openly and sharing his feelings with the researcher early on in the study.

Aside from the interviews where the topics were predetermined and the

environment more formal, Charles also began to discuss classroom events and personal feelings with the researcher. Often these comments were emotionally based expressions of fatigue or frustrations. On one occasion, after Charles had expressed some frustrations, he concluded, “I’ve vented enough . . . seems kind of pointless at times” (Field observation, November 21, 2006). Other instances included discussions regarding standards-based curriculum, assessment issues, and unusually difficult classroom management issues.

At one observation, Charles engaged in conversation with researcher as his students were entering the class. Each student would put their belongings down on their desk and then go over to the classroom sink to choose their breakfast for the morning. After getting their breakfast, they were to return to their desk and begin their bell-work. However, it was apparent that the food distracted most of the students. Students engaged in conversations with their peers, were dropping pieces of their breakfast on the floor and trying to clean it up, and most could not write and eat at the same time. It was during this scene that Charles told the researcher, “Yeah, this breakfast routine . . . I don’t know. . . I want to see how others do it. . . I don’t like mine (Field observation, November 21, 2006).”

Charles did not engage in procedural dialogues with the researcher for the purpose of learning and administering school procedures or to reflect on their outcomes. Clearly this was a result of the researcher not being associated with the school or district. Charles also tended not to discuss curricular issues with the researcher. While the explanation for this may not be as clear, it is possible that Charles viewed the researcher as representing

higher education, thus distancing the researcher from sixth-grade curriculum issues. He may also have viewed the researcher as an outsider from the school and district, and therefore not familiar with the current curricular materials of his classroom.

Authenticity of dialogues with researcher. Assessing authenticity with the researcher is a difficult endeavor with potentially compromising issues. It was hoped that a trusting relationship could be developed throughout the course of the study that would encourage honesty and trust between the researcher and the subjects. Charles did not use the Likert-scale to evaluate the authenticity of his dialogues with the researcher. However, in his last interviews, he mentioned that he had felt very comfortable during both the observations and the interviews, and had openly shared his experiences, his feelings, and his struggles. He expressed his confidence that his dialogues with the researcher had been truthful, timely and accurate. Relevancy was affected by the interviews as they prescribed the topics he and the researcher would discuss; however, outside of the interviews, Charles felt he could discuss whatever thoughts or concerns he had regarding teaching explicitly and honestly with the researcher.

A Multi-Source Experience

There are many instances where a teacher may engage in reflective dialogue with various individuals regarding a particular topic. One such instance is worth communicating as it illustrates Charles' differentiation of his reflective dialogues with people based upon their professional responsibilities and interpersonal relationship with Charles.

Charles had been teaching a social studies segment on cause and effect through history. As he reviewed the lesson in the text, he determined that it would probably not encourage student engagement. As he continued to self-reflect, he decided to “adjust it more towards the students (Interview, January 12, 2007).” During the lesson he asked the students to give examples of major occurrences that affect civilization. One student responded, “An earthquake.” He used that example and asked students to create a list of the effects that an earthquake may have, which the students did.

Charles then gave his students an in-class assignment to consider events in their personal lives that have affected them in one way or another. He gave them examples of breaking a bone or moving to a new school. Charles took the assignments home to grade them and describes his experience:

Last night, I was looking over those and it was an eye-opener as to . . . what they were sharing with me, because some for them were very deep and very personal, and many were very hurtful. And it was just, it almost made me . . . at first I was, “I don’t want to do this again, because I’m not trying to pry into their lives. . .” You’ve got to be kind of careful in what you’re asking for from these students, giving them free range of a personal experience, you know, I guess I walked right into that one. But . . . am I going to be treating these students differently now because of what they have shared with me? Or not? And how’s this going to affect this student teacher relationship for the rest of this semester. That was a very eye-opener experience for me (Interview, January 12, 2007).

Charles initially shared his discovery with his wife. His discovery of the students’ responses happened after school hours and while he was at his home. His wife was not only the most convenient person to discuss this with, but she did not represent anyone with evaluative authority

The next day, Charles made it a priority to speak with his mentor teacher regarding the assignment. She represented a trusted colleague with teaching experience

and knowledge of proper procedures. Charles' mentor encouraged him to speak with the school counselor and get her opinion on what the proper course of action should be.

Charles and his mentor determined that the content of the assignments did not pose any safety risks for the students and did not implicate the school or Charles legally. Their greatest concern was the realizing the proper intervention for students who obviously were struggling emotionally. Charles went to speak with the school counselor, but found her unavailable. He intended to visit her again after the upcoming long weekend.

In this illustration, it is interesting to note the various audiences that Charles utilized as he sought solutions to the situations. First, he employed self-reflection in anticipation of a future lesson. He determined that the lesson, as it was outlined in the text, would not engage students in the learning process, so he choose to enhance and adapt the lesson to encourage participation. When he discovered that some of the student responses were very sensitive, Charles again engaged in self-reflection and considered options he had as the teacher to attend to the responses appropriately. He used his wife to verify his initial feelings. Charles then approached his mentor. In interviews, he had identified his mentor as an important resource for procedural knowledge and also as one who had responsibility for him as a first-year teacher. Her recommendations led Charles to seek assistance from a person who was highly specialized to address the issue.

Charles has expressed his appreciation for the opportunities he has to discuss teaching with others. He enjoys the support that each of these resources offer him as he learns what it means to be a teacher. He appreciates the autonomy that his mentor and principal provide him, "They're not, 'Well, you need to teach this and you gotta use this

and that.’ They’ve given me my space in how I teach. But they’ve been there whenever I, you know, need to talk (Interview, January 26, 2007).” His mentor and team have been a rich resource of curricular ideas and materials, conveniently located and easily accessible. On the other hand, the district sponsored cohort classes and first-year teacher classes were not as valuable to Charles. He reported it being, “Kind of more of a burden than helpful (Interview, January 26, 2007).”

Change over Time

For Charles, his ability to engage in meaningful, authentic reflective dialogue has been enhanced by opportunities to build trusting relationships with fellow educators and support staff. As with most new teachers, this was impeded by personal reservation and unfamiliarity with the culture and environment of the site-school. He noted in interviews towards the end of the study that he has felt much more comfortable speaking about various topics with his mentor and sixth-grade team as the year has progressed. His relationship with the fourth-grade teacher he went through preservice with has also become more familiar and comfortable and Charles has expressed the value in the opportunities to discuss their teaching.

I’ve been more comfortable with my friend, the 4th grade teacher, um we’ve known each other for two years, so it’s been easier to share with her and we’re kind of past that introductory stage (Interview, January 12, 2007).

When asked if he his ability to engage in reflective dialogue has increased since the beginning of the school year, Charles responded:

Yes there definitely has been more since school has started, getting to know more people. You know, I never would have thought of going to the counselor at the

beginning. . . I never would have done that. . . And in time you could develop friendships and some sort of relationships with teachers here. . . So, it's been really nice to have those resources, and kind of, not officially mentors . . . I feel that they've really kind of taken my interest and thought also, and do what they can do to help me or teach me or pass on to me. . . And so, they've been mentors to many people, and I'm another newbie. I'm glad that they've thought of me. Maybe they see something in me to have a lot of potential and to be around for a while, which I hope to be. . . . (Interview, January 12, 2007).

Perception of Audience Affecting Attitudes

Charles recognizes multiple sources of reflective dialogues available to him as a beginning teacher. He acknowledges the availability of a mentor teacher, his fellow grade-level team members, administrator, novice teacher cohort, and other school faculty and staff. He also recognizes the availability of non-educational sources such as his mother, other family members and his wife. However, Charles chooses to significantly limit his reliance upon these sources; each source is reduced by Charles in its ability to fully engage him in reflective dialogue.

Attitudes Concerning Sources of Reflective Dialogues

The three most apparent factors that affected Charles were: a mutually trusting relationship, availability, and potential relevance of dialogue.

Mutually trusting relationship. Towards the beginning of the school year, Charles tended to rely more heavily upon family members, spouse, and teachers he already shared an established friendship with. As his trust and familiarity with his colleagues grew and expanded, so did the number and variety of people Charles was willing to discuss his teaching with. Charles has established a trusting relationship with his mentor, who plays

a significant role in his reflective practice as a novice teacher. Charles also shares an established relationship with the other first-year teacher on the fourth-grade level. She probably represents the second most recurrent on-site source of reflective dialogue even though she may not represent a high degree of knowledge or expertise. In contrast, Charles' shy demeanor and lack of close ties with other faculty members causes those audiences to play a much less significant role in Charles' reflective practice. His principal plays an evaluative role in Charles' professional growth, and while he has established a congenial relationship, Charles limits only the most needful topics for discussion with the principal.

Availability. While he has been assigned a competent mentor, access that is limited by her availability has hindered the opportunities for Charles to engage in spontaneous reflective dialogues with her. In addition, his own after school commitments further exacerbate the circumstances. His perception of the situation has caused Charles to adjust the timing of his reflective dialogues with his mentor and even seek other sources that are more readily available to him. Charles also recognizes that he limits the topics he speaks about and when he initiates conversations with his mentor. In a similar fashion, Charles limits the instances and topics of reflective dialogues with his principal based on his perception of the administrator's busyness and lack of availability.

Relevance of dialogue. This factor that affects Charles' participation in reflective dialogues and the topics he chooses to discuss was most apparent in his novice cohort. Charles does not perceive the topics of the instruction or the dialogues among the cohort to have a high level of relevancy to his educational practice, and therefore he withdraws

from the conversation, and is even annoyed by it occasionally. Charles also limits his discussions with others outside of the educational profession, perceiving the curricular or procedural relevancy of those discussions as minimal. The one exception to this is his dialogues with his wife, which tend to be more frequent.

Attitudes Concerning Topics of Reflective Dialogues

Charles limits the topics of his reflection depending on his perception of the audience. In the data on Charles three significant factors emerged: knowledge-base, authority, and protection.

Knowledge-base. Charles perceives the depth of his audience's knowledge-base in a given topic and adjusts his dialogues accordingly. For example, he perceives his mentor to be a rich and valuable source of procedural knowledge, and therefore seeks her for procedural themed dialogues as compared to his spouse or the other first-year teacher. Charles also views his principal as an example of experience and a source of knowledge. Charles appreciates opportunities to engage in reflective dialogues with his principal as well. However, Charles also does not perceive his novice cohort, mostly comprised of kindergarten-level first-grade teachers, as being a valuable source of knowledge for him, and therefore he does not engage himself in meaningful dialogues with them.

Authority. Charles' perception of authority affects the topics he is willing to discuss in his reflective dialogues. The most prominent example of this is Charles' interactions with his principal. Charles commented on his pre-observation conference with his principal, and reported that he had allowed the topics of discussion to be

determined by his administrator. Charles discussed the topics his mentor brought to their monthly meeting and as outlined by the district mentoring agenda. Additionally, Charles also reported feeling a sense of duty to report in to his mentor, recognizing her stewardship over him. Where Charles did not sense a position of power or authority, he was much more likely to engage in dialogues more timely and relevant to his needs.

Authenticity of Reflective Dialogues

The researcher, in conjunction with Charles, determined four factors that would contribute to their understanding of authenticity. Charles, based on that definition, characterized his perception of the authenticity of his dialogues with several people utilizing a five-point Likert-scale. The researcher, based upon the interviews with Charles, his mentor, and field observations also drew conclusions regarding the authenticity of Charles' dialogues. The data will be merged and discussed using the four points of the definition.

Truthfulness. Charles describes his reflective dialogues as truthful. He is willing to engage in honest discussions about his teaching without fabrication. In observations, Charles was willing to discuss his teaching honestly and candidly, but usually required prompting by the person with whom he was dialoguing.

Relevance. The authenticity of Charles' dialogues is affected occasionally based upon relevancy. Charles will, at times, allow the audience of his dialogues to determine the topic regardless of its relevancy to him. Occasionally, Charles will also adapt the topic of the discussion to match what he perceives the audience would desire to discuss.

An example of this occurred during Charles' pre-observation conference with his principal. Charles perceived it to be significant to discuss two topics that the principal introduced: the passing out of paper, and instructional transitions. In a later interview, Charles admitted that those two topics were not foremost concerns regarding his classroom instruction; however, he decided participating in the dialogue with his principal was appropriate and expedient at the time.

Timeliness. Charles adjusts the timing of his reflective dialogues regularly due to two factors. First, his mentor's schedule and Charles' personal after school schedule made it difficult for the two to engage in regular spontaneous dialogues. Charles is often required to postpone dialogues with his mentor as they work within the confines of their busy schedules. On some occasions, Charles foregoes dialogue with his mentor altogether as the questions or issues of the moment pass and other more current and pressing issues emerge. The second cause of timing adjustments is Charles' independent personality. Charles tends to not extend himself in unfamiliar social situations. This inhibition often, according to Charles, hinders his ability to discuss pertinent topics in the moment. Charles tends to wait for more comfortable settings or more familiar audiences to encourage reflective discourses.

Accuracy. Charles' dialogues were, for the most part, accurate according to his own evaluation. In observations, it was noted that Charles' discussions tended to accurately depict Charles' perceptions and feelings. He was not inclined to exaggerate details or feelings. Charles was, however, observed to omit certain elements in his dialogues with specific individuals. Charles exhibited an interesting motive for

adjusting his reflective dialogues with two separate audiences: his wife and his first-year teacher/friend. In both cases Charles adjusted the topic of the reflective dialogues to protect an individual from emotional harm. In the instance of his wife, Charles reports that he does not share with his wife all of his feelings, he omits certain information, thus affecting its authenticity. His purpose is to partially protect her from understanding the difficulties in the educational profession, as she intends to pursue her degree in elementary education as well. The second example is Charles' interactions with the other first-year teacher who teaches fourth grade. Charles has a friendly relationship with her after having completed his preservice training with her. He teaches her son in his sixth-grade class, and this became the motivation for Charles' omission of certain details in his conversations with her, he attempts to protect the student from the parent knowing more information about their child than is reasonable, at least in Charles' estimation.

In addition, during a pre-observation conference, Charles was asked if there were any particular features of his teaching that he perceived he needed to have observed and receive feedback on. Charles responded with an evasive answer, omitting any real reflections of his instructional practice. Only when the principal investigated with specificity was Charles willing to include the information. In addition to these examples, Charles' lack of reflective dialogues in general may be an indication of omission altogether.

Desire for Additional Opportunities

Throughout the study, Charles was asked if he desired additional opportunities for

reflective dialogues, whether it is an increase in current types of opportunities or completely different opportunities. He did not perceive the need for any different types of reflective activities or opportunities. Of the ones that he already participates in, Charles had differing views on whether an increase in participation would be beneficial or not.

When considering his interactions with his sixth-grade team, Charles reported: I'm comfortable where it's at. I mean I feel we have a very open relationship within the whole sixth-grade. And I've gone to the other teachers also for getting some ideas, if they're teaching social studies over there or something. . . . But sometimes it would still be nice to have more time within the team to meet, to talk and to kind of bounce some ideas off . . . but I don't feel like I'm drowning here. I feel comfortable, you know with what we've got going on so far (Interview, December 14, 2006).

However, Charles did not feel as positive about his participation in the district-wide novice teacher class and novice cohort teacher class. While he understands that the information imparted in these classes is probably important, he finds it difficult to fully realize the benefits because of the demographics of class, the time of day in which they are held, and the frequency of the classes.

Sometimes I think it might be too much For example, next week on Tuesday we have another class that's, you know, it's another two and a half to three hours long with a small group of us newbie teachers. And that seems to be kind of a negative, I perceive that more of a negative. I understand what the purpose is, but I see it more of a negative than a positive at this point right now (Interview, January 12, 2007).

Charles' aversion to the district classes appears to stem from his frustration with time restraints. It is not uncommon for new teachers to feel overwhelmed with all that is expected of them. Charles would prefer to focus on those things that he feels has the greatest direct impact in his classroom, at least for the present. At one point he confided:

I mean one thing after another. . . And I feel like I haven't been home at all this week. . . I just feel like I haven't gotten home until 8 or 9 until every night. Not everything has been school related. A lot of it has been. . . just so much early morning meetings, meeting with different parents, or conferences, or staff meetings, and meetings, meetings, meetings and more meetings. Uuuuuuh! . . I just kind of have to, all sort it out, and see what happens. Just kind of, I guess this is part of the grind (Interview, January 26, 2007).

Charles acknowledges the need for reflection in his practice, and would welcome opportunities, but perceives his time as extremely limited. Additional requirement for reflection beyond those already in place without time compensation would not be perceived as time-effective and worthwhile for Charles.

CHAPTER FIVE
THE CASE OF CYNTHIA

Introducing Cynthia

Cynthia is a twenty-nine year old, Caucasian female who is in her first year of professional teaching and has been assigned to a first-grade classroom. She is a single mother with one child in elementary school. Cynthia grew up in the suburban Midwest and Southwest United States. She took a few community college courses the first summer out of high school, and then began her degree at a southwestern university. She interrupted her education to get married and have a child. Later, she returned to the community college to finish her general education requirements and transferred back to the university where she completed her bachelor's degree in elementary education using a distance learning educational cohort. Many of Cynthia's family members are teachers including her mother, a twenty-five year veteran, and Cynthia cites this circumstance as one of the main reasons she decided to enter the field of education.

Cynthia worked as an aide for three years at the elementary school where her mother teaches first-grade. The low-income school is in a small southwestern urban school district and most of its students speak English as a second language. Cynthia also did her student teaching on the third-grade level at this same school. Knowing the faculty helped Cynthia feel comfortable in the environment and allowed her to arrange teaching with a mentor teacher she admired.

Upon completing her degree, Cynthia sought a teaching position in the same district where she had worked as an aide and a student teacher; however, there were few

openings and, as Cynthia describes the situation, “It wasn’t in the cards for me” (Cynthia, personal communication, January 29, 2007). She interviewed for a teaching positions in her second-choice school district and also considered the possibility of accepting a position working in special education, a field which she is considering pursuing a master’s degree in. In the end, she decided to accept a position offered to her to teach first-grade at an urban school. She had felt comfortable with the principal of the school and other staff members in her interview, and she discovered that a fellow student from her university cohort would be teaching in the same grade level. It seemed to be a good situation to Cynthia and she accepted the job offer.

School Description

The thirty-three year old, K-6 public school where Cynthia teaches is located in an urban community, surrounded by single-family homes. Three percent of the student population is English language learners (ELL), and forty-percent of the students are on the free or reduced-price lunch program. School administration and staff includes: a principal and an assistant principal, a school psychologist, two part-time librarians, a school nurse, four instructional aides, a PE teacher, a music teacher, and a part-time computer lab instructor.

Cynthia’s classroom is constructed of cinderblock on three walls, painted white, and a removable wall on one. The temporary wall does not buffer the sound from the other first-grade classroom on the opposite side. Often the sounds of the class activities on the opposite side were easily audible and occasionally Cynthia’s students would

comment on them. Most of the room's lighting comes from the overhead fluorescent lighting. Her classroom is decorated with bright educational art and student-produced artwork. There are two large whiteboards on one wall and various bulletin boards decorated with student-centered information. She has created small areas in the classroom with strategically placed bookshelves and tables. There is one desktop computer for student use and one desktop computer for the teacher. The desks are arranged in small groups of four with each student facing towards the center of the grouping.

Cynthia's school and its first-grade level are the recipients of a special educational grant which allows them to hire an additional teacher and reduce the class-size. In addition to this, Cynthia also teaches all of the mainstreamed special needs students in the first-grade and therefore has been assigned fewer students with the addition of two aides for her classroom. In all, Cynthia has fifteen students assigned to her class, but rarely are all of them there; more commonly, a few of them are in a pull-out class. About one-half of Cynthia's students represent ethnic minority populations

Teaching Situation

Cynthia is assigned a mentor teacher during her induction into the school district. Her mentor has taught for five years, all at the site-school. She has been on a first and second-grade loop where she alternates the grade level she teaches each year. This is her third year of teaching first-grade and her first year assigned as a mentor. Cynthia's mentor is young and enthusiastic and they enjoy a congenial working relationship. Her

mentor had a child shortly before the start of the school year, and intended on continuing her full-time teaching; however, within the first few months of the school year she decided to move to part-time, and currently teaches the morning hours of her first-grade class. This has greatly reduced the opportunities for Cynthia to engage in reflective dialogues with her mentor.

Cynthia has also been assigned to participate in a novice teacher cohort consisting of five to six elementary school teachers from nearby schools in the district. She attends the small cohort meetings approximately once each month where they receive the district supervised instruction and are given assignments to foster reflection and application of the material into their instructional practice. Cynthia also attends the monthly district-sponsored novice teacher meeting for all of the first-year teachers working in the school district on an elementary or secondary level.

Beginning of the School Year

Cynthia began her first year of professional teaching enthusiastically and confidently. She brought knowledge from her previous educational experiences and has a twenty-five year veteran first-grade teacher as her mother. Cynthia felt comfortable in her new school and was additionally excited about the smaller class-sizes for the first-grade level. She attended the orientation meetings before school began, decorated her room and began preparing her curriculum for the first days of school.

As school began, the teachers were instructed to partner up with a “buddy-class,” matching up lower grade-level classes with upper grade-level classes. Cynthia explains

her emotions:

I didn't know anybody and I was too shy and too scared. . . I had to go talk to another teacher at another grade level, more than second grade. . . I didn't know any of those people and I was too nervous to ask any of them. . . I got up enough courage to ask one person, [and they responded}, "Oh, no. I already have a classroom." And I was down and I couldn't handle it anymore (Interview, January 9, 2007).

Weeks later, Cynthia was contacted by a third-grade teacher who suggested they allow their classes to work together on a project. The third-grade teacher apologized for having neglected their buddy-class. That was the first time that Cynthia had been notified of her assigned buddy-class. Fortunately, this connection has provided Cynthia with more than just a buddy-class, she has also been able to discuss the challenges of teaching and receive instruction regarding school procedures and technology.

So, it's really nice now, so I feel like I have one other third grade teacher. You know, somebody else that I can talk to and, and she's kind of brought me into that third grade aspect that I can talk to a couple of the third grade teachers. . . And so, she's been a really big help as far as knowing ok, how do I do my grades? I have no idea how to input them into the system. I have no clue. And she was able to sit down with me and make sure I knew how to log-in and which part they go to for what? (Interview, January 9, 2007).

Cynthia quickly learned that her enthusiasm for the curriculum was being tempered by the reality of time restraints. As she continued to adjust her lesson plans to accommodate those time restraints, she began to realize that she was unintentionally ignoring curriculum that she did not have formal textbook lessons plans for. She describes her thoughts:

I wasn't looking at the science and social studies and then I started feeling guilty. . . I don't even know what the standards are, I haven't paid attention . . . I didn't really take any grades on it. I didn't really pay any attention to it. So it may or may not have covered the standards. . . And I'm finally finding things that work, that I can keep going and feel like my days making progress and I'm not sitting

there staring at the kids, doing, ok what do I do next? (Interview, January 9, 2007).

During this time, Cynthia relied heavily upon her own intuition and her mother's advice. It was during these first months of school that Cynthia found out her mentor was moving to part-time, thus making her less available to assist Cynthia as she struggled to navigate her way through unfamiliar territory.

Cynthia was assigned a student with severe special needs. Later in the day, after lunch, another two students with severe special needs also came to Cynthia's class for a few hours. They seemed to be functioning well in her class, and Cynthia found the inconsistency in her classroom frustrating. She decided to talk to the specialist teacher:

So, I said, "You know, is there a reason that they're not mainstreamed yet? I see that they function fairly well in here." I said, "Yeah, there are some behavior issues, but is there any reason that they're not mainstreamed in?" And she said, "Well, you know, we just weren't sure about that." And sure enough, within a week they were mainstreamed into my classroom. I had actually only asked about having one little girl, because she had behavior problems, being stubborn. And then they gave me the other one as well. . . And she's a handful (Interview, December 18, 2006).

With that change, Cynthia assumed responsibility for teaching all of the mainstreamed special needs students in her school's first-grade. Differentiation of the curriculum for her class became increasingly challenging. To assist Cynthia with the new students, two aides were assigned to work full-time in Cynthia's classroom.

Even standard tasks like grading, became a point of confusion and frustration for Cynthia. As her anxieties over these issues grew, she became increasingly less willing to discuss the concerns with her colleagues.

I'm afraid to talk to anybody on my school staff. . . I don't have anything great; my grade book is pretty much empty. (laugh) Because I'm afraid of getting

myself in trouble for that, or not wanting to talk about, not necessarily following their mandated little theories perfectly. . . . But, I don't want to get myself in trouble, or my students to be caused any issue because of it (Interview, November 20, 2006).

It was apparent that Cynthia was becoming both physically and emotionally isolated from sources that should be available to help her learn basic instructional tasks, administration of assessments, record keeping, and curriculum mapping. As the school year progressed, her fear of how administration or colleagues would perceive her performance continued to keep her from asking pertinent questions and began to wrap her in an isolating cocoon.

Sources of Reflective Dialogue

During the course of this study, Cynthia recognized various sources of reflective dialogue including, her mentor teacher, administrator, grade-level team, novice teacher cohort, other school personnel, her mother, herself, and during the study, the researcher. Some of these she utilized regularly, and others she ignored or avoided. In the following sections, each of these sources will be examined in detail along with Cynthia's attitudes regarding these sources of reflective dialogue and the topics of dialogue she engages in with each source. In addition, where applicable, the authenticity of the dialogues based upon Cynthia's and the researcher's perceptions will be discussed.

Mentor Teacher

Cynthia has been assigned a relatively new teacher as a mentor. Most research recognizes that induction of a novice teacher into the field of education and the

attainment of a competent level of instructional expertise usually requires at least three to four years (Berliner, 1995). Cynthia's mentor has only taught five years and only three of those have been on the first-grade level because of the grade-looping that first and second-grade teachers participate in at the site-school. Cynthia's mentor, however, appears to be enthusiastic, organized, an excellent communicator, and very familiar with the curricular materials. Cynthia recognizes these attributes in her mentor and it encourages a sense of innate trust:

And then with my mentor teacher, she knows the curriculum inside and out. And she even did the piloting of this program, so she had been through it before. So . . . she's just amazing at how she organizes it and she's got it down, and so I ask her a lot because I know she knows what she's doing. And so I'm really comfortable with her (Interview, December 18, 2006).

The mentor teacher's classroom is next door to Cynthia's and they share a commons area. This close proximity does encourage regular interchanges and facilitates the mentor's ability to stay abreast of Cynthia's classroom environment and instruction.

While physical proximity encourages regular interfacing, there is a more significant variable that influences the frequency and depth of Cynthia and her mentor's reflective dialogues. As stated earlier, Cynthia's mentor decided to reduce her work hours to part-time early in the school year. The mentor teacher has continued to be concerned about how her limited time on campus has affected her availability for Cynthia.

And that was my concern at the beginning of the year, that finding time would be an issue. I check in with Cynthia randomly, like before school, I'll pop in and say, "Well, are you OK? Is there anything you need to talk about?" And we have a checklist that we have to go over, and so, we need to do that, other than that it's just popping in to see how she's doing (Interview, January 31, 2007).

This shortage of time has had an impact on Cynthia's perception of the value of the interactions between her mentor and herself. Most of their before school mentor/mentee conferences are scheduled haphazardly and are forced to be succinct in order to allow both teachers time to prepare their classroom for the arrival of the students. This deters Cynthia from asking questions or bringing up any topics that might require or encourage a lengthy discussion.

Observations of the early morning interactions between Cynthia and her mentor and an observation of one of their mentor/mentee meetings verified Cynthia's perceptions. The mentor/mentee meeting was scheduled approximately one-half hour before school was to start. Both teachers still had various tasks to complete before their classes arrived, so they felt somewhat rushed to complete the meeting. The mentor had a district-produced outline of various topics they were to discuss that month and she proceeded to cover them in checklist fashion.

On a typical morning, it was observed that Cynthia's mentor did not arrive until approximately fifteen minutes before classes began. This allowed little more than a courteous, "How are you doing? Everything going OK?" Cynthia replied with an equally courteous, "Fine. Great. How are you (Field observation, February 1, 2007)?" Cynthia reports that in reality she probably talks more with the "afternoon half of her [mentor] (January 29, 2007)," referencing the part-time teacher who teaches the mentor's class the second half of the day.

The topics that do emerge in the dialogues that Cynthia and her mentor share include curricular themes and procedural information. Classroom management and

emotional support were not reported by either Cynthia or her mentor as topics that occur in their one-on-one interactions, though they may exist in interactions they share with the whole first-grade team.

Classroom management dialogues. Neither Cynthia nor her mentor identified classroom management issues as a regular topic in their conversations. Certainly comments concerning students, their behaviors and the challenge of maintaining order in the classroom during the holiday season occurred; however, Cynthia was not able to identify a time when she and her mentor had any dialogues that allowed her to contemplate her current management and consider alternatives. This was of interest because during the study Cynthia indicated that classroom management had become a major concern of hers, and she had spent quite a bit of time thinking about it and experimenting with her class.

Procedural dialogues. Cynthia identified her mentor as her primary source of information regarding procedural issues. She indicated that in most events she would first try to contact her mentor, even waiting until the next day if necessary in order to ask a procedural question. If the issue required immediate attention and her mentor was not available, Cynthia stated that she would then send an email with the question to her principal.

Cynthia's mentor also reported the existence of procedural topics in their dialogues. In an interview, when asked to identify common themes or topics in their conversations. Even though Cynthia and her mentor identified procedural topics as more common in their dialogues, it is significant to note that there were some procedural issues

that Cynthia chose to not discuss with her mentor; rather, she elected to either struggle with the issue on her own or eventually find another individual who could assist her. An example of this was entering grades into the computer. Cynthia indicated that eventually she requested help from her buddy-class' teacher and she did not become familiar with that person until well into the school year. While this specific example was not addressed in an interview with Cynthia, it is possible that she viewed this procedural question's answer as one that would consume more time than was available in the few morning minutes that she and her mentor share.

Curricular dialogues. The second most common topic that Cynthia and her mentor identified in their conversations was curricular issues. Standards-based curriculum and district adopted curriculum are among the district-specified topics that mentors are required to discuss with their mentees in a monthly meeting. Again, however, the brevity of their meetings often did not allow any in-depth discussions on those topics. Most of the information and planning that revolved around those issues took place in their grade-level team meetings. Cynthia, however, identified her mentor as being the person that she most often spoke to about curricular issues, at least on-site.

In one observation, it was obvious that Cynthia was interested in discussing curricular issues and plans for upcoming lessons. On their way to a planning meeting, she asked her mentor, "Are we going to talk about January or just next week's [lesson plans]?" Her mentor replied, "Hmmm. I hadn't thought that far yet. . . Good for you (Field observation, December 15, 2006)." In another instance, the potential for a reflective dialogue was not realized by Cynthia or her mentor. Cynthia had attended a

professional development class and had returned excited to try some new ideas in her classroom. She had taken the opportunity to talk to other teachers about it, and those discussions had increased her enthusiasm for the new possibilities. She then shared her thoughts with her mentor and describes her experience:

My mentor teacher had said, “Oh, but what about accountability?” And so, I felt a little threatened there . . . like she didn’t think I was thinking about that. And I said, “Well it’s all going to be more visual things.” I can have them do the paper, but that’s more paper work. . . But I can do that a lot quicker scanning the room and having them make sure that they sign . . .” And she was like, “Oh,” she didn’t seem to agree (Interview, January 9, 2007).

The end product of their interchange did result in Cynthia engaging in anticipatory reflection regarding her proposed assessment methods. However, the means by which it happened may have closed future doors for exchanges between her and the mentor.

Emotional support dialogues. Cynthia did not include emotional support as a component of the reflective dialogues that she and her mentor have. They do have regular conversations in the morning that include comments about their students getting excited for the winter-break, or their personal fatigue, but these were viewed as regular conversational interchanges that were not intended to elicit any form of deeper reflective attitudes.

Cynthia’s mentor actually, in an interview, recognized that reflective dialogues encouraging emotional support had been neglected. When asked if she could identify any dialogues that provided emotional support, she responded:

I’m ashamed to say, I don’t think so. None that come to the top of my head . . . That’s kind of good to bring that up. That’s probably something important for new teachers to hear . . . actually it wouldn’t be a bad thing to put at the top of the checklist. (She writes on her tablet) (Interview, January 31, 2007).

In interviews and observations with Cynthia it was apparent that she did not rely upon her mentor for emotional support. Their interactions were usually friendly but superficial. Their conversations were short and lacked reflective depth; seldom did they extend beyond brief greetings and exchanges. Cynthia relied heavily upon her mother for emotional support and that reliance never shifted to on-site personnel.

Authenticity of dialogues with mentor teacher. Cynthia rated her dialogues on a five-point Likert-scale with one being the lowest level of authenticity and five being the highest. After the qualifications for authenticity used in this study were reviewed with her and the rating scale was defined, she rated her reflective dialogues with her mentor teacher to be a four, surprisingly high. She explains:

I would say a 4. . . I kind of keep it pretty honest with her. She does come to me and ask me off and on as far as, “How are things going? Are you feeling alright?” Um, she will leave it very general and very open so I can ask for anything that I want to. And I don’t tend to leave anything out with her; I just don’t tend to ask her as often as maybe I should. Maybe whenever I do have a question I should ask her more, but I don’t tend to bring it up. I just kind of, well, you know I don’t want to bother her too much. . . if I need to, I’ll ask her (Interview, January 9, 2007).

When questioned further about how her delay or omission of dialogue with her mentor might affect the authenticity rating, she responded:

Right, and because she’s not here in the afternoons it may not come up at the time. It may come up during the afternoon when she’s not here, well, I could call her at home she may or may not answer, is it really a big enough deal to call her? Do I really want to take the time to? Usually it’s no (Interview, January 9, 2007).

In the end, she still rated the authenticity of the dialogues at a four.

The mentor did report perceiving that her absence in the afternoon does affect what Cynthia is willing to discuss and when she is willing to discuss it.

I'm not here very often, and time is something that definitely affects our discussions, because I'm just not here in the afternoons and usually I've always found in years past that good discussion always happen after school because you're more relaxed, when you're not trying to cram everything in and grade everything before they walk out the door and sort things into cubbies and stuff. . . I think it does make a huge difference. We don't have that time to talk (Interview, January 31, 2007).

While her mentor is a very capable and friendly person, the lack of available time and Cynthia's perception of intrusion upon the relatively restricted available time has caused her to withdraw most of her reflective dialogues from her mentor. Their relationship remains cordial, but has not brought to fruition the potential for reflection that a mentor/mentee association possesses.

Administrator

Cynthia is very complimentary of her principal. The principal was present at a few observations for this study and appears to be a very knowledgeable and caring administrator. She communicates well and is very supportive of her staff. Cynthia quickly leaned to trust her administrator. Repeatedly she has expressed her comfort in discussing, usually through email, various topics with her principal. During this study, Cynthia received her first formal observation and evaluation from the principal and the resulting post-observation conference is included in the data. During the post-observation conference, the principal was very positive, pointing out specific moments in Cynthia's observed lesson where she had done something well. The principal correlated these observations with educational theory and good teaching practices.

Cynthia's actual opportunities for reflective dialogue with her principal were

relatively regular. The principal requests her teachers to submit a weekly reflection by email. On occasion, the principal has responded back to Cynthia, answering questions, or making recommendations. This has been helpful to Cynthia and has engendered a sense of security in their professional relationship. Cynthia mentioned on a few occasions that she had visited the principal without an appointment to discuss various topics.

Usually she is pretty available too, so if I ever had anything, you know pop up you know she's almost always there and so I can go and ask her. . . So, it works out really well. So, she is very available, it's very nice (Interview, November 11, 2006).

During the study, there were no observations of the principal visiting Cynthia's classroom other than the formal evaluation. Cynthia did not report any unannounced visits by principal in any of the interviews. Because the extent of their interactions almost entirely consisted of the weekly reflections and the formal evaluation, the majority of reflective dialogues that Cynthia and her mentor had were observed to center around curricular topics.

Classroom management dialogues. Cynthia did not consider her principal to be a source of reflective dialogue regarding classroom management. Her opinion is that the normal occurrences and difficulties in a classroom should not be immediately taken to the principal. Rather, these daily occurrences are best addressed with a mentor or a grade-level team. She feels that only in an extreme circumstance, would she contact the principal over classroom management issues.

I don't think I have ever talked to her about [classroom management]. I think I would only probably go to her if there was more of a big issue, a behavior concern or some thing. So if it was a major concern or some thing that you know I just have a constant behavior problem and my next step would be to send the kid

to the principal, because that would be when I probably feel like I should involve her (Interview, January 29, 2007).

Curricular dialogues. The majority of interactions Cynthia had with her principal resulted in dialogues that reflected on curricular issues. During the first half of this study, Cynthia had been neglecting to write and send her weekly reflections to the principal. In her interview prior to her post-observation conference with the principal, she admitted to not finding the time to produce the written document and anticipated the principal discussing it with her in her upcoming conference.

The post-observation conference with her principal was recorded and transcribed verbatim and included as data in this study. The conference was held in an area adjacent to the principal's office. The principal and Cynthia sat at one end of the table and spoke very comfortably. The principal had scripted the observed lesson and had employed various observation techniques to capture pertinent data. In the interim between the observation and the conference she had used the data to calculate percentage numbers that would be meaningful to Cynthia.

During the conference, the principal complimented Cynthia frequently and very specifically, drawing to Cynthia's attention what she had done and why it had been successful. She repeatedly explained the connection between instructional theory and actual practice as exhibited by Cynthia. The principal had also printed a copy of the formal evaluation summary that would be added to Cynthia's records. She allowed Cynthia to read it to herself. While Cynthia read the summary, she smiled, chuckled, and nodded her head. At one point, Cynthia mumbled, "I know. I know." Following the conference, in an interview, Cynthia explained that the principal had commented on her

failure to submit her weekly instructional focus reflections.

Throughout the post-observation conference, the principal had done the great majority of the speaking. Cynthia's responses were usually one or two word acknowledgements such as, "Yeah," "Uh, huh," or, "I see." On occasion she would parrot what the principal had just said. While the principal shared some insightful connections between educational research and actual practice, it was uncertain by Cynthia's responses if she had in fact understood the implications.

Following the conference, Cynthia immediately began writing and submitting her weekly instructional focus to the principal. The focuses that were produced during the duration of this study were collected and analyzed and follow-up questions were posed to Cynthia in the final interviews. Upon review, it was noted that the majority of her instructional focuses reflected upon how she was feeling about her class that week. All of the focuses consisted of one short paragraph, usually four to five sentences long explaining her enthusiasm for certain events, her anticipation, and occasionally her fatigue. A few of the focuses indicated that she had reflected upon an instructional decision she had made and her interpretation of its success or failure. In one email, she had posed two questions to the principal regarding procedure. When Cynthia was asked in an interview why she tended to focus on emotions and didn't include many curricular details, she responded:

A lot more of my reflections focus more on how my week has gone and how it felt, because it seems like that's what she wanted. When she wanted the reflection she wanted a reflection of your week not necessarily how things went with the curriculum. And I just, I couldn't really find a way of making that worthwhile otherwise (Interview, January 29, 2007).

In interviews, Cynthia discussed certain curricular decisions she had made, but was hesitant to share with the principal. Cynthia had been unimpressed with the reading program's materials. The program provided students with small copied pages that were stapled together to form thin "books." Cynthia did not consider the materials truly books, stating that they didn't look like real books and the students did perceive them as genuine either. She refused to use them and instead opted to rely upon her own resources to gather real books together for her classroom use. As she reached decision she also decided not to share this information with her principal, partially because of potential professional repercussions. She figured that if, in the end, the children met or exceeded set standards, that the means were thereby justified. Cynthia was also very concerned about the nature of the math and science curriculum. She had heard that they were scripted and required teachers to read, word for word, the script to their students. Cynthia asserted that she could not submit herself to that form of teaching and would find another way to communicate the information. She was relieved to discover the curriculum was not as structured as she had supposed, and she expressed this relief in an instructional focus email that she had sent her principal.

Procedural and emotional support dialogues. Cynthia reported in her interviews that she did not utilize the principal as a primary source of reflective dialogue for procedural issues or emotional support. While the principal did not, during the study, become the primary source for these types of dialogues for Cynthia, observations suggest that Cynthia did communicate with the principal information regarding these two themes. On one occasion she emailed her principal concerning a fieldtrip and their travel to a

local retailer. A few parents had expressed concerns regarding the first-grade class walking along busy streets. Cynthia asked her principal what she should do regarding these concerns and the principal responded via email her suggestions.

Cynthia's instructional focus assignments that the principal requires of all teachers at the site-school, generally expressed Cynthia's emotions concerning teaching and her students than it did a description or explanation of her classroom procedures, curriculum or instructional techniques. While Cynthia did not expect the principal to respond to her submissions, it represented a source of emotional expression that Cynthia was choosing to employ. Cynthia reports that she assumed that the principal was most interested in receiving information regarding those perceptions and not information regarding standard teaching practices and curriculum common to all teachers at her grade-level. She reports that the content of her instructional focuses accurately depicted her feelings regarding her teaching experiences at the time.

Authenticity of dialogues with administrator. The only administrator that Cynthia regularly interacted with during this study was her principal, so her evaluation of authenticity is based upon those exchanges. Cynthia gives those dialogues the highest rating of a five on the five-point Likert-scale. Her assessment of those dialogues and her reasoning for the rating is both interesting and gives some insight into Cynthia's perception of her reflective dialogues with her principal:

Really it's almost hard to say, because I'm pretty authentic with her. If there is anything I need to talk to her about, I'm pretty honest and upfront about it. I tell her everything I need to know. . . But I do tend to be a little more reserved. I tend to watch what I say just to make sure. . . I would say that she's pretty much a 5, because I don't have to talk to her as often, but when I do it's usually very

important and it has purpose and meaning and reasons to be done (Interview, January 9, 2007).

It appears that Cynthia's perception of authenticity is based upon her conversations having sound rationale and her truthfulness in that conversation. It is interesting to note that in the same response, she also acknowledges that she adjusts some of her dialogue topics or information based on her evaluation of relevancy or prudence.

In the same interview, Cynthia reaffirmed her security in discussing aspects of her teaching with the principal:

I have always been able to feel very comfortable with her and tell her whatever I needed to tell her, whether or not I felt like it could get me in trouble, even though I still neglected to tell her some things because I didn't want her to know (January 9, 2007).

However, again she restates her hesitation in discussing certain details with her administrator. It appears that Cynthia, while she feels comfortable approaching her principal and discussing what she perceives to be safe topics, avoids topics that she senses may cause scrutiny or criticism. As discussed in the review of literature, it is not uncommon for teachers to manipulate reflective narrations in order to produce a depiction of best-self. In a later interview, Cynthia confirms this supposition

I'm still pretty reserved as far as talking to the Principal about certain things. I tend to watch, I just don't want her to feel like she has to say something or anything that will get me in trouble (Interview, January 29, 2007).

Other Teachers: Team Members

Cynthia is one of five first-grade teachers at her school. The first-grade teachers form a team that meets on a regular basis to plan curriculum, discuss activities and issues affecting the first-grade and provide support for each other. Four of the five teachers

have classrooms in the same building and share a commons area, encouraging regular interaction amongst the four. Cynthia reported that she did not interface with the first-grade teacher in the other building because of proximity and she did not perceive the teacher as being as valuable a resource to her. One teacher (T1) has taught elementary school for ten to fifteen years according to Cynthia. T1 tends to be the most outspoken of the teachers on the team and shares openly and frequently her ideas regarding classroom issues. The next most veteran teacher (T2) is Cynthia's mentor and, as stated before, she has taught for five years at the site-school. She too is very willing to share her ideas and opinions in the team meeting. She is very focused on addressing standards as the team discusses curricular options. The third teacher (T3) has, according to Cynthia:

. . . kind of gone back and forth. She's taught pre-school for the last two years. She taught some little kids in a day care sort of a setting. And then she did some teaching before that in another state, and she did some teaching here in Arizona as well (Interview, January 9, 2007).

T3 is the most reserved of all of the team's members and comments only infrequently in the team's meetings. In one observation, as each team member was sharing their feelings regarding the grade level they wanted to teach the following year, T3 stated, "I just hope to have a job, if not, I'll have to look at something else (Field observation, January 19, 2007)." T4 is another first year teacher that graduated from the same program as Cynthia. They share a friendly working relationship. T4 regularly brings in innovative curriculum materials and activities that she has collected from other teachers, off of the internet, or from teaching resource manuals. Cynthia, as a team member, contributes to the team meeting's dialogues regularly and asks questions frequently.

The majority of Cynthia's reflective dialogues with her team center on curricular

needs and planning. These discussions have helped Cynthia organize curricular strands, keep her classroom instruction and assessment on an appropriate timetable, incorporate variety and engaging materials in her curriculum, and ensure that her curriculum meets standards-based educational expectations. Although the team is a rich source of reflective dialogue, Cynthia does not perceive them as instrumental in her reflective practice.

Cynthia was not observed to participate in procedural or classroom management dialogues with her team members. The exception to this would be her mentor, and this data has been examined in a previous section specific to the mentorship. It was noted that Cynthia actually went to her principal for procedural knowledge when her mentor was not available instead of approaching other members of her team. In the following sub-sections, possible motives for this will be considered.

Curricular dialogues. As previously observed, the majority of Cynthia's reflective dialogues with her team members concentrated on curricular issues. Of the many facets of curriculum they discuss, Cynthia reports that science and social studies curriculum frequently emerges as a topic. She explains the reason why:

Because we don't have the standard [for science and social studies], just like the math and the reading we have an actual anthology to follow along. So with the science and social studies, someone at another school had kind of mapped it all out for us (Interview, December 18, 2006).

With no experience teaching the first-grade curriculum, and no formal standard or curriculum to guide them, Cynthia needed additional help and expertise. During the study the first-grade received new science textbooks and curricular materials from the district; however, they received no instruction or orientation to the program. Cynthia

mentioned that all of the first-grade teachers would have to take the materials home during winter break, orient themselves to the new curriculum, and be prepared to discuss it upon their return.

Cynthia recognizes the value in planning their curriculum as a team, but also wishes that her team could be a greater source for reflective dialogue in other areas as well. However, part of the reason for Cynthia's hesitation in engaging in reflective dialogue with her team members is her relationship with and perception of each teacher in the team. T4, the reserved teacher whose classroom is in another building, is located too far away and, according to Cynthia, this deters her from seeking T4 out to discuss things. In team meetings, T4's quiet demeanor withholds her from becoming a significant source of reflective dialogue. T3, the other first year teacher, is a person that Cynthia seeks occasional emotional support from; however, Cynthia does not view her as a valuable source of curricular dialogue because she has no more experience than Cynthia herself. T1, the veteran teacher, would be an ideal person to share in reflective dialogues. She has many years of experience and understands curricular themes and standards well, but her personality and instructional philosophies repel Cynthia. She explains:

And then the other first grade teacher (T1) I don't . . . , I like her but I don't agree with a lot of her methods and things. And so, I don't necessarily talk to her a whole lot. I may ask her a few things just like if my mentor teacher is not available. I'll ask her because she's kind of a back up mentor teacher. And so, she's, she knows what she's doing she just has different methods of doing certain things, and she's very certain in how she does certain things and I don't agree with them so I, I don't tend to ask her quite as much (Interview, December 18, 2007).

For Cynthia, her team has not realized its potential as a source of rich reflective dialogue regarding curricular issues.

Emotional support dialogues. Cynthia does not engage in reflective dialogues for emotional support with her team members very often. She describes her feelings regarding T1, the veteran teacher:

I mean just because she handles things so differently and I don't agree with some of her opinions. . . I tend to avoid anything that I don't need to tell her, just because I can see that, you know I may be excited about something and she's going to squish it like a bug. And I don't need that. So I figure I'm just not going to tell her, or you know even if I'm excited about something she might you know kind of sluff it off, you know, no big deal what ever, that happened to me last month you know or something and squish my joy and so I don't tend to tell her as many things. . . And we are nice to each other, it's just I avoid telling her pretty much anything (Interview, January 29, 2007).

An example of this was observed one morning before school started. Cynthia had received a package with some new thermometers for her students. T1 passed through Cynthia's room on the way to her own classroom. She asked Cynthia what the items were and Cynthia enthusiastically explained what they were and how she intended to use them with her students. T1 didn't respond, turned around and walked away.

When discussed in interviews, Cynthia expressed feelings similar to her attitudes regarding her desire and ability to engage in curricular dialogues with her team members; she perceives T3 as being located physically too far away for her to be a realistic source of reflective dialogue. She thinks of T4, the other first-year teacher, as being in the same circumstance with the same concerns to worry about. Her perceptions of her fellow team members, their personalities and limitations, have limited Cynthia in engaging in dialogue that might otherwise allow her to process the anxieties and concerns that she feels as a first-year teacher. This reluctance continues to erect around her an isolating barrier to reflective dialogues with multiple sources.

Authenticity of dialogues with team members. When questioned regarding her perception of authenticity of the reflective dialogues with her team members, Cynthia elected to rate her dialogues with each team member separately. First she rated her dialogues with T4, the other novice teacher:

The other new first-grade teacher, I'm pretty authentic with her. . . I don't tend to talk to her as much just because she seems to be in the same boat and I wouldn't want to put any extra pressure on her. . . I don't know what it is, I just don't talk to her about it to her as much. . . But I tend to be very honest and open with her whenever she comes in, and she's like, "What do you do?" And I tell her how things go, and sometimes I do tend to bring out the fact, "Well don't forget, I do have my special ed. kids in" (Interview, January 9, 2007).

It seems that Cynthia's perception of this teacher and her potential as a companion in reflective dialogues affects her willingness to share the breadth of educational issues that she might otherwise wish to discuss.

Cynthia also rated her dialogues with the other two teachers on her team, T1 and T3:

As far as the other two teachers go though, I'm not very; I don't talk to them a whole lot. So, whenever we do talk it's pretty general, pretty basic, nothing extra. So, it's not, I don't want to say it's not authentic but it's, it's basic. It's bare. It's got all the different, it's got what it needs to have, but I don't go overboard. I don't tell them any extra details. I don't seek them out to tell them anything (Interview, January 9, 2007).

Yet again, authenticity, in this circumstance, is not a reflection of truthfulness as much as it is a manifestation of relevancy and inclusiveness of information, details, and considerations in Cynthia's reflective dialogues.

Other Teachers: Novice Cohort

Cynthia participates in a small novice teacher cohort group as part of the formal

induction program for her school district. Approximately once each month, she meets with the five to six other teachers assigned to her cohort and, together, they receive instruction from the district appointed facilitator, have opportunities to discuss various instructional topics with her fellow cohort members, and fulfill assignments that will help her to find application for the class' topics in her own practice. Generally, Cynthia has not felt the experience to be valuable to her. She believes that the instruction in her cohort group emphasizes transmission of information rather than opportunity to reflect and discuss. Regarding opportunities for reflective dialogue with her cohort members, she states:

Not really. Especially lately, we haven't met lately. We do share off and on. But it seems like there's not a whole lot of time for that kind of sharing. It's a lot more of, "OK, now you have to discuss this with your mentor teacher. You have to try this out in your class." And not a whole lot of reflection time, very little (Interview, December 18, 2006).

For Cynthia, the class has become more of a burden to her teaching than a help. As a first year teacher, she is struggling with time restraints and feeling the full force of the multiple expectations placed upon a professional teacher. As she exists in this survival-mode state, any extra expectation placed upon her is perceived as oppressive and non-beneficial. In the interviews, she became emotionally charged and described her feelings candidly. When asked if she felt that the cohort class gave her opportunities for valuable reflection, she replied:

It has been a hindrance. They give us extra assignments to do and . . . we already have so much to do, and especially being first year teachers, getting to know all of this curriculum. The homework is not helpful . . . the time is so hard to come by that it's more frustrating than it is helpful (Interview, January 29, 2007).

According to Cynthia, the majority of the topics they discussed in their cohort class were of a curricular nature. She did not describe any dialogues during the study in the cohort forum that pertained to classroom management or emotional support. The large, monthly novice teacher meeting for all of the first-year teachers in the school district does cover district resources and programs and gives some procedural information; however, in the large group meeting setting, opportunities for reflective dialogue with fellow class members is rare. Cynthia felt that the information from these classes was redundant and disconnected from her actual teaching experiences.

Curricular dialogues. Cynthia reported that, in her cohort meetings, almost all of the topics were curricular-themed, covering topics of researched-based best practices in teaching. While the materials and class-outline are provided by the district induction program, facilitators utilize their own teaching skills to present the information and determine meaningful ways to encourage the novice teachers to reflect upon their own teaching practices and consider ways to incorporate these best practices into their own teaching schema. The intention seems admirable, the potential outcomes are desirable, and the method appears to be appropriate; yet, Cynthia, as a first-year teacher, is overwhelmed with the additional expectations and actually perceives these opportunities for reflection on her teaching practices as reflection-impeding busy-work. In Cynthia's case, the goal of increasing her opportunities for meaningful reflection and enriching the reflective experience with meaningful information is not fully realized.

Authenticity of dialogues with cohort group. Cynthia's attitudes regarding the cohort class experience affect her willingness to fully engage herself in the opportunities

to reflect upon her own teaching. Cynthia was not asked to rate the level of authenticity regarding her dialogues in the cohort class. However, from her statement, it appears that her participation in the class is more perfunctory than purposeful. Written assignments do not incite meaningful reflections, and her responses are targeted at minimally fulfilling the expectations of an authority figure. Knowing that her written documents will most likely not be reviewed and she will receive no feedback on her assignments further discourages Cynthia from engaging in and recording reflective thoughts. She concludes her depiction of the cohort experience by remarking, “If it could just be kind of more of a reflection. You know, think about what’s been going on this week” (Interview, January 29, 2007).

Other Teachers: Non-team and Non-cohort

As part of a school community consisting of faculty and staff, Cynthia has had the opportunity to become acquainted with teachers on other grade levels and specialty or resource teachers. These individuals have also provided Cynthia opportunities to reflect upon her practice in curricular areas and classroom management issues. As a first-year teacher, Cynthia has had to learn which teachers and staff members can provide valuable curricular and procedural information for her and which teachers will readily support her professional development. Cynthia is a friendly person who greets other teachers as she walks across the campus. She engages in light conversation with other teachers while fulfilling school duties; yet finding quality time to establish and nurture trusting relationships and engage in reflective dialogue is a difficult task. Cynthia struggles

making those connections. But gradually, by the end of the first half of the year, she feels like she is making some lasting relationships:

I've become a lot more comfortable with the teachers in my group, and even with the 2nd grade teachers. Because they've been teaching a lot longer than [my team members have], and they've been looping 2nd grade, over and over and over again. And they have just been so nice to me. I've found myself a lot more comfortable talking with them and especially during my recess duties (January 29, 2007).

Most of the reflective dialogues with these teachers and staff members occur during recess time, or during after-school duties. Cynthia also speaks to school staff members, like the school psychologist, on an as-need basis.

Classroom management dialogues. More than any other source of reflective dialogue thus far discussed in her case, Cynthia engages in reflective dialogues regarding classroom management with other teachers not in her team or in her cohort. Her discussions often occur during recess while on duty or after school. Cynthia describes these spontaneous interactions:

[It happens] out on the play ground or wherever we are, "Are they talking in your class as much as they are in mine?" . . . or as we are kind of chit-chatting a round. . . We've talked about how we've dealt with it and just the funny things that happened, but just a little bit in passing we've talked to each other about it (Interview, December 18, 2007).

In other interviews she mentions hesitation in speaking with her mentor, team teachers, and administrator regarding certain topics including classroom management because she is concerned that it may reflect poorly on her teaching abilities. In essence, she is concerned about her audience's perception of her. It was also observed that she did not harbor the same apprehensions regarding dialogues with other teachers not closely

associated to her, primarily because she did not view them as a source of professional evaluation.

Also included in this category are her two full-time teacher's aides that are assigned to assist the special needs students in her class. The special needs students do create additional classroom management issues for Cynthia, and she discusses these concerns with her aides regularly as they, together, determine ways to manage their unique issues and their influence on the rest of the class. Cynthia explains her relationship with the aides:

We tend to chit-chat quite a bit. We talk in class. We talk at recess time when the kids are out playing. We tend to group together and stand there and talk or after school they come by and talk to me. They're very good and open about telling me, "Well this isn't working" (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Cynthia describes most of her reflective dialogues with these two aides as managerial in nature; they don't discuss curricular needs very often.

Curricular dialogues. Curricular issues are more difficult to discuss with other teachers outside of one's own grade-level as the curriculum issues vary. Because of this, Cynthia finds the greatest connection with the second-grade teachers, whose curriculum will most resemble Cynthia's first-grade curriculum materials and programs. Cynthia has had a more difficult time connecting with teachers of middle or upper elementary school grade levels.

With fifth and sixth-grade [teachers] . . . I don't know them very well and even talking to any of them you start to feel a little intimidated, like they don't seem as friendly and open. . . I don't talk to any of the fourth grade teachers (Interview, January 9, 2007).

Cynthia did have an interesting experience at the beginning of the school year that

continued to develop throughout the study. She noticed in the first months of school that a certain student of hers seemed to stutter. At first, the female student was able to mask the stutter; however, Cynthia noticed the speech impairment was increasingly affecting the student's willingness to participate in the class, interact with peers, and was creating emotional difficulties for the student. Cynthia decided to speak to the speech pathologist that was able to discuss with her the issues surrounding a speech impediment and how a teacher can sensitively and effectively address the issue. These interactions allowed Cynthia to reflect upon her classroom instruction and expectations regarding appropriate student participation. Her questions were significant enough to motivate the speech pathologist to discuss the situation with the school principal who then decided to provide a teacher inservice that focused on wait-time, one of the interventions for students with a speech impediment. The speech pathologist, as part of the inservice instruction, described Cynthia's experience and a rich discussion among the teachers ensued. Some of her very own team members later confided that they had detected difficulties in speech among their own students, but had not reported it to anyone and that Cynthia's discussions and the ensuing teacher training had provided them with important information.

Authenticity of dialogues with other teachers. Cynthia did not rate the level of authenticity these dialogues merited. However, from observations which were substantiated by the interviews, it appears that Cynthia is much more willing to engage in dialogues that are relevant to her and to include details regarding the circumstances of events in her classrooms without hesitancy or censorship. Furthermore, because Cynthia

does not perceive this audience as being sources of evaluation, she is actually more authentic in some of her dialogues with this group than with the teachers in her team or on her cohort with whom she is much more acquainted.

Mother

Cynthia relies upon her mother, a veteran primary-grade teacher of twenty-years, for reflective dialogue more than any other single source. Her mother teaches in a nearby school district where Cynthia did her own student teaching. Cynthia's mom represents a source of reflective dialogue not available to all novice teachers. Not only is she able to provide emotional support, but because she is a full-time professional teacher, she can share with Cynthia ideas regarding curricular or classroom management issues as well. Cynthia has mentioned that she does not engage in discussions regarding school procedures as often with her mother because of the specificity to the district or the school. In all, Cynthia considers her mother to be the richest source of information regarding education available to her, and therefore utilizes her mother as a source for almost every educational question or concern she may have:

I probably talk to [my mom] more than I talk to anybody else just because it seems like I think that she knows more. And I think that she knows more about the first grade level than I think anybody else does and I value her opinion. She's easier to get a hold of, because most of the time it is either after school or, even during a school day, I can get a hold of her anytime I really want to (Interview, November 20, 2006).

Cynthia reports that she calls her mother on a regular basis, almost every day. She and her mother know each others' teaching schedules, and therefore they are able to coordinate their time to have regular discussion over the phone. When asked if her

interaction with her mom regarding educational issues has actually decreased during the school year, due to creating emotional bonds with her fellow faculty members, Cynthia observed that her contact with her mother has, in reality, increased over the course of the semester. In her discussion, Cynthia not only shares her challenges and anxieties, but she also shares her excitement and successes, something that she does not often share with others on her faculty. According to Cynthia, “Mom gets the bulk of it . . . on both sides (Interview, December 18, 2006).” Cynthia’s mom is one of the few sources in the study with whom Cynthia engages in each of the four areas of reflective dialogue that this study examines: classroom management; procedural issues, curricular issues, and emotional support.

Classroom management dialogues. Many new teachers, as they face the demands of the classroom, focus their attention on classroom management issues. It did not take long for Cynthia to begin to feel her attention drawn toward concerns regarding her own classroom management. Her students include all of the mainstreamed special needs students in the first-grade. These students exhibit behavioral disorders on a near constant basis and this only further exacerbates classroom management difficulties with non-special needs students. Her two aides assist with classroom discipline, but a fair portion of Cynthia’s time is spent desisting disruptive behavior.

This behavior only increased as she and her class approached the holiday season. Cynthia reported children mistreating each other on the playground regularly, classroom disruptions increasing, and children bursting into tears on almost a daily basis. As she struggled with determining how to deal with this surge of classroom disorder, she

consistently discussed the situation with her mother and found her suggestions helpful. When asked who she most often discusses her classroom management issues with, she responded:

My Mom almost every time unless it's something immediate and frustrating [then] I will go to the Principal, but other than that I always ask my Mom, "OK this kid is driving me nuts, can't sit still, can't stop talking, and no matter how many warnings I give him I can't handle it." She's always has a good idea, and it never fails . . . so she's primary (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Cynthia's mother not only provided a resource for reflective dialogue concerning classroom management, but also provided for her daughter important emotional support concerning an instructional issue that can often overwhelm a new teacher.

Procedural dialogues. Cynthia indicates that she probably does not discuss procedural issues with her mother quite as much as other topics relative to her classroom instruction mainly because of the discrepancies between the culture and policies between her school and her mother's school. However, there was one significant example of a procedural subject that Cynthia did reflect upon with her mother. Cynthia discovered the difficulty in assessing first-grade work. For the first part of the school year, her class wasn't producing anything that Cynthia felt was an accurate depiction of their learning. At this point, the children were still not able to compose and write on their own, and she struggled finding truthful assessments for the curriculum. As report card time approached she realized that she had nothing in her grade-book with which to base a grade on. She explains:

When grading time comes up, I'll definitely hit her up. OK, I have nothing to grade . . . So, I've asked [my mother] quite a bit about that and as far as what am I supposed to do, and how am I going to make this work, and what am I supposed to do with report cards, when I have no grades and I have tons of papers that I've

graded but nothing worth putting in the book (Interview, November 20, 2006). Cynthia did, in fact, discuss this issue with her mother and together, they were able to determine acceptable means to provide grades for the unique circumstances of the first-grade classroom.

Curricular dialogues. Cynthia perceives her mother to also be an excellent source of information and ideas regarding curricular topics because of her extensive experience in the classroom. About half way through the year, Cynthia felt she needed to change her approach for teaching math. She had attended a professional development class where she learned about work stations, or centers. She was interested in implementing the idea, but realized that she needed a chance to think through the details specific to her class' special needs. She discussed her ideas with other teachers and with her mother. One of the hurdles Cynthia had to overcome in order to implement her ideas was accumulating the materials for her centers, especially when she had no budget to purchase the necessary items. She knew her limited personal funds would have to be stretched in order to collect the items necessary for her plan. She discussed her dilemma with her mother:

Ok, well where am I going to find everything, can I find everything cheaper, maybe at Wal-Mart, and just trying to resource with my Mom as far as where do I need to go, and are there any other ideas as far as what I can do with selling, and are there math centers that are nice and simple that they can do independently? Or any other ideas that they can do for independent work that they can do kind of for fun on their own, and finish all their work? (Interview, January 9, 2007).

Her reflective dialogues with her mother assisted Cynthia in pooling her resources and also in anticipating the effects of her curricular plan on the students' learning processes.

Cynthia's confidence in her mother's teaching skills and her comfort level in

speaking with her mother about challenges, frustrations, and even occasionally criticisms regarding curricular choices persuades Cynthia to utilize her mother as a source for reflective dialogue over peers in her own school. It even, on this occasion, encouraged Cynthia to abandon the district approved curriculum and adopt what she came to believe to be a more effective system.

Emotional support dialogues. The trust that exists between Cynthia and her mother encourages Cynthia to share her feelings openly. Cynthia reports that if she wants to seek an immediate outlet to express struggles and frustrations or joys and excitements, she will often approach another teacher in her pod, “but otherwise I tend to share right off the bat with my mom. . . she catches it all (Interview, December 18, 2006).” Her familiarity with her mother also allows Cynthia to feel comfortable contacting her mother throughout the day, and if necessary, repeatedly without fear of encroachment or disruption.

I mean just everything that happens or any questions I have she really does get every little bit of it. And so just watching a kid get through something, or me catching something, mom’s the first one who gets the phone call. So, usually she has lunch at the same time I do too. So, it’s kind of funny that I’m, “Oh it’s almost 11:00 and I can pass off my kids and call her because I know that she’s set for lunch.” So, we can chit-chat and say, “Oh this happened this morning I’m so excited” (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Cynthia experienced an emotionally taxing incident early in the school year. She had noticed that one of her students was exhibiting some unusual symptoms. At first, she wasn’t sure if it was a behavioral issue or physiological. She discussed her observations with her mother, but felt uncomfortable, at that point, speaking to anyone else at her school about it. Eventually, her suspicions were confirmed, the student had been

diagnosed with diabetes. Cynthia felt badly that she had not recognized it sooner and had not spoken to anyone about it. Cynthia's mother was a source of emotional support and was able to dialogue with Cynthia to help her regain her confidence as a teacher and to determine how she could have responded differently. Cynthia generally is able to discuss openly her decisions with her mother without feeling as if her value or competency as a teacher is being questioned.

Authenticity of dialogues with mother. Cynthia evaluates her dialogues with her mother as being very authentic. On the five-point Likert-scale, she rated those dialogues as a four. She reasoned,

Most of the time it's pretty authentic, I'll give her all the details and everything, but there are sometimes where I know she would say something to discredit me or say, "Well, you should have done this." And I know she would say that, and I know I should have done it this way, but I don't want her to say it. . . So, I'll just kind of leave it out. So, there are a lot of times I do that with her, but most of the time, the majority of the time, I'm very, very authentic with her (Interview, January 9, 2007).

In her evaluations of her dialogues with her mother, Cynthia reports that information she shares is always truthful, she doesn't fabricate or adjust the facts of her narration. She also feels that the conversations are always relevant to her because she is the one who initiates the interaction and determines the topic of the conversations, usually based upon a perceived need that she has. Her timing is also authentic, as she usually will initiate conversations as the need arises. The one facet of authenticity that Cynthia acknowledges a deficit in is accuracy; Cynthia occasionally omits information in order to avoid her mother's reprimands or corrections.

When asked what motivates Cynthia to engage in authentic reflective dialogues

with her mother, she quickly replied:

I think it has to do with trust. Sometime I can definitely feel like I can share anything and not feel any repercussions of it. I also think that she can also share the joy with me. She helps build me up in that way so it ends up being more of a double positive because she praises me for doing a good job. And just having her knowledge level and knowing that she's going to know the answers to whatever I'm going to ask or at least a good suggestion for how to go about it. So, really she's always got everything I need whenever I need it (Interview, December 18, 2006).

The two contributing factors that elicit authentic, rich dialogues between Cynthia and her mother are a mutually trusting relationship and the perception of a valuable knowledge-base-resource. Cynthia's circumstances are unique. Most novice teachers probably do not have a trusted confidant that is also a source of instructional knowledge. When asked how she senses she would have coped with the rigors of her first year of teaching had she not had her mother to rely upon, she responded:

Oh my gosh, it would be a big struggle. I would probably be leaning a lot more on my mentor-teacher and the other teachers in my building. And even then a lot of it would be a lot more internal and I wouldn't probably reach out as much. I think I would be a lot quieter about it, and just silently struggle, and hope that I could manage through it . . . but it would definitely be a lot harder (Interview, January 29, 2007).

This freedom Cynthia feels regarding what she can discuss with her mother, her mother's availability, and the emotional security she feels in the relationship has been critical for Cynthia to assist her in grappling with difficult issues, considering methodological options, anticipating the effects of her instructional methods, and growing professionally as an educator.

Written or Electronic Reflections

Cynthia's principal requests each of her faculty members to submit a weekly instructional focus that lists the curriculum strands that they have taught and include a short reflective paragraph. Cynthia was not fulfilling this request at the beginning of the study. During her first formal observation and conference with her principal, she was reminded that she should be writing the reflection and submitting it weekly. Cynthia began to comply and began submitting it by email. The nature of these reflections was discussed in the section on reflective dialogues with her administrator as the voice of the documents is clearly addressed to her principal.

Aside from these instructional focus assignments, Cynthia does not regularly use electronic means for reflective dialogue. She states:

I knew there were some things out there, some different discussion groups, but I hadn't really ever gotten into them . . . I saw somewhere somebody was struggling with something and they had said that they had went to some website you know and said, "What do you do about this?" And they got a whole bunch of answers and I was, "Oh, that's nice," but to be able to have that would not be a bad idea (Interview, January 29, 2007).

She recognizes the potential benefits of reflective dialogues via the internet, but her main hindrance is the time that it takes to engage in these extra activities. In various interviews, Cynthia also expressed her commitment to protecting her family time. She is very cognizant to taking work home with her, and participating in internet discussion groups ultimately would intrude on her personal and family time.

Cynthia is familiar with the process of writing personal reflections on her instructional goals and outcomes. She was often required to do this during her preservice training, including during student teaching. However, while recognizing the benefits,

finding time to engage in this activity is difficult for Cynthia. Novice teachers often become consumed with survival and actually avoid some of the very practices and methodologies that are essential components of effective teaching. Cynthia is able to surmise the benefits of participating in regular written reflective activities, but it does not achieve a high enough priority on her lengthy list of duties and expectations to ever actually come to fruition.

Dialogue with Self

Cynthia, like most beginning teachers, is highly motivated by her new and demanding environment to be in a constant mode of reflection, evaluating current issues and problems and determining what aspects of her instruction stay and what must be adjusted. One of the most challenging and aggravating aspects of teaching for Cynthia is the ever-changing dynamics of her classroom. Classroom management procedures that worked well in October are no longer effective in December. Students who were once doing well can begin to struggle behaviorally or academically almost overnight. Expert teachers are able to adapt efficiently and effectively to these classroom fluctuations, but novice teachers like Cynthia may be overwhelmed by the dynamic environment of the classroom

Cynthia finds herself often thinking about her class and how she can improve as a teacher.

I seem to help myself out quite a bit that way. . . Sometime just sleeping on it, I come up with a brand new idea or some great material I could use that would make it so much easier, or a new strategy. But sometimes I keep myself up at night going, "My gosh, what am I going to do about this? How am I going to

figure this out?” And I can just keep going around and around. . . And I have a hard time trying to get to sleep because I just can’t stop thinking about it. But usually, almost always that I work it out myself (Interview, January 9, 2007).

These conversations with herself help Cynthia to evaluate past decisions, thus enabling her to determine if repeating similar actions and decisions would be beneficial to the students and in what situations might the application of the decision be best suited. By using her reflective practice to build up an anticipatory repertoire teaching methods and classroom procedures, Cynthia will better be able to automate portions of her teaching, thus freeing her cognitively to focus on the more unpredictable aspects of her classroom. This reflective practice is helpful to Cynthia especially in classroom management and curricular decision making.

Classroom management dialogues. Because of some of the unique features of Cynthia’s class population, she has had to spend a lot of time reflecting on the nature of her classroom management. Before the school year began, she had received some inservice training on management and a few models were introduced. She found herself reflecting on its effectiveness and what parts of the models she would continue and what parts did not work for her style of management:

It usually works. At the beginning of the school year just before we had a week long professional development class on classroom management and a lot of the veteran teachers were even in it (November 22, 2006).

Throughout the first part of the year, Cynthia reflected upon the theory she had learned in preservice training and her professional development class and its application to a real-time first-grade classroom. She found herself adjusting and adapting her knowledge and beliefs and she investigated what combination of interventions provided the ideal

environment for learning.

Cynthia was also struggling with her students growing increasingly restless and emotional as they approached the winter break. On one field observation, it was noted that Cynthia had gathered her class into a circle on the floor and were holding a class meeting where they could talk about the behavior issues from the past few days. Cynthia had seen a school counselor use this technique in another setting and decided to test it out in her own classroom. After implementing it, she reflected upon the experience and made some adjustments specific for her class. She used this modified class meeting effectively to assist her in encouraging mutual respect among her first-grade students.

Curricular dialogues. Cynthia was also able to use self reflection to aid in curricular decision making. She finds herself thinking about what she needs to teach and how she can better teach it to the unique needs of each student of her class. One example is her concern over the reading program.

Mostly at night when I finally lay down and just try to quiet down I'll think at least for a little while about my day and I'll fight with myself because I'll get really upset because I haven't had the ability to do my reading groups. And I feel like I'm letting my kids down because we haven't had reading groups everyday, because we are just trying to get through everything else. And, I know that they need that reading so bad, but I can't find a time (Interview, November 20, 2006).

It was these thoughts that sparked Cynthia's determination to find a different reading program for her students. Her dislike for the thin paper books included in her current curriculum was fueled by her reflective realization that her students weren't excited about reading them either. This motivated Cynthia to discuss other options with her mother, as is described in the section on Cynthia's dialogues with her mother. It is important to note, that other reflective dialogues were initiated by Cynthia first spending time in

reflective dialogues with herself, evaluating and deciding what she needed to improve upon and what resources were potentially valuable to her.

Researcher

Cynthia volunteered to participate in this study, so she already brought with her a certain level of willingness to discuss her teaching. However, as the study progressed, she found that she was increasingly enjoying the opportunities to discuss her teaching and becoming gradually more willing to discuss her attitudes candidly.

It's kind of been weird for me. It's kind of been like my reflective journal. And I feel very comfortable and very open with expressing it. . . I thought I might you know, be like, "Well I don't want to tell him a whole lot because I don't know him or anything." And yet it's almost like I got things off my chest that I didn't have to think about it anymore or, it really never felt like I was ever having to hold back, and it was just a nice comfortable thing (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Cynthia did grow increasingly comfortable with sharing very personal opinions and feelings regarding her teaching and her relationships with fellow faculty members. Her discussions with the researcher ranged from classroom management issues to curricular themes and included emotional support topics.

Authenticity of dialogues with researcher. Cynthia did not rate her dialogues with the researcher; however, in her comments, it became apparent that she considered the content of her discussions to be relatively authentic.

It's been so comfortable and so easy. There hasn't been anything to hold back. There have been things that I have told you, that I don't think I've told anybody else, not even my mom. Just things that I didn't think about talking to her about, or we never got a chance to talk about. So, it's just kind of, there are so many things that happen in a day that they all kind of fall by the wayside. . . I mean it's been very easy and open and nothing has been held back (Interview, December

18, 2006).

Cynthia perceives that her conversations with the researcher are truthful and accurate. Relevancy was affected as most discussions were based upon research interview questions rather than topics that Cynthia may have chosen to speak about.

Change over Time

As Cynthia has experienced teaching her first year, she has become increasingly aware of her need for additional resources, wells of information regarding curriculum, school policies and procedures, classroom management, and emotional support. As new teachers begin to create professional and social connections with colleagues, the breadth of their resources expands and the opportunities for reflective dialogues multiply. This normal evolution over time did not occur as expected for Cynthia. A series of circumstances regarding her connections including her mentor teacher's unavailability, personality conflicts with team teachers, and her mother's expertise and accessibility affected Cynthia's perceptions of her pool of resources for reflective dialogue. When asked mid-way through the school year about her perceptions of changes in who she speaks with about her teaching, she responded, "I started out with my mom, and it turns out that I'm calling her even more than I was at the beginning of the school year Interview, December 18, 2006)." As reliance on her mother increased, her mentor teacher's schedule further caused a reduction in meaningful reflective interactions between the mentor and the mentee. Cynthia explains her perspective:

I mean she's there, but she's not there as much. I mean if I catch her first thing in the morning, knowing that something is going on, then I'll that I'll ask her, but I

don't usually have a whole lot going on that I can ask her that I haven't already asked my mom that night or during the day after she left (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Cynthia's respect for and trust in her principal continued to grow during the first part of the school year. This did encourage an increase in reflective dialogues between the principal and herself; however, the time restrictions and multiple administrative responsibilities of an administrator were not conducive to the kind of daily interactions that Cynthia was in need of. With the passing of time, the variety of Cynthia's sources of reflective dialogue was atrophying and she was becoming increasingly isolated from the rest rich sources of knowledge and experience that surrounded her. This caused anxieties in Cynthia, especially with the prospect of having to face the next school year with the possibility of changing the grade-level she teaches and re-experiencing the trauma of figuring things out on her own again.

One on-going concern that grew increasingly frequent in Cynthia's dialogues focused on the grade-level teaching assignments for teachers at the site-school. First and second-grade teachers at Cynthia's school traditionally alternate grade levels every year, thus allowing first-grade teachers to remain with many of their students during their second-grade year. This looping-up, as it is referred to, is meant to provide early elementary school age children continuity in their instruction, classroom procedures, and their student-teacher relationship. For veteran teachers, it also provides variety in the curriculum they teach which can be invigorating and revitalizing. However, for novice teachers like Cynthia, the prospect of having to experience another year of "firsts" is daunting and overwhelming. Cynthia describes her apprehension:

All new curriculum, all new standards and everything and having to figure all that out which, that's a nightmare. I just got over a year of trying to do all that, I'd like to have a year to breathe and feel like I actually accomplished something all year long rather than doing everything trial and error all of the time (Interview, January 9, 2007).

In one observation of a team-teacher planning meeting, it was noted that Cynthia repeatedly remarked on her anxieties regarding looping-up to her fellow team members. The veteran teachers did not acknowledge her comments. Later in the meeting, the teachers discussed the reduction in the number of second-grade classes and teachers that would be needed for the next school year. It became apparent that not all of the current first-grade teachers would be able to loop-up. Cynthia immediately volunteered to not loop-up, but remain instead as a first-grade teacher for the second year of her teaching. Her mentor teacher responded to Cynthia's request, "Then I can loop-up. You can stay at first and then we can swap" (Field observation, January 19, 2007). Cynthia appeared to be greatly relieved.

Perception of Audience Affecting Attitudes

Cynthia recognizes potential for reflective dialogue all around her. She is consciously aware of her mentor teacher, her fellow team members and other faculty, her principal, her novice cohort, and non-educational sources such as her mother; however, Cynthia does not utilize all of these sources. Cynthia's main source for reflective dialogue is her mother followed distantly by her mentor teacher. Her actual reflective dialogues with other resources are minimal.

Attitudes Concerning Sources of Reflective Dialogues

Cynthia's perception of the various audiences to her reflective dialogue is what motivates her or ultimately inhibits her from engaging these important interactions. The three contributing factors that appear to encourage Cynthia to interact and elicit rich, authentic reflective dialogues are: mutually trusting relationship, availability, valuable knowledge-base

Mutually trusting relationship. Cynthia avoids interactions where she perceives the other party may be critical of her or otherwise evaluative. She is permissive of evaluation in the instance of her principal during a formal evaluation, but she admits to avoiding additional discussions with her principal that might result in correction. Cynthia does not feel mutual trust between herself and T1, the veteran teacher on her grade-level team, and therefore, avoids communications with her. Conversely, she does sense a trusting relationship with the other novice first-grade teacher on her team, and yet, does not engage in reflective dialogues with her often either. The reason for this lay in the second contributing factor.

Valuable knowledge-base. Cynthia must also perceive her audience to be a source of knowledge relevant to her experiences and needs in order to encourage her to engage in reflective dialogues. The first-year teacher on her team enjoys a mutually-respectful relationship with Cynthia, but Cynthia believes that this teacher possesses no more knowledge than she herself already has, and therefore, does not seek opportunities for reflective dialogues with this teacher.

Availability. Cynthia's relationship with her mentor teacher is positive and

trusting. She perceives her mentor teacher as a competent educator and an excellent source of curricular knowledge. However, Cynthia has limited access to her mentor. The time between arrival to the school and classes beginning is not ideal for deep reflective dialogue. Time restraints deter Cynthia from asking questions that may require more than a few minutes to answer. At the end of the day, when Cynthia reports having the most desire to discuss questions and concerns, her mentor teacher is not on-site. Cynthia admits to having more regular reflective dialogues with the afternoon teacher of her mentor's class than with the mentor herself because of the afternoon teacher's availability during the time Cynthia is most prone to engaging in reflective dialogue.

These three contributing factors are the primary instigators for Cynthia's dialogues with her mother. Their interpersonal relationship is familial and safe. Cynthia's mother is a deep source of educational experience and knowledge, and she is readily accessible, even during the day. No other person that Cynthia interacts with in the education forum approaches the level that Cynthia's mother attains regarding these three key indicators.

Attitudes Concerning Topics of Reflective Dialogues

Cynthia selects her audiences for reflective dialogue carefully. Previous interactions and experiences with people, affect Cynthia's future topics of discussions and frequency of those discussions. During the study, it was observed that Cynthia based the topics of her reflective dialogues on three points:

Knowledge-base. Again, Cynthia's perceptions of the knowledge and understanding of educational topics that a person possesses affected the topics she was

willing to discuss with that person. Cynthia views her mentor as being very competent in the area of curriculum, and therefore, much of the interchange that they do have revolves around curricular issues. The first-year teacher in the classroom adjacent to Cynthia is not perceived by Cynthia as having any more curricular or procedural knowledge than Cynthia, and therefore, she limits much of her dialogues with that teacher.

Emotional support. As a first-year teacher, Cynthia is often in an emotional deficit. The challenges of achieving all of the many different educational expectations in the dynamic environment of the modern classroom are overwhelming to her at times. In those times, she avoids discussions that might expose her to further criticism or censure. In those moments when she experiences fulfillment and joy in the progress her students achieve or in successes she discovers as an instructor, she carefully chooses who she will and will not share those feelings with. For example, T1, the veteran teacher on her team, is a knowledgeable resource available to Cynthia, but she avoids discussions with her. Cynthia describes past experiences as she has tried to share and discuss personal successes with this teacher. T1's lack of interest and occasional pessimistic attitude regarding Cynthia's new discovered insights obstructs Cynthia's desires to engage in a discussion with T1 about those types of topics in the future.

Authority. Cynthia is very perceptive of authority and seeks to portray her best-self as a professional educator. Her interactions with her principal are honest, but Cynthia allowed the principal to govern the topics in their conferencing session. Of equal importance are the written reflective instructional focuses that Cynthia submitted to her principal on a weekly basis. In these, Cynthia had the option to choose what she reflected

upon. Again, she was honest in her descriptions; however, she chose to share topics that were safe and superficial while avoiding issues that would delve deeper into her growing-pains as a novice teacher.

Authenticity of Reflective Dialogues

The researcher, in conjunction with Cynthia, determined four factors that would contribute to their understanding of authenticity. Cynthia, based on that definition, characterized her perception of the authenticity of her dialogues with several people utilizing a five-point Likert-scale. The researcher, based upon the interviews with Cynthia and her mentor, field observations, and written documents also drew conclusions regarding the authenticity of Cynthia's dialogues. The data will be merged discussed using the four points of the definition.

Truthfulness. Cynthia feels that most of her reflective dialogues with others are truthful. She does not fabricate information or purposefully give misleading information. Observations verified that Cynthia, when she speaks with others, is very open and forthright.

Relevance. Cynthia is affected, in some instances, by what she perceives the audience desires to discuss regardless of the topic's relevancy to her. In discussions with her mother, her reflective dialogues are extremely relevant. Cynthia is usually the instigator of the exchange and chooses the topic that is most relevant to her at the moment. This allows her to obtain the information she needs. Her personal self-reflections are also very relevant to her immediate concerns. In many cases, her

conversations with her principal also represent dialogues with authentic relevancy; the one exception was their post-observation conference where Cynthia admitted in a subsequent interview that her perception of the principal's authority caused her to decide not to say much in the conference and she acquiesced the topic of conversation to the principal. Her dialogues with her mentor lacked relevance on occasion. Cynthia perceived the checklist approach to their mentor/mentee conferences to be the instigator of their discussions. Although Cynthia had questions and concerns she would have desired to share with her mentor, the perception of time limitations and an established agenda for the conferences caused Cynthia to forego her own desired topics and comply with the formal outlines.

Timeliness. Cynthia exhibited some adjustments to the timing of her reflections based upon her audience. Her reflective dialogues with her mother suggested the immediacy of the topics she chose to discuss. Whether they were moments of concern, joy, frustration, or confusion she approached her mother without hesitancy; instances of joy or discovery were able to be shared in the moment. When dialoguing with her mother, Cynthia was able to discuss issues of the greatest concern to her at the time they were creating cognitive dissonance in her practice; these were the moments Cynthia was most likely to allow her reflective practice move her towards a greater comprehension of the application of educational theory to her professional circumstances. The timing of her dialogues with her mentor was affected by Cynthia's perception of and actual time limitations. Cynthia had to postpone questions or concerns until opportune situations where she could discuss them with her mentor. When those opportunities did not occur

within Cynthia's window of immediacy, Cynthia would seek out another source.

Another example of this aspect of authenticity relative to Cynthia's reflective dialogues is her interactions with her cohort group and group facilitator. The topics of the cohort were obviously important aspects of effective teaching; however, because Cynthia did not perceive them as being immediately applicable to her current teaching, she resisted engagement in the reflective dialogues. In this case, the timing of the dialogue's themes affected Cynthia's perception of relevancy.

Accuracy. When Cynthia shared feelings, insights, concerns, and decisions with others, she usually did so with honesty. Cynthia, in her observations, was not prone to embellishing or exaggerating her conversations; however, she did regularly omit information from her interactions with others in an effort to avoid certain undesirable conversational themes. For example, Cynthia mentions omitting certain events from her conversations with her mother in a conscientious effort to avoid her mother's reprimand and correction. Cynthia acts similarly with her principal, choosing to omit information regarding some of her curricular decisions. In her interactions with T1, the veteran teacher on her team, Cynthia purposefully omits joyous teaching moments in her narrative dialogues in an attempt to avoid comments from T1 that have a dampening effect on Cynthia's enthusiasm.

Desire for Additional Opportunities

Cynthia's circumstances and her perceptions of her work environment have created a paradigm of isolation. This paradigm creates a barrier between Cynthia and the

rich, authentic, and multi-sourced reflective dialogues potentially available to her. In many of her interviews she expressed the desire and the need to have more opportunities to interact with other teachers both formally and informally. She describes her view of an ideal faculty meeting, with time to interact with teachers on various grade-levels:

We could just almost sit and have a social time. A lot of people don't want to do the happy hour thing, and then when we get there they don't really want to talk about school. But it's kind of nice, the idea even if we had only fifteen to twenty minutes, a little mixture to talk about what's going on. . . . But, it would be nice to have a whole, just not grade level, but talk with the other teachers and get to know them, and see how these things are going. I mean, there are always opportunities for them to give us ideas and vice-versa and that would be kind of nice to have (Interview, January 29, 2007).

Cynthia also recognizes that her situation is unique among new teachers. Most don't have a trusted family member who has two decades of experience teaching at the same grade-level as the novice teacher. Cynthia expresses her feelings of facing her first year without her mother as a resource:

The fact that I had background with my mom and being able to use her and having her as my support. . . . I don't think I would have made it past this first year without her. I don't think I would have made it to the end of this first year without her (Interview, December 18, 2006).

Because of this exceptional circumstance, Cynthia does recognize her need and desire to interact with more teachers in a mutually safe, reflective setting.

And so, it's. . . not so much just having [my mom] as a resource, but having her there as someone I can contact when I need to, and tell her anything and not feel like it's gonna hurt me. And, really and truly having someone on campus would be even better (Interview, December 18, 2006).

CHAPTER SIX
THE CASE OF SAMANTHA

Introducing Samantha

Samantha is a twenty-three year old, Caucasian female who is finishing her first year of public school teaching and been assigned to teach at the first-grade level.

Samantha is single and has no children. She grew up in the suburban Southwest United States. Samantha began her post-high school education at a community college, completing most of her general education requirements. She then transferred to a large southwestern university and entered the college of education where she obtained her bachelor's degree in elementary education and worked on a science minor. Samantha recounts that she has always wanted to be a teacher and do something that would make a difference.

Samantha student taught second-grade as part of her preservice training at the same school she attended as a child. Upon graduation from the university, Samantha sought a teaching position in the same school district. She felt that her expectations and goals matched the district's values and foci. She also determined that she wanted to teach at an elementary school in a suburban area, avoiding inner-city and rural communities. A position opened up at a school that matched this description. Samantha had completed many of her preservice practicum hours at this particular school and had enjoyed her experience there; however, the position required her to assume teaching a kindergarten class part way through the school year. The class had already experienced nine teachers previously, Samantha would be the tenth, and parents were distraught and wary. She

decided to accept the job. During this study, she was in her second school year, but still within her first calendar year of teaching.

School Description

The eleven-year old, K-6 public school where Samantha teaches is located in an upper-middle class suburban community, surrounded by single-family homes in planned community with a home-owners association. Four percent of the student population is English language learners (ELL), and fourteen percent of the students at the school are on the free or reduced-price lunch program. Her school administration and staff includes: a principal and an assistant principal, a school counselor, librarian, a music and a PE teacher, a computer lab assistant, a grade-level aide, and ELL aide, and a reading specialist, and a school nurse.

Samantha's classroom is constructed of modern materials in an off-white color. She has a large window which allows the room to be lit with natural light, augmented with fluorescent lighting. Her classroom is decorated with bright educational artwork and student work. She has arranged the room to create work stations and a reading corner. The desks were in different configurations during the study. There are three student desktop computers and one desktop computer for the teacher.

Most of Samantha's first-grade class was together in kindergarten as well. Because of the difficulties they experienced with multiple teachers during the previous year, the administrators felt it best to stabilize the class and allow them to continue with the same teacher, Samantha, during their first-grade year. In all, Samantha has nineteen

students in her class and about one-half of them represent ethnic minority populations.

Teaching Situation

Samantha works with a first-grade team consisting of seven teachers. The teachers represent a range of experience from veteran teachers with decades of experience to Samantha and another first-year teacher. One of the team members also acts as Samantha's mentor. The mentor is a twenty-seven year veteran teacher who has taught for the majority of her career in two school districts in Illinois. She has taught for four years at the site-school. She has acted as a mentor for new teachers and student teachers many times in the past, but this is the first time she has acted as a mentor at the site-school.

Samantha also participates in the district sponsored, novice teacher cohort with a small group of other first-year elementary teachers. She attends the cohort approximately once each month during which she receives the district-selected induction curriculum and is given assignments to foster reflection and application of the material into her teaching practice. Samantha also attends the monthly district-sponsored, novice teacher meeting for all of the first-year teachers working in the school district on an elementary or secondary level.

Beginning of the School Year

Samantha began this school year differently than most first-year novice teachers, including the other two included in this study; she had already taught at her site-school

for half of a year and retained the majority of her students. This is the first time that Samantha has taught first-grade curriculum; however, she entered this school year without some of the anxieties that would otherwise accompany a new teacher. Samantha was also somewhat familiar with administrators and other faculty members. In spite of this advantage, there were many aspects of teaching that Samantha still had to wrestle with. Her previous year, she had entered a less-than-ideal situation and done the best she could. She reported that because she started part way through the year, she did not interact with a mentor and was not part of the district induction programs for new teachers and she met very little with her kindergarten team. It had been a difficult and emotional entrance into her career. At the beginning of this school year, she was ready to put the previous experience behind her and move forward. However, it would not be as uncomplicated as she had anticipated.

Because of the inconsistencies in their classroom the year before, her students were not meeting standards. During the second week of school, all students were evaluated and the results were promptly reported back to the teachers. Samantha describes her feelings at the time:

We immediately get these [test] results back. And they're saying, "This student is at risk and he needs intensive intervention. This student's here and this student. . . ." Immediately you have some diagnosis for where these kids are. As a first year teacher, "OK, what do I do?!" I have this one size fits all curriculum and now I need to figure out what I'm going to do (Interview, December 5, 2006).

She quickly realized the complexity of diversifying her curriculum to meet the individual needs of each of her nineteen students, many of whom were struggling academically.

Samantha spent a lot of time worrying about her ability to provide a quality

educational experience for her class. She explains:

Having no, absolutely no training in [differentiating curriculum], to me was like, “OK, hold it! What am I doing?” I remember laying in bed at night and thinking, “OK, tomorrow I have to pull this student up, and this student up, and this student up and have to do small group and I have to do this and I have to do that. And don’t forget to do that,” and I just felt like my mind was constantly like, “Am I doing what I’m supposed to be doing? Am I ever going to get these kids where they need to be by the end of the year? Am I even doing what I was taught to do in the University?” . . . It’s a really weird time. I never expected it to be like that (Interview, December 5, 2006).

Early in the school year, as she was struggling with these emotions, she had an unfortunate experience with a parent. The parent called Samantha on the phone and lashed out at her. Samantha did her best to reassure the parent and offer her assistance.

She describes the aftermath:

I remember hanging up the phone and coming into this classroom and crying hysterically for probably an hour, I mean just sobbing. And [my mentor] came in here and was like, “You’re fine! Don’t worry, this happens all the time. This is normal.” And I’m like, “No, this isn’t normal!” And it was only the second month of teaching. If this is how teaching is, I don’t know if I can do this (Interview, December 5, 2006).

These experiences created insecurities in Samantha and she questioned her ability to appropriately and effectively teach her students. Experiences like these and the attendant emotions became a catalyst for Samantha’s reflective dialogues, encouraging her to broaden the number of people she discusses her teaching with and deepen her reflective practice.

Sources of Reflective Dialogue

As a result of these new and disconcerting experiences and general concerns for her class because of their history, Samantha was in direct contact with administrators,

faculty, and staff who were in a position to provide her needed support. These interactions would lay the foundation for a strong network of professionals with whom Samantha could engage in reflective dialogue with, enhancing her own instructional skills. Early in the school year, Samantha gained an appreciation for the expertise of her mentor and the rich source of experience she would be. Samantha also quickly made a close friendship with the other first-year teacher on her team whose classroom was situated next to Samantha's. Samantha's frequent interaction with both the principal and assistant principal encouraged a comfortable relationship that allowed her to feel comfortable approaching them with concerns and questions. Samantha also had opportunities to participate in reflective dialogues with her team members, her novice cohort, other teachers, and family members, each one contributing important information and insights that assisted Samantha in her development towards expertise. In the following sections, each of these sources will be examined in detail along with Samantha's attitudes regarding these sources of reflective dialogue and the topics of dialogue she engages in with each source. In addition, where applicable, the authenticity of the dialogues based upon Samantha's evaluations and the researcher's perceptions will be discussed.

Mentor

Samantha has been assigned an experienced mentor who teaches in a classroom adjacent to Samantha's class and is connected by a commons area. Her mentor is friendly, open, and makes herself available to Samantha for informal interaction. Their

collegial relationship has taken some time to mature as Samantha explains:

We didn't really talk until we started. And then both us were trying to get settled in our classrooms. So, it was a good month before we even started asking, "Oh, what are you doing?" Now it's to the point where I can walk into her classroom anytime and she can walk into my classroom anytime and I don't have a problem with her coming in at all. . . And she comes in and . . . she says, "Well, do you think that's the best way to do it?" Kind of asks me to reflect myself. But I think that changed a lot and continues to change. The more experiences we have and the more that I share with her, the more that changes (Interview, December 5, 2006).

Over the first few months of the school year they have become very comfortable with open discussions regarding various educational topics.

With a mutually respectful rapport established, Samantha and her mentor interact frequently, both in formal settings, but more often in daily informal interactions.

Samantha describes their interactions:

I have an opportunity to talk to my mentor . . . on a . . . daily basis. We're going back and forth. I'm going over there daily, kind of peeking in to see what they're doing. So I really get a lot of ideas from her (Interview, November 22, 2006).

The mentor is available to Samantha before school, during school, and also after school.

In numerous field observations, it was noted that Samantha regularly goes to her mentor's classroom after school to engage in various dialogues. The interactions are sometimes focused on a particular issue, but more often are free-flowing, covering a variety of curricular and procedural topics as well as themes relative to classroom management.

Often the discussions additionally provide emotional support for Samantha as she faces new challenges. In one field observation dated November 29, 2006, an after school reflective dialogue resulted in the discussion of: two classroom management topics; eight curricular topics; eight procedural topics; and five conversations aimed at emotional

support. Clearly, these opportunities to glean from a veteran teacher's experience are invaluable to a novice teacher like Samantha.

In an interview with the mentor teacher, a question regarding the initiation of the reflective dialogues was asked. The mentor responded:

I think it's about the same. I think it's back and forth. She closes her door here and I tend to leave mine open. If her door were open more I think I would be back and forth. . . Sometimes I think that new teachers want to have their privacy, to try things and they don't want to, you know, be judged (Interview, January 22, 2007).

In observations, it was noted that Samantha probably initiates the conversations more often than does her mentor, but the mentor does regularly enter Samantha's classroom before and after school to check in, share information, and ask questions. In summary, both Samantha and her mentor teacher initiate frequent opportunities for reflective dialogue covering a broad array of educational topics.

Classroom management dialogues. New teachers are often consumed with classroom management issues and Samantha has her share of challenges. Her mentor represents a wealth of experience and knowledge in this area and Samantha consults regularly with her. In so doing, Samantha has recognized that she and her mentor share differences in their personalities, age, and educational training. Samantha does not feel compelled by her relationship with her mentor to adopt every suggestion that her mentor provides.

Samantha describes a prime example of this. She had been concerned with her computer station becoming a distraction to the students at their desks.

She describes a prime example of identifying a problem or concern, engaging in a

reflective dialogue with her mentor, and thereupon reflecting on her own. She then makes a deliberate decision for her classroom, evaluates the outcome and adjusts accordingly.

Procedural dialogues. Samantha, having taught for half of a year previously at the site-school, has a good understanding of basic policies and procedures at the school. However, during the course of the study, various unusual occurrences required Samantha to seek additional support in understanding appropriate procedures. Some of the more serious situations motivated Samantha to approach her administrators first; however, for the great majority of situations, Samantha first spoke with her mentor. When her mentor was asked if she perceived that Samantha discusses procedural issues with her as a mentor, she responded, “Yes, she’ll ask my opinion in respect to that. I feel a lot of respect from her. A lot of respect from her (Interview, January 22, 2007).”

Curricular dialogues. Samantha and her mentor’s reflective dialogues focus on curricular themes more than any other topic. Samantha’s mentor is a rich source of ideas and has a thorough grasp of the standards-based curriculum strands. Other teachers in the first-grade team also seem to gravitate to Samantha’s mentor for ideas. The mentor very openly shares her ideas and the philosophy behind the method; however, she is careful to not project her opinions on to the other teachers. She also recognizes that she is not the sole source of valuable information as she welcomes Samantha’s expertise in new topics which affect their educational environment, such as technology. She explains:

I can be overpowering with ideas. So sometimes I’ll just throw things out in passing, and sometimes it’s a follow up to see what that is, just clarification of an idea that I’ve thrown out there. “So here’s some ideas,” and I’ll throw things at them. And then, on her end, she tends to use technology than of any of us,

particularly me. And so she will bring things to my attention that she's picked up from technology that I appreciate (Interview, January 22, 2007).

Samantha's mentor is also skilled at asking Samantha questions that motivate her to more deeply consider her pedagogical decisions regarding curricular issues. Samantha describes one such example regarding her lesson plans. Samantha is a very detail-oriented person who methodically maps out her lesson plans.

That's how I am. And so she saw that and kind of questioned me about it. And I remember going home and being like, "Oh no, maybe I'm not doing it right." And I thought, but then I came to the conclusion that that's what works for me and that's the way I need to do it. But, I remember that when it happened, I value her opinion so much that I was like, "(gasp) Oh no, you don't like the way that I'm doing it." . . . we just came to the conclusion that we had different styles and that's OK (Interview, December 5, 2006).

Samantha obviously respects her mentor's suggestions; yet, their relationship is such that she does not feel obligated to conform to those suggestions. This mutually respectful association allows free exchange of ideas and open expression of perceptions.

Emotional support dialogues. Samantha's mentor is a major factor in Samantha's ability to adjust to her new career and grow professionally. Numerous times throughout the study, Samantha was observed engaging in reflective dialogues that provided emotional support for her, especially right before the winter break. In one instance towards the end of the study, Samantha had experienced an especially difficult and disheartening situation with one of her students. It escalated, and eventually administration, the child's guardians, and Samantha needed to meet in a special conference. Samantha's mentor not only provided reassurance, but also offered to attend the evening conference as well in order to provide moral support for Samantha. In an interview, Samantha openly expressed her appreciation for her mentor and the effect her

mentor has had on her emotional well-being this school year. In her description, she compares her experience last year without a mentor to this year with a mentor:

[Last year] I didn't have a mentor. I never talked to him. And so, anytime I had any kind of problem I would just try to deal with it myself. And it created so much stress. I just, I couldn't handle it, because I had no idea what to do. . . . It was the feeling of being alone and then really being alone because you had absolutely nobody. And, you question your teaching and there's no one, because [my current mentor] will come in here and say, "Samantha you're amazing. There's no need to worry about this. You have great potential." . . . Last year, I just could down myself and I'd stay down . . . And it's a completely different situation this year (Interview, January 24, 2007).

Authenticity of dialogues with mentor. Although Samantha was asked to evaluate the authenticity of her dialogues with her mentor based on the five-point Likert-scale, she instead chose instead to give a narrative evaluation:

With. . . [my mentor] it's really good because [she] comes to my class a lot. . . 'cause we're right next door to each other. So, [she] see my students and [she] walk through my class a lot, and so [she] see the procedures and we're all basically do the curriculum (Interview, January 11, 2007).

Samantha, in her observations and her interviews appears to reflect openly and honestly with her mentor. Her mentor's availability allows Samantha to discuss relevant issues to her classroom with her mentor in a timely way. Samantha experienced a number of difficult situations during the study, and it became evident that her trust in her mentor allowed her interactions to be forthright and accurate. Samantha's trust in her mentor allowed her to honestly and deeply explore her comprehension of classroom processes and her impact as the teacher in the classroom upon her student's education growth.

Administrator

Samantha has two administrators that she interfaces with regularly. Her formal

evaluations are accomplished by her assistant principal. The assistant principal is a male in his mid-thirties who exhibits a very casual and approachable disposition. He spends time in her class in observations and conferences with Samantha at her formal evaluations. He is also the administrator that she contacts first if she perceives she needs the assistance of an administrator. Her principal is a middle-aged male who also appears to be very approachable and supportive of his staff and faculty. While he does not personally participate in the formal evaluation with Samantha, he was observed on numerous occasions to enter Samantha's classroom while class was in session, observe the students and teacher for about five minutes and exit.

The majority of Samantha's reflective dialogues with her administrators fall into two main categories: procedural and curricular. The later takes place primarily in the conferences associated with formal evaluations. Samantha perceives other topics such as classroom management and emotional support as more appropriately being discussed with her mentor or team. She explains:

The only time I interface with the administrators . . . is at the conferences. Because we're in such a large school that it's hard to go to them with these little things. . . I went to [the assistant principal] and I said, "I don't know what to do. This parent doesn't want to fill out the form. She wants all of this history. I have no idea what I need to do. Who do I go to?" And he was able to say, "You need to go see the psychologist and take care of it that way (Interview, November 22, 2006)."

Classroom management dialogues. As stated previously, it was observed in this study that Samantha typically did not discuss classroom management issues with her administrators. There were two exceptions to this observation. One was Samantha's formal evaluation and conference with her assistant principal. The majority of the

dialogue focused on curricular issues, but there were occasional references to topics influenced by classroom management (i.e. time on task, student engagement, and her “with-it-ness”).

The only other occurrence was a unique situation, representing an outlier in the data. Samantha had an usual situation unravel with one of her students. The issues stemmed from situations at home, but were affecting the school environment. Eventually the circumstances escalated and Samantha had to act, employing the aid of her administrators. It was in a conversation between Samantha and her administrators that they discussed with her how she might reduce the affect of the situation on her class. The manner in which they engaged in the dialogue with Samantha maintained her dignity as a professional teacher, but also invited her to reflect upon her practice and determine ways to approach these types of problems. She explains:

[The administrators] will say, “Well you know Samantha, what are you doing? What are you trying? How are you communicating with the parents?” And I’m looking back and I’m saying, “Well I did this and this.” . . . I don’t want to say it’s needing me to reflect, but it’s helping me as a first-year teacher to reflect on what am I doing that could be changed? (Interview, January 24, 2007)

Procedural dialogues. The majority of Samantha’s reflective dialogues with her administrators were procedural in nature. Samantha perceives her administrators as being very busy people with many responsibilities. Therefore she is very selective about what questions or comments she approaches them with. During the study, Samantha experienced some very unusual events involving students in her class. The events were unrelated, but their close proximity to each other compounded Samantha’s emotions. In two of the three cases, it involved parents who were very concerned about the treatment

of their children in a specific occurrence. In both of these instances, Samantha was not present; rather, the occurrences took place when the students were not in class. Samantha was unsure how to handle the situation appropriately and therefore consulted with her assistant administrator

Sometimes Samantha's motivation for speaking to her administrators is part of the procedure as well as about the procedure.

I want them to know that there's an issue, because I never want it to come back and have the parents going to the administration and saying, "She's saying this and she's saying that and she's doing this and this." And [the administrators] have no idea, because that's the worst thing that can happen. . . . And also they have more resources and I know that, so if I'm really in a tough situation, I'll go to them (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Samantha perceives her administrators as capable and supportive of her efforts as a teacher. She also understood that in these unusual circumstances, adherence to protocol was essential for her professional safety, the school's interests, and ultimately the protection of the students to which she had been entrusted. Ultimately, her administrators were, in her assessment, the best equipped to provide the necessary information.

Curricular dialogues. As noted previously, Samantha does not routinely engage in reflective dialogues of curricular themes. The only exception in this study was her formal observation and conference with her assistant principal. The post-observation conference was both observed and recorded and transcribed verbatim. It is included as data in this study.

The assistant principal spent a short amount of time explaining the formal evaluation process. He is a very friendly, expressive person who endeavored to help Samantha feel comfortable in her first evaluation. He had partially scripted his

observations, and had various notes. He used the checklist from the evaluation form as the agenda for their discussion. Throughout the conference he would read the checklist item's description and then make a comment about what he had observed in Samantha's class. Often he would also give examples from other teachers he had observed and occasionally his own teaching experiences. Samantha only gave short one to two-word responses, acknowledging her attentiveness to his explanations. Occasionally, he would deviate into a tangent as he attempted to illustrate certain instructional best practices.

For example, at one point in the conference, as commented on Samantha's ability to avoid favoring one side of the classroom over the other, he commenced to describe how he avoided favoritism while a classroom teacher by learning to write on the board with both hands, thus allowing him to switch sides and not consistently block the view of the same students. Samantha nodded her head and smiled as she did with all of the other comments he made during the conference.

Towards the end of the thirty-minute conference, he invited Samantha to make some observations regarding her lesson, one good point and one area of improvement. Samantha chose to share something that she has been working on and desires to continue to improve. The assistant principal interrupted to make a comment regarding her observation, and then apologized, "I'm sorry, keep going" (Field observation, November 16, 2006). Samantha continued. Following her brief statement, the assistant principal assumed control of the conversation again, and Samantha resumed her short acknowledging responses.

The administrator was very complimentary of Samantha's observation, and this

certainly did much to enhance positive feelings for Samantha; however, the approach to the conference discouraged Samantha from participating in the dialogue, thus hampering her opportunity to engage in a reflection with her administrator. While the researcher could not fully discern the amount of reflection that occurred internally as Samantha listened to the administrator's evaluation, subsequent interviews revealed that the experience had not motivated her to investigate and consider her own teaching practices.

Emotional support dialogues. Samantha does not perceive her administrators to be a primary source of reflective dialogues regarding emotional support. In an interview, she stated:

And I don't necessarily think or feel that [the administrators] have time to give sympathy to me. . . They don't have time to, "Oh Samantha, I'm so sorry." If they had that from every teacher on campus, that's all they'd be doing all day, controlling teachers' emotions . . . And they're not even in a classroom. So, you know, how are they going to relate to my class when they haven't seen this class or had the interaction with them (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Authenticity of dialogues with administrators. Samantha admits readily that her perceptions of her administrators has and continues to affect her dialogues with them. In her responses, she describes a change in what she is willing to share with administrators. She evaluated her reflective dialogues on the five-point Likert-scale for authenticity, and gave her dialogues a rating of three at the beginning of the school year. While she does not assign a numerical value to her dialogues presently, she does describe them as improving as the year had progressed. She states:

Thinking about it at the beginning of the year, I definitely was not at the point where I could go to them about anything. I was kind of hesitant to do that. . . So, I think that as far as my conversations with them, I more comfortable now saying, "Yeah, I do have that . . . problem, and I've done everything I know how to. And so I'm just going through the process." . . . As far as my stress level has come

down 10 notches since the beginning of the year, because I know they're aware of the situation I'm in and I don't feel like I have to hide it from them anymore (Interview, January 11, 2007).

In considering those influences that have encouraged Samantha to engage in more authentic dialogue with her administrators, she, on a number of occasions identified the administrator's knowledge and familiarity with her classroom as being highly influential.

I think of a lot of it is them coming in to see my classroom. For the beginning the first quarter they had never seen my classroom. They walk through my classroom a lot . . . And, the conversation it just seems that the communication line has been open (January 11, 2007).

On another occasion, Samantha made this observation:

I think with [the assistant principal], I would be a lot more open to bring it up because he does know my class. Whereas, I think if it was [the principal], I would be a little more hesitant. I would just be like, "Oh yeah. OK." Because I would feel like there just hasn't been that, you know he hasn't ever seen them really other than in that one situation. And he wouldn't understand that that's how they always are (December 14, 2006).

Samantha also adjusts her reflective dialogues with administrators to accommodate their elected topic of discussion, especially in her post-observation conference. Reflecting on the occasion, Samantha notes:

But, with the administrators, I definitely find myself, in post conferences, talking about what they want to talk about. I'm not going to bring up an issue that's not displayed in my observation because. . . (pause) I don't know why. That's a good question. I don't know why I don't. I just figure it's not relevant to the conversation (Interview, January 11, 2007).

In doing so, she adjusts the accuracy of her dialogue, omitting topics, details, or questions that may be perplexing her.

Another perception that influences the accuracy of Samantha's dialogues is the busyness of the administrators. Samantha states:

When I talk to an administrators, if I'm talking to them about a certain situation . . . I say, "This is what I need an answer for and this is what's going on." And just very to the point. And I think a lot of time with that it's because I don't want to waste their time and I know they don't have a lot of time, just trying to get it done as fast as they can (January 11, 2007).

This perception may cause Samantha to affect the accuracy of her dialogues or perhaps the timing of the dialogues.

Other Teacher: Team Members

As a first-grade teacher at the site-school, Samantha is part of a team of seven total teachers. All of the first grade teachers at the site-school are female and they represent a wide array of experience in the teaching field. Samantha teaches in a pod of four classrooms and interacts regularly with her team members who are in the pod throughout the day's routine. She describes her interactions with her team members:

I interface with them a couple of times everyday. It's never a long drawn out conversation. But I might say, "Oh, how did your math lesson go?" And they can go, "Oh it went terrible," or, "Oh it went great" (Interview, November 22, 2006).

The first-grade team also converses daily at lunch, where they meet for a few minutes in the teacher's lounge and speak spontaneously about the day's classroom events and educational topics of a general nature. The team also meets weekly in a planning meeting, usually on Friday, where they formally plan curricular goals for upcoming weeks; ensure attention to standards-based curriculum strands, and share ideas and insights.

In observations of Samantha's interactions with fellow team members and of their team planning meeting, it was apparent that Samantha shares a friendly, open relationship

with her team members. During every interview for this study, conducted entirely in Samantha's classroom after school hours, various members of her team would interrupt to share something, ask a question, or bring information. It was apparent that the first-grade team had created a culture of interdependency and mutual respect for each individual's assets. In an interview, Samantha was asked to explain why she felt her team had developed such a strong reliance upon each other. She responded:

One thing about this school that might be different about other schools is that the parents here they all talk to each other a lot. So if one student is in this class and another student is maybe in [my mentor's] class and we're not doing the same thing, you're going to have a parent in the room talking to you about why you're doing different things and why is this student getting that and why isn't my student getting this. . . And so at the grade level especially, [the principal] has been really good about you need to collaborate. You need to talk about what you're doing. You're best sources are the people you work with, obviously (Interview, December 5, 2006).

While the external parental expectations play a role in the need to collaborate within the grade level, it was also significant that the principal had been a motivating force in ensuring grade-level communication. Still, these two influences can not account for the collegiality and mutual support that is felt in the team. When questioned further, Samantha identified another factor:

The other thing is, I guess in previous years, [in] this particular grade level . . . there are people who get along better than others. So it's kind of been like segregated. And then they got three new teachers this year. So, out of seven there are three brand new teachers to the grade level. And so, all of the teachers, the older teachers are saying this is what we're doing, and all of the new teachers are saying, "Ok, well what are you doing?" You know, and so I think that it helps that they're so many new people on the team. That it kind of forces us to say, "So what's going on in your class" (Interview, December 5, 2006).

In observations, it was noted that Samantha's reflective dialogues with her team members spanned a wide range of educational topics. In one field observation on

December 19, 2006, Samantha and her team members ate lunch together in the teacher's lounge, almost a daily occurrence. During their discussions, spontaneous conversations encouraged the asking of questions, sharing of ideas and experiences, and plans for implementation. Topics in the one lunch period extended from classroom management ideas and implementation, to procedural policies. Curricular suggestions were shared and clarifying questions were posed. As the teachers shared some of their frustrations, emotional support was garnered. All of this occurred in a thirty-minute period, and according to the team members interviewed for this study, it is a daily event.

Classroom management dialogues. As a first-year teacher, Samantha is especially concerned about her classroom management. She is still establishing within her own instructional repertoire classroom management philosophies and skills. Much of her dialogue with other team members focuses on the current struggles that she faces. Her team members are quick to share ideas they have used that may aid Samantha in her efforts. Samantha also has opportunities to share her successes with classroom management with her team, who listen and offer encouraging comments. These interactions further solidify Samantha's understanding and appreciation of her evolving understanding of classroom processes. The mutual trust in their team allows the teachers to ask questions that encourage reflection without offending. A brief example of this happened in the lunch room. Samantha had just shared how she was administering classroom discipline to students who were not finishing their work before recess. A team member asked a reflective question:

Team member: Are you punishing slow children?

Samantha: No, just those that goof off (Field observation, January 22, 2007).

Most of these conversations occur spontaneously in collaborative meetings, in the commons area of their pod, during lunch, or while visiting one another in each others' classrooms after school.

Procedural dialogues. Most of Samantha's procedural dialogues are directed to her mentor teacher who also is a member of the first-grade team. In this study, those reflective dialogues that occur between Samantha and her mentor are treated separately and only those incidents that occur with other team members or with the mentor when other team members were present are considered in this section.

Samantha is exposed to a large wealth of procedural knowledge by her first-grade team. Three of the teachers on the team are first-year novices, so the veteran teachers on the team are methodical in outlining policies and procedures that the new teachers need to be aware of and conform to. In one planning meeting, an upcoming field trip was discussed in detail, assignments were made to each of the team members, and experiences from past years were shared to help the new teachers identify potential problems and issues. The district and school policies regarding fieldtrips was discussed and plans for proper implementation of these guidelines were established. Not only were the details of procedure discussed, but the meeting itself became a model of communication and preparation for the novice teachers.

The team also is part of a performance-based pay (PBP) program. While the conversations surrounding the program usually are of a curricular nature, there are forms to fill out, and evidences to document. The procedures regarding the program are

regularly discussed, allowing the new teachers to ensure their own personal success in the program and learn the process of obtaining other monies including grants and other additional educational funding, something most preservice teachers do not think about during their educational preparations.

Curricular dialogues. Most of Samantha's reflective dialogues with her team members are of a curricular nature. They cover a large breadth of themes and issues regarding both curricular materials, standards, and teaching methodologies. These regular interactions assisted Samantha during a troublesome period for most new teachers. As a first-year teacher, Samantha was just solidifying her classroom procedures and had assumed a curricular rhythm, Halloween, Thanksgiving, and Christmas/Hanukah happened upon her classroom and created new challenges with classroom management and curriculum. Samantha struggled through this period, but found her team members to be a valuable source of insight and ideas to prepare her for the commotion of the season.

As a first grade, because we just kind of decided. . . rather than trying to cram this all in and stress them all out, they already in their minds are going on vacation for winter. We thought, you know, why don't we just stretch it out and make sure they have a really solid understanding so that when they come back in January we can pick up and go, because the program is just really from here, just starts just take off and they expect them to know how to do everything (Interview, December 14, 2006).

The team also provided an opportunity to evaluate their curricular plans along the way and make necessary adjustments.

And for Halloween and Thanksgiving we tried to jam pack three days just totally full of only Thanksgiving or only Halloween. We had planned on doing that, but after this week . . . not anymore (chuckles). It was too insane. The whole week, starting Monday, they weren't in their normal routine. We do this and this at this time and this at this time and this time . . . every single week, from the beginning of the year. So now we throw this new week at them and they just can't focus.

And so, that's what [our team] was just discussing (Interview, November 22, 2006).

Not only does this evaluative dialogue contribute to a novice teacher's ability to reflect on past decisions, but it also encourages the capacity to change and adjust plans in progress.

The grade-level team provides an ideal forum for discussion. Both veteran teachers and novice teachers initiate conversations, both contribute important information. While the veteran teachers hold the important resource of experience, the novice teachers bring understanding of contemporary educational philosophy and models, and a competency in technology. It is a mutually beneficial relationship for all seven members. Samantha describes how she, as a novice teacher, benefits from the interactions:

We do have an adopted science, but we didn't or an adopted social studies. So we're trying to integrate it into the reading and math program that we have. And, so, then the process of that involved going to the veteran teachers and they've been saying, "What do you do? How do you teach science? You have no materials, nothing. What do you do?" And they would kind of pull out examples from other years and say, "Well this is what I'm going to do." And then we'd go from there. . . I remember the first month they would say, "You guys just look like you're overwhelmed." (laugh) Of course we are! (Interview, December 5, 2006).

Samantha recognizes the value of her collaborative team and the unique qualities her team possesses this year, especially as she reflects back on her first experiences with her kindergarten team from the previous year at the same school.

Emotional support dialogues. Samantha's team members have become an important source of emotional support during her first year of teaching. Her teams shares a common curriculum and common challenges unique to the grade-level. Samantha's

reliance upon them has developed as the year has progressed. She explains:

At first I think that maybe . . . at first when I brought it up it was really because I needed the input. I needed to know what to do. And then as I'm trying things that they're suggesting, it's just not working. . . You know, their suggestions are, "We really don't know what to do." And then in that case it's like OK, whenever I talk about [a particular student] it's really not, not because I need any input. . . So when it's that case, it really is just sympathy (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Towards the beginning of the school year, she perceived her team as a source of information. As her trust and comfort level increased, she also began to view her team members as valuable contributors to her emotional wellbeing as a new teacher. Samantha not only commiserates with her team members over the discouraging or difficult events, but also celebrates moments of improvement and growth.

I'll say, "Oh, look at this students." And [they'll] say, "Remember this, look at mine, look at mine." And I could say, "Remember this and look at mine. See how much they've improved." So we were able to talk about our successes with the students (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Authenticity of dialogues with team members. Samantha rated the authenticity of her reflective dialogues with her team members on the five-point Likert-scale. She reported that at the beginning of the school year, it was probably about a three. She describes why she was hesitant to be more authentic in her interactions with them:

Like maybe they were going to think, "What is she doing over there to cause that problem to happen?" And I didn't, as a new teacher and a new team member, I didn't want them thinking that she doesn't even know how to handle her class. I thought, I want to be a strong link in the team. I don't want to be this weak link. So, I think that had a lot to do with it at first (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Her concerns caused Samantha to withhold a certain amount of accuracy in her dialogues, often omitting events and concerns in order to conceal what she thought might be perceived by her team as weakness or a lack of competency.

As the year has progressed and her interpersonal relationships with her team members have stabilized, she expresses a greater willingness to candidly participate in reflective dialogues with her team.

And as the year's gone on, I've become more comfortable as I've gotten to know the other classes and the dynamics of it and teachers have shared more. I'm more comfortable now talking to them about it (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Throughout the study, Samantha was observed to participate in reflective dialogue with her team members in ways that enhanced the level of authenticity. Her regular, daily interactions with team members allowed Samantha's discussions to be very timely and relevant to her immediate needs and concerns. The regular planning meetings and constant group-evaluation of current curricular needs and strategies allowed for timely discussions of lesson plans, goals, schedules, and future needs. Samantha felt comfortable discussing issues that were relevant to her as a classroom teacher and as an individual.

Other Teacher: Megan

Samantha has one particular teacher on her first-grade team that she reflectively dialogues with on such a frequent basis that it is necessary to discuss the nature of these dialogues independent of the team dialogues. The data presented in this section occurred in dialogues strictly between Samantha and another first-year teacher, Megan. Data was also collected during in-depth interviews with Samantha and Megan, as she participated in the study as a secondary subject.

Megan graduated with her bachelor's degree in education a few years before

Samantha, but postponed her entrance into the field until after she had completed a master's degree in elementary education. This year marks her first year as a full-time teacher. Megan's classroom is next to Samantha's classroom and they share the central commons area with two other teachers, one is Samantha's mentor and the other is a veteran teacher who acts as Megan's mentor.

Samantha and Megan quickly developed not only an interdependent working relationship, but also a close friendship. Because they are both first year teachers, they openly share experiences and frustrations with each other, ask questions about procedures and policies, plan curriculum, and discuss classroom management issues on almost a daily basis. Samantha's mentor commented on Samantha and Megan's relationship and her perception of their interdependency has developed:

I think I've noticed that the relationship between the younger teachers has strengthened. They're going to each other more. . . And, I think, and I know that I see [Samantha] as a leader in the group of new teachers. And she likes to feel that. . . So I see that's her chance to have a leadership role (Interview, January 22, 2007).

Both Samantha and Megan agreed that their similar preservice training encourages them to collaborate as they plan their curriculum. Samantha stated:

As far as on a planning basis, where I'm coming from with my education. . . [and] as far as, what I'm used to and what I've been trained in, I go to Megan because we've been trained on a similar program. . . And so, in [the area of curriculum], I guess that's where I have most of my conversations (Interview, November 22, 2006).

Megan, in her interview, described how their similar preservice background has enhanced their working relationship, "I think for the most part we're pretty much on the same page, and I think that's why we work so well together. It's that we really just click" (Interview,

January 22, 2007). Field observations elucidated the number of topics that Samantha and Megan discuss. Most joint planning meetings between the two teachers resulted in a fluid discussion of curricular and procedural topics, with questions posed by both teachers, and ideas, philosophies, and opinions shared equally by both.

The close proximity of their classrooms expedites the frequent interactions Samantha and Megan share. When asked which of them initiates the dialogues most often, Megan responded, “It depends on who’s here first. If I’m here first, and she comes in and sees that I’m here, she comes to me. And if she’s here first and I come in, I go see her. So it’s both of us really” (Interview, January 22, 2007). When further questioned about the nature of the daily spontaneous interactions, Megan described them as frequent and multi-themed. In her interview, when asked when those spontaneous reflective dialogues were most likely to occur, she described how she and Samantha interact throughout the whole day:

I mean it is because we check-in with each other in the morning. . . And during the day we see each other, we’ll talk about how the morning went. After school we’re either talking about the next day or we’re planning for the next week. We’re talking about any problems we have in class. So really, we’re talking all day long. And there are even times that after school we’ll call each other on the phone and talk more about something that we forgot while we were there. So it’s all day (Interview, January 22, 2007).

Megan recognizes that Samantha has become her dominant source for reflective dialogue, even surpassing her mentor; however, she recognizes that Samantha engages in reflective dialogues with multiple sources including her own mentor and other teachers. This further corroborated the observations that suggest that Samantha has created a valuable

network of sources for reflective dialogue, and that she utilizes each of those sources often and decisively.

Classroom management dialogues. Novice teachers have a tendency to focus their attention on classroom management issues. While Samantha and Megan's dialogues were not overly inundated with management themes, they did regularly share concerns, experiences and ideas with each other. Samantha and Megan know each other's students well and they can discuss the various dynamics of their classrooms easily. Samantha has one student, in particular, that she is consistently concerned. She often will give Megan an update on the latest daily occurrence, most of the time to engage in a dialogue for emotional support.

At one point in the study, Samantha decided to change her seating arrangement. She had spent some time contemplating what she felt would enhance good behavior and discourage some of the management issues she had struggled with. After determining the desk configuration, she consulted with Megan. Megan shared her personal experiences from her classroom and her experiences with different desk configurations.

Procedural dialogues. Because both Samantha and Megan are new teachers, it would not seem probably that they would rely on each other as sources of procedural information. Samantha does usually discuss procedural issues with her mentor, and in more severe circumstances, with her administrators. However, it was observed on numerous occasions that Samantha and Megan would engage in reflective dialogues that were procedural in nature. Megan appeared to rely upon Samantha for her knowledge and experience in procedures, even though she was only senior to Megan by one

semester. Megan states:

I think a lot of it also is that she is a little bit more familiar with this school because she spent a semester here last year. Whereas my student teaching was in the district, but at a different school. So me coming to [the site-school] was a big jump. I didn't know anybody here. I wasn't familiar with how things really work at this school. So, because she's had the prior experience, that helps too. She kind of walks me through things (Interview, January 22, 2007).

These instances provided Samantha with the opportunity to check the accuracy of her procedural knowledge and recognize issues that she needed further clarification on.

Curricular dialogues. Samantha and Megan meet together every Thursday to review their past week and plan their next week's lessons. This naturally leads to opportunities for both Samantha and Megan to engage in reflective dialogues that focus on curricular subjects. Samantha does not participate in this type of detailed planning with any other faculty or staff member at the site-school. In one field observation that serves as an example, Samantha and Megan reviewed math exercises they had used to teach odd and even integers to their first-graders. They discussed their observations that some of their students were still struggling to understand the concept. They compared the strategies they had used to teach the concept and then discussed possible alternatives, using visuals to assist the students who were still having difficulties.

In another observation that took place before the holiday season, Samantha discussed with Megan a classroom difficulty. One of Samantha's students is a member of a religious denomination that does not celebrate holidays. Samantha had not considered this potential challenge as she had planned various classroom activities around holiday themes. She spoke to Megan about the issue and the two of them discussed various alternatives for the student that would allow the student to feel

comfortable and, at the same time, raise awareness and tolerance for the rest of Samantha's class.

Their planning sessions allow both Samantha and Megan to reflect in an anticipatory mode, thinking about upcoming lessons, potential obstacles, and necessary differentiation for their students' varying educational and emotional needs. They also regularly engage in evaluative reflection, discussing past lessons, problems they encountered, and successes they have experienced. They speak candidly and specifically about their frustration or satisfaction regarding curricular materials.

Emotional support dialogues. Both Samantha and Megan have come to rely upon each other for emotional support. They both feel that having another first-year teacher with whom they can discuss their anxieties and recount emotional moments with is helpful and supportive. Megan describes their mutually encouraging relationship:

She has been a really great asset this first part of this first year just because it is my first year. It's been intimidating, scary, any kind emotion you can think of, and she's really helped put my mind at ease and she's given me a lot of confidence. And we like to share our ideas. And I think that makes it a little more fun. I feel like when what I'm doing is not working, I can go talk to her. And we're in the same age group and so we can kind of relate to each other. . . So, she's not just a co-worker, she's also become a friend (Interview, January 22, 2007).

Samantha experienced a series of very discouraging and worrisome events. During these events, as she endeavored to mediate the situations and reduce the events' impact upon the rest of her class, she would turn to a variety of sources for help. As was discussed earlier, she relied on the administration to assist her with procedural issues. She consulted with her mentor in order to obtain additional procedural information and ideas for intervention. In addition to these sources replete with experience, she turned to

Megan, a relatively inexperienced teacher, for support and sympathy. She describes one situation:

I go to her after a long day and she can say, “Oh I’ve had those days.” You know. Or today, she said, “Let me buy you a candy bar.” It’s just, I think it’s just the emotional support that she lends here (Interview, January 24, 2007).

Authenticity of dialogues with Megan. Samantha rated her dialogues with Megan as very authentic. In an interview, she describes why she feels her interactions with Megan are truthful, relevant, timely, and accurate:

Because Megan interacts with my class a lot . . . so [she] sees my students and [she] walks through my class a lot, and so [my team] sees the procedures and we’re all basically do the curriculum. . . And I feel like [Megan] as the first year teacher, I can go to her and say, “Are you having the same problem?” And she can tell me, “Oh yeah, I have so and so. My class is the same way.” So I think, as far as Megan, I think a lot of it is trying to feel like someone is in the same situation as I am (Interview, January 11, 2007).

The proximity of Megan’s classroom and their similar tenure of teaching have created a climate favorable to camaraderie. Samantha describes her comfort level with Julie in contrast to her tentativeness in fully disclosing difficulties or questions she may have regarding her teaching with other teachers:

I know what [Megan is] going through, and she’s going to listen and she’s not going to judge based on what’s going on or what happens. Or, because sometimes if you’re talking to somebody . . . it’s not happened very many times, but someone will say, “Well, why did it even get to that point?” And I’m thinking, “I don’t know, but it just happened. And now I need an answer.” And so, sometimes when that happens, you know, I’m a little hesitant, ‘cause I know that it is my fault. But at the same time, I need to know how to fix it (January 11, 2007).

The trust that they have engendered and their perception of protection from evaluation, have further encouraged frank and descriptive dialogues between the two of them.

Other Teachers: Novice Cohort

Samantha participates in the novice teacher cohort group as do all first-year teachers in her school district. The cohort consists of a small number of elementary teachers teaching at schools in close proximity to each other. The class curriculum is determined by the district; however, the district appointed facilitator determines the structure of the class and the presentation of the material. For Samantha, it has been a positive experience, one that allows her additional opportunities to reflect on her teaching in a structured format, prompted by topics pertinent to classroom instruction.

We would reflect, but just only on that particular part of the model. . . You can't just go in and reflect on anything. Like, they direct you on what you're going to reflect on and it's never a formal, you have to turn in anything for work. It's kind of just talking about what you see going on. . . And the more I think about it, the more I'm thinking that was a really valuable thing for me to do, to sit down and do that. . . It's not necessarily something you're going to sit down and formally do (Interview, December 5, 2006).

While the topics vary in each class period, during this study, they all focused on curricular issues. Samantha indicated very little dialogue focused on emotional support or procedural issues.

Curricular dialogues. Samantha's novice cohort is designed to initiate reflective dialogues among class members and reflective thought in the individuals. The class' facilitator is an administrator from another elementary school who is able to contribute year's worth of experience as a teacher and school leader to the class' reflective dialogues. Samantha recognizes this as a great benefit to the class:

During the class, it's really nice, she's an administrator at another school, so, we can discuss. "Well this is what's going on in our school." And then she can say, "Oh, well we don't do it that way," or, "Oh, well from another administrator's point of view. . ." So that's been nice getting another person's point of view on a

situation because in that class they really pinpoint specific situations, and so, we're sharing personal experiences and then she can say, can give us her insight. And so that's been really helpful (Interview, January 24, 2007).

Data regarding the cohort class Samantha attends was not directly collected by field observations for this study; however, Samantha received assignments to encourage reflection during the interim between class sessions and to promote further reflective dialogue among class members in future meetings. In a field observation on January 15, 2007, Samantha and Megan, another first-year teacher, discussed the instructional content of their most recent novice cohort class regarding classroom engagement. Regarding the training and example they had received in the latest class regarding classroom engagement, Samantha commented to the researcher:

I looked at this, and I am paranoid about it after the training . . . (She shows the researcher a sample lesson plan they received from the cohort meeting.) It is extremely detailed. Yeah, there's no way I can do this!

Despite their concerns regarding their ability to reproduce lesson plans with equal detail, the concepts taught in the class had an impact on Samantha's reflective dialogues with herself. She referenced its affects on her lesson planning and her personal evaluations of classroom instruction:

So now I'm thinking, everything I do I'm thinking, "Is this engaging? Is this engaging?" Or, I went to [my mentor] this morning and asked, "How can I make my activities more engaging?" And she was able to give me some ideas. And normally I wouldn't have even thought, "Is my activity engaging?" And now when I do an activity, like today when I was reading out of the book, I was like, "Ah! I need to figure out some way to make this exciting." . . . I wouldn't have even known that had I not gone to that class and had the opportunity. . . We were supposed to look in our lessons this week for what is engaging and what do you need to change, and, so I think that's been a big help too (January 24, 2007).

The instruction in Samantha's cohort class encourages Samantha to reflect upon her own

teaching, discuss her curricular and instructional decisions with others around her and prepares her for further discussion and evaluation with the cohort's members in subsequent class sessions.

Authenticity of dialogues with novice cohort class. Samantha did not rate the authenticity of her reflective dialogues with members of her novice cohort class for this study. However, she does mention her willingness to communicate with her cohort members outside of class:

And then there are some teachers [in the cohort class] at the school where I was at (student teaching assignment) that I kind of talk to. I will say, "Oh how are [former students]?" . . . And, they've been sending me their tests, and kind of giving me neat things as a new teacher that I wouldn't have otherwise (Interview, January 24, 2007).

In addition to these teachers, Megan, Samantha's friend and another first-year teacher at the site-school, is a member of the cohort class. As discussed earlier in the sub-section studying Megan, Samantha and Megan's dialogues are extremely authentic and rich. It is assumed in this study that the same conditions would exist between Samantha and Megan in the novice cohort class as well.

Mother

Samantha discusses her teaching and her classroom experiences often with her family members, especially her mother. Her mother, while not a professional educator, volunteers in Samantha's classroom on a regular basis and has been very familiar with the composition of students and the nature of the curriculum. Because of the emotional security Samantha feels with her mother coupled with her mother's familiarity with

Samantha's class, Samantha participates in reflective dialogues with her mother on almost a daily basis. She explains:

Our family goes home every night like, I don't live at home and my sister doesn't live at home, but we eat dinner together every night as a family, and so, every night I see [my mom] and I talk to her about it. . . "You want to hear what happened today?" or . . . it's more like, "I want some sympathy from you!" (laugh) With my mom, she . . . will help me out . . . and I can say, "I'm overwhelmed, I need help" (Interview, November 22, 2006).

As Samantha described the nature of her educational discussions with her mother during this study, it became apparent that most of their conversations focused on emotional support. While Samantha does discuss classroom management problems with her mother, Samantha's purpose in the conversation was generally not to evaluate past decisions or deliberate over future actions; rather, it was to share a narration of a memorable occurrence and solicit an empathetic discussion. Samantha does engage in dialogues with her mother concerning curricular and procedural topics as an outlet for emotions, but did not perceive her mother to be a source of valuable dialogue concerning procedural or curricular information as her mother is not specifically knowledgeable in the site-school's procedures or in issues regarding standards-based curriculum.

Emotional support dialogues. Samantha has experienced many emotions during her first year of teaching, ranging from exhilaration to discouragement and frustration. At the beginning of the school year, she was very hesitant to share these very sincere emotions with any of her fellow faculty members. Her mother represented a safe source for these dialogues. As the year has progressed, Samantha has expanded the number of people she is willing to discuss her emotions with, but her mother consistently remains the single most common outlet Samantha uses for reflective dialogues for emotional

support.

Samantha's mother volunteers in Samantha's classroom and this further encourages reflective dialogues specific to Samantha's teaching experience. Samantha discusses this effect:

My mom comes and will . . . come in my classroom a couple days a week. And so she knows all of the kids, and so . . . she knows what's going on, and this is happening. And she's, "Oh, well do this." Or, "Oh, take this to so and so," you know. "[student's name], will like this. Take this to [student's name]." So that helps to have that support system (Interview November 22, 2006).

Samantha not only draws upon her mother's support during emotional difficult times, but also enjoys discussing with her mother the successes in the classroom. Samantha states, "I always share [the positive experiences] with my family, 'cause I feel like they're a part of my successes. They have to listen to all of my challenges (Interview, December 14, 2006)."

Authenticity of dialogues with mother. Samantha rated her reflective dialogues with her mother as extremely authentic. She cites the trust level between the two of them as the main reason for her willingness to discuss her educational experiences truthfully, timely, accurately and relevantly. Samantha describes the security she feels in these discussions with her mother:

I know that when I talk to my mom I definitely don't leave anything out, because I can talk to my mom for hours and she'll just listen, and that's how she is. And so I'll tell her every little thing, "And then he dropped his pencil. And then he picked it up, and then he did this . . ." and tell her every little thing and every frustration I have because I know that she's just there to listen to me (Interview, January, 11, 2007).

Samantha further describes this relationship by comparing it with other teachers with whom she could engage in similar conversations with, but chooses not to.

My mom gets the unedited version of everything . . . you know information that I might withhold from other people just for whatever reason . . . if I tell my mom, I tell her exactly what happens. . . It's never from a teacher standpoint, and an education standpoint. It's always from an emotional . . . It's kind of like unload on mom and then OK, we can move on (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Written or Electronic Dialogues

Samantha was asked in interviews throughout this study concerning her use of written or electronic means of reflective dialoguing. While she recognizes that there are additional opportunities for reflection using reflective journaling, web-based discussion groups, or email correspondence with other educators, she chooses not participate.

Samantha does create very detailed lesson plans which, in their creation, allow her to contemplate her instructional goals and purposes, its connection to educational standards, and her use of research-based instructional practices. Samples of her lesson plans were collected for this study and reviewed for evidences of anticipatory reflection. In her lesson plan dated November 15, 2006, Samantha included detailed explanations of the following components of her lesson:

- Time requirement
- Materials necessary for the lesson
- Purpose and instructional objective
- Connection to educational standards
- Introduction and anticipatory set, modeling, guided practice, independent practice and closure
- Method of assessment
- Plans for differentiating the lesson for various learning levels and styles.

Samantha contemplates and creates her detailed lesson plans for each lesson she teaches. As this is the case, it is presumed that her reflections while composing the plans are both authentic and pertinent to her classroom instruction.

Dialogue with Self

Samantha finds herself almost constantly thinking about her classroom. She evaluates her daily experiences and consistently ponders her students' needs and plans for upcoming lessons and activities. Samantha's mentor depicts Samantha as being a very reflective teacher:

I think she's a very reflective [teacher]. I like that about her. And that's why she's a strong team leader. Because she will make older people like me better because she'll ask, "Well, why are you doing that?" And I like that. . . That's the good part about planning and having strong objectives. . . And she's really good at that. She's just going to be a strong teacher. I can see that (Interview, January 22, 2007).

Throughout this study, Samantha was forced to reflect upon her teaching in ways that she had not anticipated as she began her career. On numerous occasions, she was confronted with unique situations or circumstances that required her to consider her past decisions, their current efficacy, and determine what her future plans would be and how she would implement those plans. Most of her self reflections centered in classroom management and curricular decisions.

Classroom management dialogues. Early in the school year, Samantha established classroom procedures and expectations that would encourage good classroom management. As the year progressed, however, she realized that her classroom was an extremely dynamic environment, subject to constant change. Her classroom management

procedures did not need to be entirely abandoned with these changes; however, recurring evaluation and adjustment were expedient. As she and her class entered into the month of December, Samantha became acutely aware that her classroom management needed some modifications to accommodate the affect of the anticipation of the holiday season upon her students. Samantha considered a change in her desk arrangement. She tried a few configurations and settled on one that provided her the ability to see all of the students while she used the overhead projector. Samantha developed the very unique desk arrangement through her own reflections. As she instigated the change, she continually evaluated its effectiveness and also noted other results from the change:

And the other thing as far as time management, I have it separated so all these kids pass their papers this way to this desk. All these kids pass their papers to that desk. When I pass out paper, I pass out here and they pass along. It's so much faster than going three or four at a time. And so that's been nice. . . I thought, "Well, it's worth a shot," because the worse that can happen is that it will be as bad as it was before. But, it's working well so far (Interview, January 11, 2007).

Curricular dialogues. Samantha's commitment to formally creating and writing a lesson plan creates a consistent opportunity for her to reflect upon her curriculum and instruction. The specificity of her plans also allows her to effectively evaluate her lessons and plan for future improvements and adjustments. As the school year neared the holiday season, Samantha evaluated her lesson plans and compared them to what she was really accomplishing. She describes her personal reflections and decisions:

Well it's hard because you're coming to the end of quarter and you're wanting to give them as much time as possible to get the new content under their belt before you start assessing them. But at the same time the longer you wait the less engaged they are . . . but you learn I guess. That's all you can do is change what you're going to do next year (Interview, January 11, 2007).

Researcher

Samantha volunteered for this study, and from the onset was willing to share her thoughts and perceptions. Often, she would make comments to the researcher during her class and would share concerns and frustrations during her interviews. In one such interview, Samantha explained:

It's getting crazy. I never suspected it would be this hard. I really didn't think it would be this hard. And of course, getting sick just made it harder because then you have to put the act on because they feed into the fact that you're sick. Then they know, "Oh, we can get away with more." You know. (chuckles) So, it's been kind of interesting (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Most of Samantha's reflective dialogues were focused on classroom management issues and emotional support themes.

On one particular occasion, when the researcher arrived it was apparent that Samantha was emotionally distraught. She and the researcher were scheduled to have an interview, but the researcher perceived that she was not prepared to participate in a question/answer setting. Instead, the researcher let Samantha talk, sharing her feelings and concerns. Samantha shared some very personal feelings she had been feeling during the week as an issue with one of her students had unfolded. The situation had caused her deep concern and the culminating events of that particular day had particularly affected Samantha. In that moment, she utilized her relationship with the researcher, as one who was not directly connected to any of the parties involved, as an opportunity to engage in a reflective dialogue to review her decisions and seek emotional support. Later, Samantha described why she had felt comfortable throughout the study in using the researcher as a source of dialogue:

I would tell [the researcher] anything that happens in the classroom because. . . [the researcher has] been in my classroom. [He has] seen how the students work, and what happens and so that way I know that [the researcher] understands how my classroom works and how the students are and their personalities. . . I know if I tell [the researcher] something [he] understands because [he's] been in here. And I feel like what [he] might have to say in response to it is going to be a lot more valid compared to someone who has never stepped foot in my classroom. Or never has seen the composition of my students together . . . or anything like that. I think it may also have to do with, obviously the questions [the researcher] asks me cause me to reflect on things that have affected me personally in my teaching, and so I've told [him] the things that are, you know, the worst things so, obviously the little things aren't that big of a deal anymore (Interview, December 5, 2006).

It is apparent that Samantha feels that she can engage in authentic reflective dialogue with the researcher which appears to be influenced by two perceptions. First, she feels that the researcher, having been in her classroom and observed the environment of her class, will be better able to relate to and comprehend what she desires to talk about. Secondly, she believes that the researcher's familiarity with her classroom also encourages the researcher to be less judgmental or evaluative of her classroom instruction.

Changes over time

Samantha's appreciation for her opportunities to participate in reflective dialogues has grown. With her increased appreciation has also come an increase in the sources she utilizes for those dialogues. At the beginning of the school year, Samantha confined most of her reflective dialogues to her mother and a few teachers she had previous interactions with during her student teaching. As the year progressed, she accepted more individuals into her circle of sources. Her mentor, her grade-level team, her friend Megan, and

eventually her administrators became an important part of Samantha's ability to reflect meaningfully upon her own instructional decisions and actions and how those affected the educational outcome of her class. She has learned to appreciate the varied information and insight each of these sources provides her. She explains:

You do have to go to other people. They do have to help you figure out what to do. And, just talking to the one teacher that I had as mentor was not going to do it. To get a solid idea, it really takes, I feel and what my experience has been this year, it really takes more and more persons. But you kind of have to pull from a bunch of different people and then go from there. And use a couple of the ideas as you go (Interview, December 14, 2006).

Throughout the study, Samantha was observed to become increasingly willing to discuss educational topics with those who were able to support her. As she continued to build a strong network of support, she was better able to re-evaluate her own beliefs regarding the public school classroom, understand connections between educational theory and practice, learn important procedures and protocol, and more deeply understand how her decisions can affect the outcome of her students.

Perception of Audience Affecting Attitudes

Samantha is surrounded by opportunities for reflective dialogue, both in her professional environment, as well as in her personal life. She has developed an attitude that not only recognizes these sources as valuable means for her progression towards professional expertise, but she has been enabled to actually employ these sources in an effective manner. These rich and varied reflective dialogues imbue Samantha with increased competency and confidence in her teaching and simultaneously provide important emotional support.

Attitudes Concerning Sources of Reflective Dialogues

Samantha's perception of the various audiences to her reflective dialogue is what encourages her to engage in discussions and select the educational topics that she will discuss. In reviewing the data collected for Samantha, it appears that there are four significant factors that contribute to Samantha's desire and ability to engage in authentic, rich reflective dialogues. Conversely, the absence of these four factors deters Samantha from participating in reflective dialogues. The four factors are: a mutually trusting relationship, a valuable knowledge-base, and a level of familiarity with her class, and availability.

Mutually trusting relationship. Samantha reported being hesitant at the beginning of the school year to participate in reflective dialogues with fellow grade-level team members, her mentor, and other administrators and staff members, citing the lack of a trusting relationship as the primary cause. Conversely, Samantha was comfortable in participating in reflective dialogues with her mother from the start because the pre-existing level trust they shared. As the school year progressed and as Samantha had opportunities to interact with the site-school faculty and staff, the foundations of trusting relationships were laid. During these interactions, Samantha discerned that the colleagues that surrounded her were not intent upon assessing her instructional skills and ultimately her value as a teacher; rather, they were ready, capable, and eager to provide her with support and assistance. These foundations of trust became crucial to Samantha and her desire and ability to engage in important reflective dialogues with these individuals later.

Valuable knowledge-base. Samantha's dialogues were influenced by her perception of the potential audience's ability to provide pertinent information relevant to her immediate need. She learned to greatly appreciate the wealth of knowledge and experience her mentor teacher possesses in curriculum content. Much of her curriculum related conversations were directed, therefore, to her mentor teacher. Additionally, she perceived Megan, the other first-year teacher on her grade-level team to be an important source of curricular planning and emotional support. Thus, in observations, Samantha was observed to engage in regular dialogues with Megan concerning those two topics and not as often on procedural topics, for which Megan had little experience.

Probably the most apparent influence of perceived knowledge-base upon Samantha's dialogues was observed in her interaction with the site-school's assistant principal and, to a lesser degree, the principal. Although a mutually-trusting relationship had begun to be established, it had not had time to fully mature when a significant crisis occurred in Samantha's classroom. Knowing that the administrator's would be the primary source of this type of procedural knowledge, Samantha bypassed her normal sources and discussed the issue directly with her assistant principal. In several other subsequent instances, Samantha relied almost entirely upon her administrators as the source of reflective dialogues to obtain procedural knowledge.

Familiarity. In several interviews, Samantha discussed the importance for those that chooses to participate in reflective dialogues with to have a familiarity with her class. She suggested that the familiarity level contributes to the audience's ability to provide relevancy and significance to the reflective dialogues. Samantha describes the interaction

of this feature of her audiences with her willingness to participate in reflective dialogues in an example with her administrators. Samantha explained in several interviews that she preferred speaking with the assistant principal over the principal because the assistant principal had substitute taught her class for a time and also frequented her classroom, thus allowing him to be very aware of the dynamics of the class, each student's abilities and special needs. She mentioned in a few interviews how she enjoys discussing her class with her mother and can do so regarding classroom management and for emotional support because her mother volunteers in her classroom often and knows Samantha's individual students. Their discussions can be specific and Samantha appreciates her mother's perceptions of the situations based upon her own observations. Samantha described similar feelings regarding her mentor, her fellow team member, Megan, and the researcher.

Availability. Samantha did not discuss this factor very often in her interviews; however, it appears that she did not consider it a factor because it has become part of her educational paradigm. She did refer to her previous year teaching kindergarten and contrasted the lack availability to meet with her mentor and grade-level team as being a negative experience. The conclusion that Samantha's reflective dialogues are greatly influenced by the factor of availability is based upon numerous field observations where she engages in multiple reflective dialogues with a variety of individuals. These interchanges appeared to be comfortable and fluent. Some were formal, most were spontaneous. A very important feature is that they were able to occur frequently throughout the day both when others instigated the dialogue, but also in the moment

when Samantha felt the desire or sensed a need to engage in reflective dialogue.

Attitudes Concerning Topics of Reflective Dialogues

Samantha's chosen topics for reflective dialogue are affected by her perceptions of her audience. Most of those perceptions are based upon awareness of the audience's ability to provide meaningful dialogue regarding the topic. In Samantha's case study, three factors that affect Samantha's perceptions emerged from the data. These three factors are: knowledge-base, emotional support, and authority.

Knowledge-base. Samantha chooses to talk to individuals about certain topics because she perceives that they may be able to contribute to her understanding of the topic. As discussed previously, Samantha perceives her mentor as being a valuable source of curricular information, and, therefore, speaks often about curriculum with her mentor. Conversely, she does not perceive her mother to be as valuable a resource for curricular issues, and according reports that she engages in far fewer curricular-themed discourses with her mother. Samantha also perceives her administrators to be experts in school and district policy and procedure, and therefore approaches them when she determines that vital procedural knowledge must be acquired; she does not approach her fellow first-year teacher about similar procedural issues on account of her equal lack of experience.

Emotional support. Samantha's first year of teaching has been fraught with numerous challenges and difficulties in addition to the normal worries a first-year teacher is expected to experience. These included assuming a class that had multiple previous

teachers and unusual student crises. In order to cope with these stressors, Samantha utilized those personal and professional sources that surrounded her for emotional support. Among the major contributors is Samantha's mother, whom Samantha employed as a source from the beginning of her first-year experience. Samantha, as her collegial relationships deepened, broadened her support base to include her mentor, other team members, other teachers, and the researcher. With these individuals, her sense of mutual trust allowed her to disclose very personal feelings of vulnerability. While she viewed her administrators as knowledgeable, she did not perceive them as appropriate sources of emotional support, and, therefore, resisted reflective discussions that focused on that them.

Authenticity of Reflective Dialogues

The researcher, in conjunction with Samantha, determined four factors that would contribute to their understanding of authenticity. Samantha, based on that definition, characterized her perception of the authenticity of her dialogues with several people utilizing a five-point Likert-scale. The researcher, based upon the interviews with Samantha, her mentor and Megan, field observations, and written documents also drew conclusions regarding the authenticity of Samantha's dialogues. The data will be merged discussed using the four points of the definition.

Truthfulness. Samantha is willing to speak honestly when she engages in a reflective dialogue. She indicates that she does not fabricate information or purposefully determine to deceive those with whom she speaks with in reflective dialogues.

Relevance. Samantha speaks very relevant to her desires and needs when she is engaged in dialogue with those whom she trusts and when she perceives occasion warrants timely action. Samantha's reflective dialogues with Megan and her mentor revolve around current curricular issues and planning. Samantha discusses with them those topics that are the most currently applicable to Samantha's needs. In contrast, Samantha discusses relevant topics in her dialogues with her administrators when she perceives there is an immediate need, but will relinquish the relevancy of the topic if she perceives it appropriate for the administrator to dictate the dialogues topic. An example of this was Samantha's formal post-observation conference and the conversation surrounding learning to write on the board ambidextrously. In a subsequent interview, Samantha admitted that while not all of the topics in the conference were relevant to her current teaching, nervousness, inexperience and the perception of power instigated her willingness to allow the administrator to determine the topics and provide most of the dialogue.

Timeliness. Samantha's quick acclimatization to her professional environment and development of strong relationships of mutual trust with her colleagues encouraged her reflective dialogues to be timely. Samantha did not feel the need to hesitate or adjust the timing of her dialogues or the topics. She discussed relevant topics in both formal and informal settings on a daily basis with multiple sources.

Accuracy. Samantha familiarity with her fellow faculty, especially her team and her mentor, promoted accuracy in her dialogues. Samantha was not observed to embellish or exaggerate the information she shared in her reflective dialogues. In regards

to her mentor teacher, her friend, Megan, and her mother, Samantha omitted little if any pertinent information. In interviews, she indicated that she did not feel the need to conceal any information regarding her teaching or her feelings about teaching from these audiences. She was less likely to share information to this same depth with her novice cohort group, grade-level team members (other than Megan), and administrators. She cites two main reasons for omission in dialogues with these audiences. First, lack of familiarity and trust. She hesitates in sharing information that might cause this audience to evaluate her competency as a teacher. Secondly, she considers time and position. Samantha, on numerous occasions, expressed her reluctance to engage in reflective dialogues for emotional support with administrators, even when she knew they were aware of her struggles. She explained that she felt they had many other administrative responsibilities, and she determined to not bother them with her emotional struggles, especially when she had many other resources to fulfill that need.

Desire for Additional Opportunities

Samantha recognizes the benefit of multiple sources of and frequent engagement in reflective dialogues. While she does acknowledge that there are yet sources of reflective dialogue that she is not fully utilizing (i.e., reflective journals or electronic means of reflection), she does not indicate feeling a desire for additional sources of reflection. Samantha has ample opportunities for meaningful reflective dialogues that regularly provide for her information and support and equip her with the resources she needs when she faces the inevitable uncertainties of teaching.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The following chapter will present a cross examination of the three cases in this investigation. Features that emerged from the data will be correlated to existing literature and compared to the research questions which guided this study. Contributions from the findings of this study will be proposed and suggestions for further research will be recommended.

Cross Case Examination

What opportunities for reflective dialogue do these novice teachers recognize and utilize?

Charles, Cynthia, and Samantha recognized multiple sources of reflective dialogue available to them. These sources included a mentor teacher, administrator(s), grade-level team members, other school faculty members, novice cohort members, and family members. These opportunities to engage in reflective dialogues with others are an essential part of teacher inquiry and reflective practice (Rust, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). While each of the subjects comprehended the existence of their reflective resources, they did not uniformly profit from the availability; each perceived and utilized the sources to different degrees.

Similarities in usage. All three of the teachers in this study recognized their mentors as a valuable source of procedural knowledge. They perceived that the mentor's fundamental role was to provide them, as a new teacher, important information pertinent

to the site-school and the district. All three of the subjects reported that they almost always first approached their mentor teacher about school policies and procedures. With regards to procedural knowledge, none of the subjects used family or friends outside of the educational field as a source or procedural dialogue. This, obviously, is a result of the novice teacher's perception that these individuals do not represent a valuable knowledge-base of school-specific procedures.

Each of the novice teachers in this study identified their administrators as beneficial sources of reflective dialogue. Each appreciated the rich source of experience that each principal represented and welcomed pertinent feedback from their administrators. Each of the three teachers utilized their administrators to solve classroom management issues and answer procedural questions that they perceived were too urgent or complex to rely solely upon their mentor teacher.

All three of the subjects viewed their grade-level team and mentor as an important source of curricular themed reflective dialogue. Most cited their weekly team planning meetings as the central occasion for them to reflect with their team members as they planned for upcoming schedules and lessons, and reviewed standards. Samantha was the only teacher who approached her team members, other than the mentor, regularly outside of the planning meeting to discuss curricular issues. Both Charles and Cynthia confined their curricular discussions primarily to the team meetings and found other outlets for curricular discussions during the interim.

All three of the teachers were uncertain of the significance of their novice cohort meetings in providing them opportunities for reflective dialogue. The attitudes reflected

frustrations they often felt as they perceived the content and presentation of the class in conflict with the topics and format they personally desired. Charles and Cynthia found little value in their novice cohort group meetings, and while they realized the purpose of the class, and believed in its theoretical value, they did not feel that it fulfilled a beneficial role in their reflective practice. Samantha was frustrated, at times, with the additional pressure the class placed upon her as she became aware of areas in her instruction that needed improvement, but she also viewed this dissonance as an important part of her progression towards expertise.

All three of the subjects appreciated close family members' roles in emotional support. Each recognized the important function parents or spouse fulfilled as a trusted source of non-evaluative communication. All three utilized the non-educationally related sources extensively at the beginning of the school year. Charles and Samantha decreased their utilization of these sources as the year progressed and as other sources were identified and established. Cynthia not only continued to use her mother, but her reliance upon her increased as Cynthia's sense of isolation deepened.

Another similar feature shared by all three of the subjects was the lack of usage of written or electronic reflection. All three in interviews confessed that they felt that writing their thoughts and feelings and creating evaluative notes about past lessons could be a valuable activity; however, none seized the opportunity, usually citing lack of time as a contributing factor. Samantha did create a detailed lesson plan regularly, while Cynthia and Charles did not. In addition, each of the teachers expressed their enjoyment of having the opportunity to engage in reflective dialogues with the researcher. They

enjoyed how the interviews had encouraged them to consider their reasons for pedagogical decisions and evaluate the outcomes of their choices. The meetings simply created a reason to reflect for each of them.

Differences in usages. While there were many similarities shared across the cases, there were equally as many features unique to a specific individual. These differences also represent important data that enhances our understanding of the induction period.

Cynthia perceived her administrator as a valuable source of reflective dialogue who is accessible to her, especially by email. Cynthia also creates a written reflective document that she submits to her administrator weekly; however, her personal contacts with her administrator did not exceed that of Samantha and Charles. Cynthia was also the only teacher who did not regularly engage in meaningful reflective dialogue with the assigned mentor teacher. She was also the only teacher who relied upon her mother (or other family member) for her entire array of educational needs, albeit, not as significantly for the gathering of procedural knowledge. Her mother's unique characteristic of being a highly experienced veteran teacher contributed to the frequency of Cynthia's reliance on her mother's assistance. This almost total dependence upon her mother uniquely marked Cynthia as the subject who utilized the fewest sources for reflective dialogues and the least likely to use the sources provided to her by the school and district in this study.

Charles' unique feature was his autonomy. By personality, choice, and circumstances, he engaged in the fewest number external reflective dialogues. It is acknowledged that this study's data gathering methods could not accurately determine

the frequency or depth of the internal, self reflective practices of the subjects, therefore no conclusions will be drawn about Charles' reflective nature, only as it was observable. However, one of the risks of reflecting alone is the tendency to reconstruct ideas with personal bias (Jay & Johnson, 2000), and thus lose the opportunity to garner fresh and valuable insights and assessments from external sources.

Samantha represented a more encouraging scenario. In this study, she uniquely was able to create important professional and inter-personal ties with a wide array of individuals who constituted a network of support. Her dialogues occurred freely and frequently, including during her lunch hour, after school, in planning meetings, with her mentor, administrators, and her friend/team member, Megan. This network was able to provide Samantha with the various types of reflective dialogues that would encourage effective instructional methodologies, thoughtful planning of curriculum, successful management of the classroom, and provide her with crucial emotional support. Identification and utilization of each of her available resources was critical to Samantha's experience as a novice teacher not only for survival, but to assist her in successfully developing the attitudes and aptitudes of an expert teacher.

How do these novice teachers perceive audience when engaging in reflective dialogue?

How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes concerning sources of reflective dialogue?

It quickly became apparent during this investigation that each of the three subjects' attitudes regarding sources for their reflective dialogues was influenced by their

perceptions of the audiences to these dialogues. The factors that appeared to have the greatest influence on their attitudes were identified in the individual cases and will be compared across the cases here. Table 4 lists the factors and allows for visual comparison.

Table 4

Comparison of Factors Influencing Attitudes Regarding Sources of Reflective Dialogue

Subject	Factors Identified by Subjects				
	Trusting relationship	Availability	Familiarity with class	Knowledge base	Relevance of audience
Charles	X	X	X		X
Cynthia	X	X		X	
Samantha	X	X	X	X	

Mutually trusting relationship. In all three cases a mutually trusting relationship was a critical factor in encouraging authentic and rich reflective dialogue. These positive relationships allowed the novice teacher to feel they could express themselves and share moments of cognitive dissonance without the risk of intense criticism or evaluation. Some of these relationships existed before the beginning of the school year, as was the case for family members and classmates from preservice training. With on-site faculty and staff, the creation of this type of relationship took time and attention but was expedited by frequent interaction and consistently meaningful dialogues. Samantha was

an example of how her initial apprehensions concerning dialogues with her mentor were overcome by regular interactions. She grew to trust her administrators as individuals who viewed her as a professional and supported her induction into career teaching.

Availability. Even when the teacher perceived a potential audience to their reflective dialogues as being expert or one they could trust, the factor of availability greatly influenced whether or not they chose to utilize that resource. All three teachers gravitated towards those sources that were consistently available to them when they desired to engage in reflective dialogue. Some of this is due to immediacy of circumstances and issues the novice teacher confronts; however, it may also be a result of frequency of the dialogues and the creation a norm for the novice teacher. All three teachers were also observed to increasingly disregard other sources if they were not perceived as consistently available. Both Cynthia's and Charles' mentors were an example of this. Cynthia and Charles did not utilize their mentors nearly as much as Samantha did. While all three viewed their mentors as excellent sources of knowledge, only Samantha utilized her mentor for issues beyond acquisition of procedural knowledge. Observations indicated that this was, in part, a result of Samantha's opportunities to interact with her mentor before, during, and after school regarding a variety of different topics. Another example was Charles' principal. The principal made frequent unannounced visits to Charles' class at the beginning of the school year. This allowed Charles to engage in brief, but important, reflective dialogues with his administrator regularly. During the second half of this study, those visits diminished. Charles suggested the reason was his principal's busyness or lack of time. This

perception caused Charles to also reduce his reliance and willingness to approach his principal for reflective dialogues during the second half of the study.

Familiarity. Two of the subjects, Charles and Samantha, identified the potential audience's familiarity with their classroom and instruction as a factor in their attitude regarding reflective dialoguing with that individual. Both of these teachers felt that the familiarity allowed their discussions to be specific and in-depth. It also allowed them to discuss underlying issues and potential adjustments in their teaching without having to spend much of the discussion describing background details. It was also noted that familiarity reduced the perception that the potential audience would become critical or evaluative. This allowed the novice teacher to candidly discuss concerns and mistakes without fear of their professionalism or competency falling into question.

Cynthia was the only subject who did not identify familiarity as an important factor. The argument could be made, however, that this factor did influence Cynthia's lack of reflective dialoguing and the reason she increasingly isolated herself from potential reflective opportunities. Cynthia had made choices in her curriculum which she perceived might not be in congruence with school or district expectations. Her administrator, mentor teacher, and others were not familiar with this entirely, and Cynthia promoted this buffer of unfamiliarity by the rarity of her reflective dialogues with them and the topics she chose to forward.

Knowledge-base. Two of the three teachers recognized the knowledge-base of the potential audience as a key factor in their willingness to engage in reflective dialogue. As novice teachers, they were investigating their own understandings of the educational

process, grappling with the actual convergence of theory and practice, and attempting to differentiate for a myriad of perplexing circumstances common to the dynamic classroom environment. In this struggle, they sought the assistance from those they perceived were equipped to offer aid in the form of knowledge, both theoretical and pragmatic. All three subjects viewed their mentors as experts in procedural knowledge, and therefore utilized that individual as an audience to their procedural dialogues. Other individuals, like family members, were trusted but were not perceived to possess relevant knowledge, and therefore were not utilized for dialogues where further understanding the educative process was the goal.

In some instances, the perception that an individual was the possessor of critically important information was able to supersede other inhibitors and propel the novice teacher into a reflective dialogue. This was the case with Samantha and her administrators. Certain perceptions and concerns generally kept Samantha from engaging in dialogues with her administrators; however, when a crisis occurred, these fears were displaced and Samantha initiated dialogues with them. It must be observed here that while accumulation of important procedural knowledge was a distinct motivating factor, Samantha was also prompted to speak to her administrators to insure proper documentation of her intervention in the circumstances. The novice teachers in this study also mentioned engaging in dialogues with other school support personnel such as school psychologists and specialists with whom they would not naturally interface. In this circumstance again, it encouraged the teacher to engage in reflective dialogues with those whom they perceived to be owners of valuable knowledge.

Relevance of audience. Charles was the only participant in this study who acknowledged the relevancy of his audience as a primary influence in his reflective dialogues. Obviously, this is a relative perception as none of the participants likely engaged in reflective dialogue regarding their instruction to any degree of depth with persons who were totally irrelevant to themselves or their practice; however, for Charles it was a significant factor to find some amount of relevance to encourage him to initiate the dialogue. Samantha and Cynthia appeared to be much more willing to engage in dialogues with others from varying grade-levels. It is not known from the data collected in this study whether this was an anomaly founded upon Charles' personality or the possibility of it being gender-based.

How do these novice teachers perceive audience when engaging in reflective dialogue?

How does this perception of audience affect their attitudes regarding topics of reflective dialogue?

Just as their perception of audience affected with whom they would engage in reflective dialogues, this perception also affected the topics upon which the three novice teachers were willing to reflect. During the course of the study, the main themes of the subjects' conversations were identified and categorized into four main groupings: classroom management, procedural themes, curricular themes, and dialogues of emotional support. In each of these categories, the teachers engaged in a two way discussion with their audience in an effort to further understand their teaching practice, link educational theory with real-life application, and otherwise appreciate the various

intricacies of their new career. These themes closely resemble and further validate previous research models which seek to identify areas of support needed by new teachers (Odell, 1986; Eldar et al., 2003).

The factors that affected the subjects' perceptions of their audience and that had a significant impact on the topics the subject was willing to address in reflective dialogues with that particular audience fell into four main categories. Most of these categories were shared universally by the participants in this investigation. Table 5 illustrates the factors that affected the topics subjects desired to discuss in their reflective dialogues.

Table 5

Comparison of Factors Influencing Attitudes Regarding Topics of Reflective Dialogue

Subject	Factors Identified by Subjects		
	Knowledge-base	Authority	Emotional Support
Charles	X	X	
Cynthia	X	X	X
Samantha	X	X	X

Knowledge-base. In the data collected on all three subjects, it became evident that their perception of the knowledge-base a potential audience possessed affected the topics they ultimately discussed in those dialogues. All three of the teachers viewed their administrators as competent and knowledgeable in the realm of procedures. All three of

them identified their administrators as primary sources for the acquisition of procedural knowledge. Samantha mentioned, in an interview, that she wasn't sure how much knowledge her assistant principal had in the curriculum for first-grade students, acknowledging that he had come from a career in teaching secondary-level math. This influenced her inclination to discuss with him classroom management and curricular issues regarding her young students.

In a similar example, Cynthia referenced her familiarity with another first-grade team member that had attended the same preservice program. While she sensed the familiarity, she did not engage in curricular, procedural or classroom management focused dialogues with her because she did not feel that particular teacher had any more insight or information regarding those topics than she did. Conversely, all three subjects viewed their mentor teachers as experts in procedural information and would freely discuss procedural topics with their mentor.

Authority. The three novice teachers were all very cognizant of power and position. Labels attached to them like “novice,” and “probationary” consistently reminded them of their place in the scaffolding of power. Having a mentor assigned to them and the mandatory teacher induction meetings further highlighted this hierarchy. This, in and of itself, was not necessarily perceived as a negative position; however it did affect their willingness to discuss certain topics with particular individuals or encouraged them to surrender the power to prompt a topic entirely to their audience.

This sense of power hierarchy was most prevalent at the beginning of the school year when the subjects were feeling the newness of their presence on campus most

acutely. As the year progressed, they were able to establish closer relationships with those they associated with, and the levels of power in these relationships came into equilibrium. Samantha and her mentor are an example of this. Samantha felt uncomfortable speaking candidly with her mentor at the beginning of the year because of her unfamiliarity with the mentor and her perception of the authority the mentor had relative to Samantha. As the year progressed and their professional and personal relationship developed, Samantha's perceptions of power and authority diminished and she found greater desire and ability to discuss a myriad of educational topics pertinent and specific to her teaching with her mentor. Cynthia and Charles did not experience this occurrence to the same degree. While they recognized their mentor's expertise, they still perceived their mentor as a source of authority, and therefore did not initiate dialogues with them as frequently or fluidly as did Samantha. Charles and Cynthia also were much more apt to yield the topics of discussion in mentor/mentee meetings to their mentor.

Perhaps the most pointed example was in the post-observation conferences with each of the subjects. It was fortunate that data from all three of the subjects' first formal post-observation conference with their administrator was able to be collected for this investigation. This provided an opportunity for cross comparison of a similar experience for each teacher. In all three cases, the novice teacher allowed the administrator to guide the conversation as they followed a set format established for evaluation. Obviously, there are cultural norms of propriety that influence these interactions and assure organization and efficiency in the processes and shape content and form (Frank, 2002; Nunksoosing, 2005); however, it was interesting to note the extent that these new

teachers allowed the administrator to assume the role of navigator in the reflective dialogue. Both Cynthia's and Samantha's administrators dominated the conversation with their comments and observations. The majority of the dialogue was administrator-centric, while the novice teacher did little more than use words of acknowledgement. Charles' administrator asked probing questions to elicit Charles' perceptions and reflections on his teaching. Charles did answer the questions, but in response to his administrator's observations and suggestions, Charles reverted to simple one or two-word responses or would simply parrot what his administrator had just said. In these instances, it was uncertain whether or not the novice teachers truly comprehended the implications of what their administrators were attempting to share and teach. Certainly, the novice teachers were reluctant to add to or adjust any suggestions their administrators were proposing.

Emotional Support. All three novice teachers experienced the shock that most beginning teachers confront as they begin to realize the complexity of teaching in a real-life classroom (Morine-Dershimer, 1992; Concoran, 1981). In interviews, each one of the subjects confessed that the emotions they were feeling were far more intense than they had expected. At the beginning of the school year, each was most comfortable sharing their feelings with individuals they had a close, trusting relationship with. This usually meant family members. As the year progressed and the shock became more acute, their audiences for emotional support shifted in a unique manner.

Cynthia's focus for her reflective dialogues regarding emotional support shifted more intensely toward her mother. In interviews, she described her reliance on her

mother for emotional support as increasing throughout the study. As she relied more heavily upon her mother, she retracted her dialogues from those around her, including her mentor. Cynthia perceived her mentor as a competent educator, but not as a trusted or available resource for emotional support. Most of the time, Cynthia felt the need to engage in this type of dialogue after school, when the events of the day were still fresh. Unfortunately, her mentor was not available at that time, and Cynthia soon created a culture of reflection between herself and her mother and excluded peer faculty members. Charles faced a similar situation between himself and his mentor based upon her daily schedule and his need to leave early two days each week. Unlike Cynthia, however, Charles focus for these dialogues shifted inwards. In his interviews he described how he even kept some of his feelings and concerns from his wife.

Samantha began as the other two subjects in this study, relying heavily upon a close family member, her mother. However, as the year progressed, her focus shifted towards the support system that surrounded her at her site-school. She was able to create a trusting relationship with her mentor and with another first-year teacher. These friendships provided Samantha a safe environment where she could express her fears and frustrations openly. These two resources were able to empathize, being professional teachers, and, in the case of the mentor, provide valuable knowledge based upon experience. She perceived her mentor as a person who was not only very accessible, but as a person who cared and was willing to make time to assist her in her professional development. During the study, Samantha had to participate in a special conference with herself, a student's guardians, and the administrators. It was a very tense and emotional

situation for Samantha as a new teacher. Her mentor volunteered to be present at the evening meeting to provide emotional support Samantha. This kind of consistent, caring support that surrounded Samantha created a professional climate that fostered authentic reflection and adaptation, necessary for her development towards expertise.

How does this perception of audience affect the authenticity of the novice teacher's reflection as determined by the novice teacher and the researcher?

In this section the four indicators of authenticity that emerged in this investigation will be utilized to create a cross comparison of the three cases.

Truthfulness. All three novice teachers indicated that their reflective dialogues were highly truthful. None of the participants were observed to fabricate or purposefully distort their dialogues with any of their audiences. Had truthfulness alone been used as an indicator of authenticity, there would not have been much information to explicate as a result of this investigation into the authenticity of novice teachers' reflective dialogues.

Relevance. The aspect of relevance in reflective dialogues varied with each individual subject based upon their perception of the current audience. In all three cases, the novice teacher was willing to initiate a conversation about an issue they felt the need to discuss, or alter the topic of an existing dialogue to match their immediate concerns based upon their relationship with the audience of their dialogue. In this case, the teacher felt that relevancy was most likely to occur in the resultant reflective dialogues. This did not occur as frequently when the novice teacher perceived a relationship based upon power or authority or when they felt that the audience was pressed for time or had limited

availability. In these circumstances, the teacher was inclined to allow the audience to determine the topic, whether or not they perceived the conversation to have relevance to their teaching. This was illustrated in all three subjects' post-observation conference experiences.

In addition to dialogues initiated by the novice teacher, the subjects felt that those audiences who possessed a knowledge-base appropriate to the teacher's immediate needs also promoted relevancy in the discussions. For example, Samantha's dialogues with her administrators gained a tremendous amount of relevancy when she perceived the need to discuss with them a critical circumstance regarding one of her students. At this point, her inhibitions based on the perception of power were rested and determination to access important procedural information became primary.

Timeliness. Both external and internal influences affected the timing of the three novice teachers' reflective dialogues. Timeliness and its effect on authenticity was identified and measured by moments when the novice teacher was able to discuss issues of the greatest concern at the time when they were experiencing cognitive dissonance in his or her practice. It was in these moments that the teacher was most likely to allow reflective practice to propel him or herself towards a greater comprehension of the application of educational theory to professional circumstances.

In both Charles' and Cynthia's case, their perception of their mentor's availability for reflective dialoguing affected their timeliness. Both would often have to wait in order to discuss issues they had concerns over, and sometimes would feel it necessary to find another source with whom to engage in the dialogue. At times, the moment of cognitive

dissonance would pass, and in postponing the discussion, new issues would emerge that would displace the immediacy of previous concerns; thus, the opportunity to reflect upon previous concerns or questions would be lost to the propinquity of the next moment. Conversely, Samantha's teaching environment encouraged frequent and uninhibited dialogues with multiple sources. Her perception of the audience and the quantity of potential audiences allowed her to reflect in the moment when her reflective practice could have the most application and impact on her conceptualization of the teaching process.

Accuracy. In this study, two aspects of authenticity were identified: embellishment/exaggeration, and omission. None of the subjects identified their dialogues as containing embellishments or exaggerations. Observations concurred with their reporting as very little of either was recorded. However, both the observations and the subject's identified multiple instances of omission of information when engaging in reflective dialogues. Often the omission was merely a mechanical means of shortening the narratives so as to convey the most critical information pertinent to the conversation (Frank, 2002; Nunksoosing, 2005). In these cases the audience appeared to have little impact on the decision; it was clearly universal. In some instances, however, the omissions moved beyond the universality of narrative exclusion, and were a direct result of the subject's perception of audience and their attempt to manipulate the conversation, sometimes in an effort to create their best-self (Anderson, 1997; Meiners, 2001; Polya et al., 2005).

All three novice teachers acknowledged their tendency to omit details in their

reflective dialogues with others in order to create the perception of best-self, especially early in the school year. Their concern over potential criticism or reservations regarding their professionalism appears to have motivated their decision to omit information and events they felt may be incriminating. Cynthia was observed to continue in this trend with fellow faculty and administrators throughout the study. Whereas Samantha's decreased as she established trusting relationships with other teachers, primarily her mentor and Megan. Her omissions continued to a certain extent with her administrators and teachers with whom she was less familiar.

Each teacher also had unique features regarding omissions. Cynthia reported omitting details and descriptions of joyous or successful moments in her teaching, especially when she engaged in dialogues with a particular teacher on her grade-level team. Past experience had convinced Cynthia that this teacher would diminish her positive emotions, and therefore, omitted those experiences from her dialogues with the teacher. Samantha chose to omit information from her dialogues with her administrators citing her perception that the administrators were busy and had many other important issues demanding their attention. Charles omitted information from dialogues with his wife and a fourth-grade teacher whose child he taught, all in an effort to protect the audience from certain information. While the details surrounding his decisions were unique, the underlying motivation was an attempt to protect another individual from understanding his true feelings or perceptions. This feature was treated as an outlier in the study as it did not present itself in the other two cases; however, it was a significant feature of Charles. It is uncertain if this feature emerged because of Charles' personality

or if it was influenced by gender. More research with a greater subject pool could assist in determining this distinctive attribute. It was also proposed that Charles' lack of reflective dialogues in general might also be evidence of authenticity affected by omission.

Summary and Implications

This section proposes to summarize conclusions pertinent to the research investigation and appropriate to collected data as it was analyzed according to the guiding research questions. In addition, implications of the research's conclusions on teaching practice and the induction of novice teachers will be proposed. The research paradigm implemented for this study required that rich and descriptive data be gathered. In order to accomplish this, the sample was limited to three cases. The researcher recognizes that the conclusions of this study can neither be generalized to a large population of teachers, nor precisely replicated by other researchers. However, instrumental case studies are intended to produce "a particular case" which "is examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Stakes, 2003, p. 137). The intention of this research was to gain further insight into the reflective practice of novice teachers and provide suggestions for the support of reflective practice in other novice teachers.

All three novice teachers involved in this investigation experienced a shock when confronting the dynamics of the modern classroom. Each teacher struggled to find the convergence of the educational theory and philosophy they had studied in their preservice programs, and the reality of a classroom full of diverse students and the endeavor to

educate them in compliance with mandated standards. It became apparent through this study that novice teachers are in need of multiple sources for reflective dialogues, as each one fulfills specific needs at distinct junctures. Reflective dialogues are far more instrumental in their professional development when they are rich and diverse and occur in both formal and informal settings. This supports previous research which suggests that successful induction occurs most effectively when new teachers are immersed in a culture of expert teachers (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). While this culture is desirable, veteran teachers must also learn to acknowledge the distinctive needs novice teachers possess and adapt this culture to include intervention to accommodate the novice teacher's unique concerns (Johnson & the Project on the Next Generation of Teachers, 2004). Planning meetings and informal exchanges became forums for reflective dialogues specific to the beginning teacher's circumstances. There is a need for administrators, mentors, grade-level team members, and other faculty and staff to conscientiously merge their attention and efforts towards assisting novice teachers during this turbulent time in their career. These efforts should be coordinated and methodically prepared. This is not to say that all aspects of the intervention should be formalized; conversely, frequent informal dialogues with other expert teachers are the hallmark of excellent novice teacher induction; however, the focus and philosophy that drive the intervention should be formally recognized.

The novice teachers in this study were well accommodated when they had experienced and supportive resources available onsite (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). While off-site audiences to their reflective dialogues did play a role in their reflective practice, it

became obvious that a support system made of faculty, staff, administrators, and mentors familiar with the teaching environment of the site-school was critical for each of the teachers. This was especially true for the acquisition of procedural knowledge. Two of the subjects expressed dislike for the novice teacher cohort which they participated in, explaining the perceived disconnect between their school and classroom's unique circumstances, to other cohort members' circumstances at different locations or in different grade-levels.

A critical part of the on-site support group should be a qualified and well-trained mentor. The mentor fulfills an important role as a source for procedural and curricular understandings, and for much-needed emotional support (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). These mentors need to possess a deep knowledge-base regarding teaching, understand the school and its procedures, and be committed to fostering a trusting and caring relationship with the novice teacher. This requires time and multiple interactions, necessitating the mentor's availability to the novice teacher, especially during joint consultation/preparation periods or after school.

Data collected and analyzed in this study indicated that novice teachers were affected by their attitudes regarding the audiences to their reflective dialogues. All three teachers indicated they were more likely to participate in rich, reflective dialogues when the audience was perceived to be a possessor of a valuable knowledge-base. This allowed the novice teacher, with confidence, to approach the potential audience and trust the validity of the information obtained resultant to the dialogue. While no school or district can guarantee every faculty and staff member who associates with a novice

teacher be a veteran; it would be important to ensure that the novice teacher's mentor be an individual with the afore mentioned level of knowledge and experience in all of the areas distinguished in this study.

The next key factor which affected the novice teacher's attitudes towards sources of reflective dialogues and topics in those dialogues was the audience's availability. If the novice teacher perceived an audience to be less available, they reduced the dialogues with that source. Closely associated with availability was the development of a mutually respectful and trusting relationship which is a critical component of authentic reflective dialogues. While the novice teachers in this study were willing to superficially talk about aspects of their classroom instruction, curriculum, school policy and procedures with a variety of school and district personnel, they reserved sharing and discussing deeper issues of concern and uncertainty with those in an exclusive circle of trust. Often this circle was limited at the beginning of the first year to family members and previous associates. Ideally, this circle should expand to include mentor teachers, grade-level team members and other school staff, faculty and administration. When this does not occur it limits the new teacher to an extremely small pool of resources. In addition, the creation of an environment which fosters mutual trust and respect may encourage individuals to confidently extend themselves to sources of surrounding support, thus engaging the teacher in opportunities for meaningful reflective dialoguing. This kind of genuine reciprocity of trust and respect requires time and effort to establish and nurture. While formal meetings or conferences can assist in this process, this type of relationship often flourishes in much more relaxed, casual settings where the beginning teacher and

audience can speak freely, candidly, and according to the wants and needs of the novice.

As a subsection of trust and respect, the novice teacher is also affected by their perception of the audience's familiarity with their circumstances and their classroom. In the cases, familiarity also enhanced the economy of the reflective dialogue, allowing the novice teacher to focus on the issues concerning them during their dialogues, rather than on communicating background information pertinent to the situation. Administrators and mentors who spend quality time in the novice teacher's classroom, not purely for evaluative purposes, but to gain familiarity with the teacher and his or her unique class, can encourage richer, multi-themed reflective dialogues with the novice.

Finally, this investigation uncovered the novice teacher's perception of power and their position in the hierarchy of authority. The three subjects in this study affected the topics of their reflective dialogues or surrendered the timing and itinerary of the dialogue when they perceived the audience to be an authority figure. While employment of this social structure for formal evaluative purposes may not be totally undesirable, certainly it is not conducive for authentic dialogues that match the novice teacher's concerns with appropriate, meaningful opportunities to investigate their practices. The fear of evaluation or criticism silences their voice, thus hampering the fluid, unguarded and multi-themed reflective dialogues that represent an important component of their progress towards proficiency. It is important that novice teachers garner opportunities to voice their concerns and successes, allowing them to directly confront the associated causes for such, and establish conscientious practices that will mature towards the tacit knowledge of an expert teacher.

Recommendations for Further Research

While much was learned during this investigation concerning the unique circumstances of novice teachers, their reflective practice, and how their perceptions of audience affects their reflective dialogues; there is still much to be realized. Throughout the study, it became evident that this multi-faceted topic has many layers that delve deep into sociological, psychological, and educational issues. There are a few critical foci that emerged for which the researcher recommends further investigation.

First, it is important that the educational community, and especially those who have specific stewardship over beginning teachers, understand the potential benefits and limitations of both spontaneous and formal dialogues. From this research, formal dialogues would be identified as those that are planned and scheduled, and where the novice teacher senses the specific agenda or purpose is being retained by their counterpart. Spontaneous dialogue, on the other hand, is represented by unscheduled, fluent discussions often initiated by the immediacy of current events in the novice teacher's experiences. Research to more deeply understand not only the differences, but modes of encouraging the positive aspects of each, could greatly enhance the access novice teachers have to voice.

Measurement of authenticity is both awkward and complex. Most often, novice teachers' reflective dialogues utilize the vehicle of the narrative. The difficulty of the narrative does not lie in the actual production of the story, but in the systematic interpretation of it (McEwan, 1997). There is a greater need for the aggressive development of qualitative data collection and benchmarks for interpretation. The

complexities of the novice teacher's paradigm can best be understood by research methods which acknowledge the convolution of this very human experience.

It was observed in this study that all subjects evaded opportunities for written reflective practice. Each identified multiple occasions for the employment of written reflective practice, but opted to not utilize it. All three teachers cited time restraints as being the primary reason for the absence of written documentation of their reflections. This study suggests further investigation into the comparison of verbal and written reflective practices. Important topics to consider include:

- Are verbal reflective dialogues as memorable as written reflections for novice teachers?
- Is talk "cheap?" Is it easier for novice teachers to express themselves verbally? And, does that ease affect their ability to acquire important information and assimilate that information into their own beliefs and practices?

The size of the research sample limited the researcher's ability to investigate the nature of gender in the dynamics of reflective practice and perception of audience. While the two females in this study shared commonalities that differed from the singular male in this study, generalization cannot be drawn from such a small sample. Further research would elucidate our understanding of the differences between male and female perceptions to audience and its affect on their reflective practices. In addition, it would be meaningful to investigate the social interactions between genders: male-male, female-male, and female-female, especially in the context of power and authority.

Additionally, with the increasingly multi-ethnic nature of U.S. classrooms, it is imperative that educators understand the effects of the early teaching years on new teachers of racially ethnic minorities, their unique difficulties and the critical interventions that should result. Because the original intention of including a subject representing an ethnic-minority was not realized in this study, it is recommended that further research in this area be conducted to more fully comprehend the unique complexities experienced by this population of novice-educators.

It is hoped that the results of this study and further investigations in the area of novice teacher reflective practices will give new and significant understandings to researchers, administrators, educators, and others who have responsibility for the induction of novice teachers into the educational profession. Application of these understandings to novice teacher induction could be one tool to curb the currently high attrition rate of new teachers entering the field. Of equal importance, it can be utilized to encourage the professional growth of teachers towards expertise in the classroom, assisting them in connecting educational theory to application and establishing effective, fluent teaching practices.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRIMARY PARTICIPANTS

1. What opportunities do you have to talk about teaching?
2. How often do these opportunities occur?
3. What aspects of teaching do you discuss?
4. With whom do you discuss teaching?
5. Are there others, outside of the education profession, with whom you discuss issues regarding your teaching?
6. (If yes) In what ways do those discussions with individuals outside of the educational profession differ?
7. Is what you discuss affected by the person you are talking with? If so, how?
8. Are there issues or circumstances regarding your teaching that you would be hesitant in discussing with a mentor? Administrator? Peer teacher?
9. Are there any issues that you would be more likely to discuss with the above individuals?
10. How comfortable do you feel in an observation/conferencing setting? Are there certain topics you tend to focus on or avoid? Why?
11. (If a reflective journal or the like exists) How is what you write about similar to or differ from what you talk about? Is it similar with certain people and different with others? Why or why not?

12. With regards to your classroom instruction, have you ever purposefully avoided discussing certain events or circumstances? Why or why not?
13. Have you ever altered information regarding your teaching/classroom when you have discussed it with another person?
14. Have you ever deleted certain classroom events or aspects of classroom events when you spoke about it with another person? Why or why not?
15. Did the person with whom you were discussing the events have an influence on why you made these choices? Explain.
16. Were there any occasions when you desired more opportunities to discuss your teaching practice? Explain.
17. Are you required to produce any reflective documents (i.e., reflective journal, portfolio, or web-based discussions groups)? Did you participate in any of these activities on your own volition? If so, why? And how did these dialogues differ from the face-to-face discussions?

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR SECONDARY
PARTICIPANTS

1. What is your relation to the primary participant?
2. If you act as a mentor/supervisor/peer coach, is this part of your job description? Do you receive compensations (time, salary) for your efforts? How were you assigned to assist this person? By whom?
3. (If not part of formal job description) Why do you choose to discuss aspects of teaching with this person
4. Who initiates these interactions? Why do you perceive it happens this way?
5. What is the normal context of these interactions?
6. How common is it for this person to discuss their teaching with you?
7. What is the nature of those discussions? (i.e., descriptions of classroom events, complaints, questions, advice seeking, etc.)
8. Why do you think this person chose to talk to you about it?
9. (If appropriate) Are there certain aspects of his or her teaching (the novice teacher) that you would feel appropriate he or she discusses with you, but you find they don't? What do you perceive to be the cause of this?

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