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ABSTRACT

As more young children are cared for in group settings, studies are needed that can increase our understanding of prekindergarten teachers' thinking and what guides their teaching. The aim of this study was to understand the theories of action of three educated, experienced, exemplary prekindergarten teachers. Four major questions guided this study: (a) what are the theories of action of the three teachers, (b) what factors have influenced the teacher's theories of action, (c) how do their theories of action guide their teaching, and (d) how does the context impact the teachers, their teaching, and their theories of action? This was a qualitative, non-manipulative, naturalistic inquiry into the teachers' thinking. Educational criticism, a genre of qualitative inquiry developed by Elliot Eisner, was the methodology used. The methods of data collection were: (a) sustained observations of each teacher during the school year, (b) in-depth semi-structured interviews, (c) interviews with supervisors and/or teaching peers, (d) video taping, and (e) examination of various documents pertaining to the teachers' work. The results of the studied were written in the form of educational criticisms, which allowed the researcher to render vivid descriptions, theoretical interpretations, and evaluations of the teachers'
theories of action. When the three educational criticisms were compared, common themes were identified. Three conceptual frameworks were used to analyze the themes: (a) idea-based social constructivism, (b) discourse theory from two viewpoints - Gee's Discourse theory and Bakhtin's view of professional discourse, and (c) the concept of a language of practice. The four major findings of the study were: (a) the three teachers have well-organized, explicit, easily articulated theories of action, which were philosophically aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children; (b) NAEYC's various projects to improve the quality of early education and care of young children have influenced these teachers; (c) NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practice guidelines act as a language of practice for the teachers; and (d) the teachers are meaning makers and decision makers, who actively engage in an internal dialogue with the socially constructed, professional knowledge base that is developmentally appropriate practice. Implications of the research are discussed.
Dedicated to Benjamin, Maggie, and children yet to be and to the three teachers who so generously shared their classrooms, their teaching, and their thoughts about their teaching with me. May Benjamin, Maggie, and other young children be so fortunate as to have teachers like Ann, Mary, and Ann.
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VITA</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>xv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>xvi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context of the Problem</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educated, Experienced, and Exemplary</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Participants of this Study</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Overview of the Methodology</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Underlying Assumptions</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Terms</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the Dissertation</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Thinking</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Theories of Action</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyris and Schön</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shulman's reactions to Schon's Theory in Action</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research in Teachers' Theories of Action</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ix
McCutcheon and Colleagues ................................................................. 24
Clandinin and Colleagues ................................................................. 25
Studies in Prekindergarten/Preschool Teacher Thinking ..................... 27
Instructional planning in a laboratory preschool .................................. 28
A teacher at work: professional development .................................... 29
Thought processes underlying preschool teachers' classroom decisions ................................................................. 30
The implicit theories of early childhood teachers ................................. 31
Beginning preschool teachers' implicit theories .................................. 32
Frameworks of practice: five stories of teacher practical knowledge .................. 33
Implicit theories of emotion of four experienced preschool teachers ........... 35
Constructivism .................................................................................. 38
Idea-Based Social Constructivism ....................................................... 42
Two Views of Discourse .................................................................... 44
Gee .................................................................................................. 45
Bakhtin ............................................................................................. 48
Language of Practice ........................................................................ 50
Conceptual Framework for the Language of Practice ......................... 51
A Language of Practice for Teaching .................................................. 53
Early Childhood Education Language of Practice ............................... 56
NAEYC: History and Influences ......................................................... 57
Nursery Schools: A New Institution ..................................................... 57
National Association for Nursery Education (NANE): A New Organization ................................................................. 58
Emergency Nursery Schools and NANE: A Collaborative Effort ............ 60
Federally Sponsored Lanham Child Care Centers: Another Collaboration ................................................................. 62
NANE to NAEYC .............................................................................. 64
Head Start ......................................................................................... 66
  Prevailing view of the times ............................................................ 67
  View of the original head start planning committee ......................... 71
  Hymes' & Niemeyer's Attempts to Influence Head Start .................... 72
Further Conflict between the Head Start Agenda and And the Goals of NAEYC ................................................................. 75
Curriculum models ............................................................................ 76
Educated teachers vs. anyone can teach young children ....................... 77
Childcare standards and regulations.................................79
Federal government's role in improving early education and care.................................79
The Lesson for NAEYC.........................................................80
NAEYC: The Influential Years.............................................82
  1982: Early childhood teacher education guidelines...............................84
  1984: Accreditation of early childhood education programs.................................86
  1986: Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP).................................88
  1991: Early childhood teacher certification.................................................93
  1992: Curriculum guidelines for early childhood programs.................................94
NAEYC Today.................................................................97
Summary...............................................................................98

3 METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY .............................................100
  Rationale for a Qualitative Research Approach ............................................101
  Qualitative Research...............................................................................105
    Characteristics of Qualitative Research...................................................106
    Kinds of Qualitative Research..................................................................107
    Choice of Qualitative Approach..............................................................109
    Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigm of Qualitative Research. 111
      Constructivist Component of the Constructivist – Interpretative Paradigm .................................................................112
      Constructivist Research........................................................................116
      Arts-Based Research...............................................................................118
      Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism...........................................124
        Description.........................................................................................127
        Interpretation......................................................................................129
        Evaluation..........................................................................................130
        Thematics............................................................................................132
    Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism and this Study ..............................................134
    Design of the Study, Emergent Focus, and Conceptual Frameworks .................................136
    Selection of Participants.........................................................................139
    Data Sources and Collection...................................................................144
      Observation.........................................................................................144
      Videotaping..........................................................................................146
      Interviews............................................................................................147
    Documents and Artifacts........................................................................151
# LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Participants in Wien's Study</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Six Types of Constructivism and Their Positions on Individual/Social Focus</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Chart of the Participants</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 Chart of the Differences Among the Three Teachers</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2 Factors Influencing the Teachers' Theories of Action</td>
<td>442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIGURE</td>
<td>PAGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Educational Connoisseurship and Educational Criticism's Location on the Qualitative Research Landscape
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is like a story, like a journey. Story and journey are familiar patterns with infinite variations. Each story and each journey is special, distinct from all others. Yet all stories share some common features, as do journeys. (Clark, 1995, p. xvi)

A teacher's story or journey is shaped by her theories of action, the ideas, concepts, and beliefs, which influence her actions. Her theories of action act as her pilot or guide as she makes this journey of teaching. What teachers believe, what teachers think, and what teachers do shape their teaching. Studying and describing what teachers think and do as well as why they employ the teaching practices they do can help us to understand their journeys.

What are teachers' theories of action? What influences teachers thinking? Why do teachers do what they do? Using journey as a metaphor of teaching, how are their journeys different? What do teachers' journeys have in common? Just as a journey is influenced by the terrain one travels, the people one encounters, and the various conditions that can impact travel, teaching is influenced by the children, classroom, parents, administrators, and various
other factors of culture and context. How do teachers' theories of action guide them through the complex, practical world of teaching?

This study is aimed at understanding the theories of actions of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers in different non-public school prekindergarten settings. It is a study in teacher thinking.

Context of the Problem

Each year more and more children younger than five are cared for in group settings outside their homes. The requirements to care for children vary from state to state and often the requirements are minimal (Mitchell, Ripple, & Chanana, 1998). In many states the people who care for young children only need a high school diploma (Bowman, 1997). Few states call the people who work with very young children teachers. Most states refer to the individuals as childcare employees or caregivers. States only refer to them as teachers if they work with young children in public schools settings where the teachers are required to have a teaching certificate or license.

Public school prekindergarten teachers in this state must have an appropriate teacher certificate or license from the state's Department of Education. Head Start teachers currently need to have Child Development Associate credential, which requires no college degree or college credits (Mitchell, Ripple, & Chanana, 1998). According to the state's Child Day Care Licensing laws, individuals who care for children in childcare centers
are called childcare employees and are only required to have a high school diploma plus 45 clock hours of training, which does not have to be attached to college credit.

A major issue in the early education and care of young children is quality (Bowman, 1997). Quality care impacts the children's development not only during the time they are in an early education and care setting, but also as the children go through elementary school. According to the conclusions reached in The Children of the Cost, Quality, and Outcomes Study Go to School, a major research study, the quality of child care classroom practices influences children's cognitive development (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999). Positive interactions, a caring teacher, and an emotionally close teacher-child relationship also influence "children's social development through the early school years" (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999, p. 2).

Research has indicated that a key factor in providing quality experiences for young children is educated teachers (Bowman, 1997; Cost, Quality, and Child Outcomes Study Team, 1995; Hofferth, Shawman, & Henke, 1998; Kisker, Hofferth, Phillips, & Farquhar, 1991). An individual educated in the care and education of young children is more likely to have acquired and developed the knowledge and skill to provide quality care.

What do we know about the thinking of educated teachers of young children? What guides and influences a teacher's actions? How does her thinking impact the type of early education and care she provides the children in her classroom?
Statement of the Problem

The study of teaching from a teacher thinking perspective strives for the development of an explanation and understanding of teaching (Halkes & Olson, 1984, p. 1). "What teachers think, what teachers believe and what teachers do" (Hargreaves, 1995, p. ix) shape their teaching. Studying and describing what teachers think and do as well as why they do it can help us to understand their teaching. Eisenhart and Borko (1993) called for research into "teachers' knowledge systems; their thoughts, judgments, and decisions; the relationship between teachers' knowledge systems and their cognitions; and how these cognitions are translated into action" (p. 25).

Goffin (1989), who reviewed research on teaching and tried to extrapolate the research to the teaching of very young children, called for a research agenda for early childhood education which would focus on the teaching of children before they go to kindergarten. A key piece of research should deal with developing "more understanding about early childhood teachers' thinking and decision making" (Goffin, 1989, p. 199).

The study of teacher thinking has been a viable research topic for more than 20 years, but the vast majority of the research has been done with elementary and high school teachers (Fang, 1996, p. 59). Several studies have been done that focused on the thinking of early childhood educators but the majority of the teachers in those studies taught kindergarten and primary grades.
In the United States, nearly 13 million children younger than kindergarten age attend some type of program of early education and care every day (Hofferth, Shauman, & Henke, 1998). Approximately one million adults provide this early education and care. What do we know about the thinking of the people who are providing early education and care to young children every day? What guides the teachers of young children on their teaching journey?

Only a handful of studies have investigated the thinking of preschool or prekindergarten teachers. Hill, Yinger, and Robins (1983) studied how preschool teachers plan in a laboratory preschool. Yonemura (1986) investigated the professional development of one nursery school teacher and examined the practical knowledge that guided her teaching. Spodek (1987) conducted a study of the thought processes of four preschool teachers. Li (1992), a student of Spodek, studied the implicit theories of two beginning preschool teachers. Wien (1995) explored the framework of practices of five Canadian childcare teachers. Delaney (1995) researched the implicit theories of emotion of four preschool teachers who were retiring.

This dissertation study added to the above research by examining the theories of actions of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers.
Research Questions

This study explored the following questions regarding the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers:

1. What are the theories of action of the teachers in the study?
2. What factors have influenced the teacher's theories of action?
3. How do their theories of action guide their teaching?
4. How does the context of the setting and the children impact the teachers, their teaching, and their theories of action?

Educated, Experienced, and Exemplary

The focus of this dissertation study concerned the theories of action of three prekindergarten teachers. The focus of this study was not on the prekindergarten teachers' education, experience, or exemplariness, but these three attributes were a part of the selection criteria for the following three reasons. First, no study has been done on the theories of actions of prekindergarten teachers who were (a) educated in early childhood education, (b) experienced, and (c) exemplary. This study should add information to the literature base about the theories of action of prekindergarten teachers who have the listed characteristics.

Educated in early childhood means to have a degree in early childhood education. Experienced means to have a least five years of experience.
teaching children younger than kindergarten age. Five years of experience is considered to be the minimum number of years it takes to develop the skills of an expert teacher (Berliner, 1992; Katz, 1977).

Exemplary is not easily defined. Sternberg and Horvath (1995) argue "there exists no well-defined standard that all experts meet and that no nonexpert meet. Rather, experts bear a family resemblance to one another and it is their resemblance to one another that structures the category 'expert'" (p. 9). Teachers, who are exemplary, are "so labeled because their teaching behavior reflects a successful blend of the best qualities associated with 'good' and effective teaching" (Hamachek, 1999, p. 190). Being an exemplary teachers, according to Collinson (1996), involves the "continuous development of a triad of knowledge:

1. professional knowledge (subject matter, curricular, and pedagogical knowledge)
2. interpersonal knowledge (relationships with students, the educational community, and the local community)
3. intrapersonal knowledge (reflection, ethics, and dispositions)" (p. 1).

Exemplary teachers can be recognized and identified, especially by their peers (Jackson, 1968; Van Schaack, 1982). Their peers have recognized the three prekindergarten teachers in this study as being exemplary teachers. In defining exemplary for this study, I am referring to teachers who are examples of a particular type of practice that is looked upon by their professional peers as examples of excellent teaching.
The second reason educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers were chosen is that an educated, experienced, and exemplary teacher is more likely to be "one who has taken steps toward making explicit his or her . . . theories about learners, curriculum, subject matter, and the teacher's role (Clark & Peterson, 1986, p. 292). Experienced and exemplary teachers are "likely to have richer, more well-instantiated representations of knowledge about subject matter, teaching strategies, and the characteristics of children" (Ennis, Cothran, & Loftus, 1997, p. 75). As the focus of this dissertation study was on theories of action, it seemed likely that exemplary teachers would be able to articulate their theories of action and to practice those theories in the classroom.

The third reason educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers were chosen is that mature professionals, such as these three prekindergarten teachers, adjust and adapt their theories to their own classrooms (Hamachek, 1999). Biber and Snyder (1948) wrote "there are many kinds of good teachers and many kinds of good teaching. They are good only in terms of the environment in which they exist" (p. 285). Using education, experience, and exemplariness as criteria for participant selection resulted in information-rich case studies of the theories of action of three prekindergarten teachers.

The Participants of this Study

Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are educated, experienced, and exemplary teachers of young children. Each was identified as meeting the selection
criteria and each was asked to be part of the study. Kate, who is in her late twenties, teaches in an inner city, full-day Head Start and has taught for six years. She has a master's degree in early childhood education. The state's Association for the Education of Young Children has selected her as a teacher of the year.

Audrey, who is in her forties, teaches nursery school in a private alternative school and has taught at this school for 10 years. She has a bachelor's degree in education with an emphasis on early childhood education. Her fellow teachers and the community recognize Audrey as an excellent teacher.

Maggie, who is in her sixties, has taught for 13 years in a part-time childcare center at an urban college. Prior to teaching in the college childcare center, she taught at a parent co-op for more than 18 years. She has a total of 35 years of experience teaching children younger than five years of age. Maggie has an associate degree in early childhood education. In the 1980s, the state's Association for the Education of Young Children selected Maggie as a teacher of the year.

Significance of the Study

The results of this study can increase the understanding of what theories of actions are for prekindergarten teachers. The factors that influence the teachers' theories of action can be disclosed. The theories of action can illuminate what it is about the teaching of these three educated, experienced, exemplary teachers that makes it possible for them to provide quality early
education and care. The study can show how the context of the childcare setting and the children impact teachers’ decisions and methods of teaching. The information may provide insights for teacher educators into what influences the theories of actions of teachers and may help preservice and inservice teachers reflect upon and increase their understanding of their own theories of action.

An Overview of the Methodology

This was a qualitative, non-manipulative, naturalistic inquiry about the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers. The basic methodological framework used for this study was educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, a form of qualitative inquiry developed by Elliot Eisner. Teachers’ theories of action (McCutcheon, 1995), was the major conceptual framework of this study. Three other conceptual frameworks were used to examine, analyze, and interpret the teachers’ theories of action:

1. Idea-based social constructivism (Prawat & Peterson, 1999)
3. The concept of a language of practice (Yinger, 1987)

Just as a prism is used to analyze a spectrum of light, idea-based social constructivism, discourse, and language of practice were used to illuminate and analyze the theories of action of the prekindergarten teachers in this study. A prism analyzes the same phenomena (light) but as you turn the
prism, you see different facets of the light. The different conceptual frameworks will allow the reader to view the three teachers' theories of action from slightly different angles.

The primary methods of data collection were: (a) sustained observations of each teacher during the 97-98 school year, (b) in-depth semi-structured interviews with each teacher, (c) interviews with each teacher's supervisor and/or peer, (d) video taping of each teacher, and (e) examination of various documents pertaining to the teachers' work.

NUD*IST, an acronym for Non-numerical Unstructured Data - Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing, a computer qualitative data analysis package, was used to support the preliminary coding and analysis of the data collected during the research. After the preliminary data analysis, I had to purchase a new computer. After many hours of frustrating attempts to use the qualitative software analysis program on my new computer, I contacted the developers of the software and I was told NUD*IST 4 was not compatible with the operating system of my new computer. Rather than wait for a updated version of NU*DIST, I finished the data analysis using paper, pencil, charts, and the copy and paste features on the computer's word processing software to create my own analysis reports. I analyzed the data by developing codes for different categories of beliefs, concepts, and images. Common themes regarding the teachers' theories of action were identified when I compared and contrasted the data from each teacher. The results of the research were written in the form of educational criticisms, which allowed me,
as the researcher/critic, to render vivid descriptions, theoretical interpretations, and evaluations of the teachers' theories of action.

Interpretation of the data analysis was discussed with a peer debriefer. Accuracy of the teachers' interviews, my observations, and interpretations were verified through member checking.

Underlying Assumptions

The following assumptions guided my thinking in this study:

1. Theories of action guide a teacher's teaching.
2. It is the nature of humans to search for meaning.
3. Experiences and interactions with others influence learning.
4. Educated, experienced individuals who care for and educate young children can be teachers.
5. Teaching young children is a complex intellectual, emotional, social, moral, personal, and physical endeavor.

Definition of Terms

A number of key terms which are important concepts of this study are defined below:

- Developmentally appropriate practice is the term used to denote a “framework, a philosophy, or an approach to working with young children” (Bredekamp and Rosegrant, 1992, p. 4). It is based on what is presently known and understood about child development and how to teach young children (Bredekamp and Copple, 1997, v. 5). Developmentally appropriate practice is pragmatic, adheres to a
constructivist approach, and is phenomenological in nature. DAP is the abbreviation often used for developmentally appropriate practices.

- *Discourse* has multiple meanings and the meanings vary according to the individual defining it. A dictionary defines discourse as a “well formulated or coherently arranged serious and systematic treatment of a subject in writing or speaking” or a “verbal exchange of ideas” (Gove, 1976, p. 647). Gee (1989) defines discourse (with a lower case “d”) as connected stretches of language and Discourse (with a capital “D”) as a "way of being in the world" (Gee, 1989, pp. 6-7). A discourse, according to Bakhtin (1981), facilitates the social construction of a worldview which insures a "maximum of mutual understanding" (p. 271).

- *Early childhood education* is the term currently used to denote the early education and care of children from birth to age eight. Although NAEYC, the leading organization dealing with the early childhood education field, consistently uses this meaning, it is not a universally accepted definition.

- *Idea-based constructivism* is rooted in the work of Dewey and Peirce and is a form of symbolic social constructivism. This view of social constructivism assigns a prominent role to the social, individual, and experimentation with ideas or concepts in the development of meaning (Prawat & Peterson, 1999).

- *Language of practice* is thinking and acting “in ways appropriate to the demands of the profession” (Yinger, 1987, p. 293). It includes “the vocabulary and jargon that practitioners use within a profession [as well
as] a logic or ‘grammar’ for thought and action, a system of meaning, and

- **National Association for the Education of Young Children** is the nation’s largest
organization for early childhood professionals who care for and educate
young children. NAEYC has over 100,000 members and publishes a
journal, *Young Children*, as well as numerous other publications of interest
to teachers of young children. NAEYC holds several national conferences
each year. Each state and many localities within each state have
organizations affiliated with NAEYC.

- **Preschool or Prekindergarten** are the terms currently being used to denote the
early education and care of three, four, and young five year olds before
they go to "real school", i.e., kindergarten.

- **Theories of action** are “interrelated concepts, beliefs, and images teachers
hold about their work. They guide the decision-making process before and
during teaching and form the interpretive lens teachers apply to their post-
teaching reflection” (McCutcheon, 1995, p. 34).

**Organization of the Dissertation**

In Chapter One, I have (a) outlined the context of the problem, (b)
stated the problem, (c) listed the research questions, (d) provided a brief
description of the three participants of the study, (e) summarized the
significance of the study, (f) presented a brief overview of the study’s
methodology, (g) explained the underlying assumptions of the study, and
(h) defined some of the key terms used in this study.
Chapter Two presents a review of literature pertaining to: (a) teacher thinking research and teachers' theories of action; (b) constructivism, with emphasis on idea-based social constructivism; (c) two views of discourse, Gee's Discourse theory and Bakhtin's view of professional discourse; (d) language of practice; and (e) the National Association for the Education of Young Children, its history and influences on the professional discourse and early childhood education language of practice.

In Chapter Three, I describe the research paradigm, the research approach, and research methods used in this study. First, I discuss the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach for this study and then proceed to discuss qualitative research, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, arts-based research, and educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, the particular qualitative research genre used in this study. This information should assist the reader in understanding educational connoisseurship and educational criticism and its position within the qualitative research family. This is followed by methodology information regarding design of the study, conceptual frameworks, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, creditability of the study, ethical considerations, and challenges to writing the three educational criticisms.

Chapter Four is the educational criticism of Kate, the Head Start teacher. Chapter Five is the educational criticism of Audrey, the nursery school teacher. Chapter Six is the educational criticism of Maggie, the part-time childcare teacher. A layered story approach is used for the educational
criticisms. Each criticism is composed of five layers. In the first layer, I introduce the teacher, her background, the childcare center where she is teaching, and the children and adults with whom she worked. In the second layer, I recreate a day in the teacher's classroom early in the school year. With this recreated day, the reader can begin to see the teacher in action and be introduced to the teacher's teaching style. In the third layer, I describe the teacher's theories of action expressed primarily in her own words or voice. In the fourth layer, I provide a glimpse or snap shot of the teacher's classroom late in the school year so the reader can see both the growth of the children and how the teacher's theories of actions are implemented as the year progressed. The fifth and final layer is an epilogue of what happened to the teacher after the research component of this study had been completed. The three educational criticisms form the basis for the analysis and interpretation of this study.

In Chapter Seven, I continue with the educational criticism methodology and explore the thematics or themes of the three educational criticisms. Themes are the essential points or pervasive qualities found in the text of the educational criticisms. Using this approach, I analyze the teachers' theories of action. Findings and implications are discussed.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH

The review of literature related to this dissertation is organized and discussed under five major headings: (a) teacher thinking research; (b) constructivism, with emphasis on idea-based social constructivism; (c) two views of discourse: Gee's Discourse theory and Bakhtin's view of professional discourse; (d) language of practice; and (e) the National Association for the Education of Young Children, its history and influences on the professional discourse and early childhood education language of practice.

The first section, teacher thinking, includes a brief overview of the teacher thinking literature. This is followed by a discussion of the impetus for teachers' theories of action research. The main conceptual framework of this study is teachers' theories of action and relevant research in this area is reviewed. The last segment of the first section includes a description of six teacher thinking studies involving North American preschool and prekindergarten teachers.

The second, third, and fourth major sections focus on three different conceptual frameworks that I will use to illuminate the theories of action of
the three teachers in this study. The fifth and longest section of this chapter focuses on the National Association for the Education of Young Children organization and the historical, political, and social factors, which have contributed to the current state of the professional discourse and the language practice for the field of early childhood education. The information in this last section sets the stage for understanding the why, the how, and the what in terms of the impact NAEYC has had and continues to have on the field of early childhood education.

**Teacher Thinking**

Research on teacher thinking has been a viable area of study for more than 20 years and is an important area of inquiry related to teachers, their thinking, and their teaching practices (Calderhead, 1996). The interest in teacher thinking is international and published research findings reflect teacher thinking and teaching practices in over 19 different countries (International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching, 1998).

The International Study Association on Teachers and Teaching, formerly the International Study Association on Teacher Thinking, lists four different clusters of teacher thinking research reflected in studies, completed or in progress, and in published findings:

- teachers' thoughts, conceptions, practical theories, 'voice,' etc.
- teachers' intentions, thought processes and cognitions, personal practical knowledge
- teachers' thinking as an aspect of professional actions
- teachers' thinking and action as influenced by contextual factors in their structural, cultural and social environments. (ISATT, 1998, p. 1)
The above list covers a wide array of topics related to teachers, their thinking, and their teaching practices. Numerous reviews of different aspects of the teacher thinking literature have been conducted over the last 18 years (Calderhead, 1996), five of which are mentioned below. One of the earliest teacher thinking literature reviews, conducted by Shavelson and Stern (1981), surveyed research dealing with teachers' pedagogical thoughts, judgments, decisions, and behaviors. Clark and Peterson (1986) compiled a comprehensive review of studies about teachers' thought processes with emphasis on teachers' planning, teachers' interactive thoughts and decisions, and teachers' theories and beliefs. Fenstermacher (1994) reviewed teacher thinking research as well as other teacher research that attempted to address the following questions:

1. What is known about effective teaching?
2. What do teachers know?
3. What knowledge is essential for teaching?
4. Who produces knowledge about teaching? (p. 5)

Fang (1996) reviewed teacher thinking literature that addressed the relationships between teacher beliefs and practices. Calderhead (1996) reviewed the research literature which focused on the "content and nature of teachers' knowledge and beliefs and on the processes involved in the growth of professional knowledge and teaching" (p. 709). Many others have also reviewed the teacher thinking research (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 1987; Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987; Pajares, 1992). The ISATT has published and/or
supported the publication of seven edited books composed of collections of research on teacher thinking: Halkes and Olson (1984); Peretz, Bromme, and Halkes (1986); Lowyck and Clark (1989); Day, Pope, and Denicolo (1990); Day, Calderhead, and Denicolo (1993); Carlgren, Handal, and Vaage, (1994); and Kompf, Bond, Dworet, and Boak, (1996).

The research literature related to teacher thinking is spread across a wide array of topics, which has created a broad and diverse literature base. As a result, a wide variation exists in topics being studied. Factors that have contributed to such variations include: (a) the many different worldviews of the teacher thinking researchers and the assumptions they make, (b) the different methodologies and conceptual frameworks employed in the research, (c) the research topics of interest in different countries, (d) the wide array of terms used in describing teacher thinking, and (e) the time and point in history in which the research occurred.

This dissertation focused on teacher's theories of action, one aspect of teacher thinking, and the factors that influence these theories of action. In the next section, I will review the literature relating to theories of action.

Teachers' Theories of Action

The impetus for interest in teacher's practical theories of action originated from a curriculum theory stance, especially Schwab's work on the practical and the commonplaces of curriculum: teacher, subject matter, student, and milieu (Delaney, 1995). Schwab (1978a) called for a "totally new and extensive pattern of empirical study of classroom action and reaction . . . as
a basis for beginning to know what [teachers] are doing” (p. 313). According to Schwab (1978b), it was imperative for researchers to "include knowledge of what these teachers are likely to know” (p. 367). Schwab (1978a) wrote that theories of curriculum and of teaching and learning cannot, alone, tell us what and how to teach, because questions of what and how to teach arise in concrete situations loaded with concrete particulars of time, place, person, and circumstances. (p. 322)

Schwab (1983) believed "teachers practise [sic] an art. Moments of choice of what to do, how to do it, with whom and at what pace, arise hundreds of times a school day, and arise differently every day and with every group of students” (p. 245). From Schwab’s perspective it was important to understand how teachers practice their art. Out of this need to understand came the interest in teachers’ theories of action.

**Argyris and Schön.** The work of Argyris and Schön (1974) regarding the practice of professionals became a starting point for research on teachers' theories of action. "Theories of professional practice," Argyris and Schön (1974) wrote, "are best understood as special cases of theories of action that determine all deliberate behavior" (p. 4). Argyris and Schön believed "theories [were] theories regardless of their origin" (p. 4). Theories are either "practical, common-sense theories [or] academic or scientific theories" (p. 4).

Argyris and Schön (1974) wrote “my theory of action is normative for me; that is, it states what I ought to do if I wish to achieve certain results. It is a theory of control” (p. 6). A theory of action, then, is a theory of deliberate human behavior, which is also a theory of control for the individual.
A professional's theories of action can be divided into two categories: espoused theory and theory-in-use (Argyris & Schön, 1974). The espoused theory is the one the individual gives verbal allegiance to and the one she verbally communicates to others. The theory that actually governs the individual's actions is her theory-in-use, "which may or may not be compatible with [her] espoused theory" (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 7) and the theories-in-use "are usually tacit" (Schön, 1987, p. 255).

Schön (1987) uses the term "knowing-in-action to refer to the sorts of know-how we reveal in our intelligent action - publicly observable, performances" (p. 25). The individual may not be able to verbally explain why she is doing what she is doing. If the individual can describe and explain her behavior, the "descriptions of knowing-in-action are always constructions. They are always attempts to put into explicit, symbolic form a kind of intelligence that begins by being tacit and spontaneous" (p. 25).

From a theory of action the individual creates a theory of practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974). "A theory of practice consists of a set of interrelated theories of action that specify for the situations of the practice the actions that will, under the relevant assumptions, yield intended consequences. Theories of practice [are] aimed at enhancing effectiveness" (Argyris & Schön, 1974, p. 6).

Schön (1987) continued to expand his theory and wrote on the importance of reflection in professional development. He stressed the need
for more than just "spontaneous knowing-in-action" (p. 26). The professional teacher needs "reflection-in-action" (p. 26), and through this reflection-in-action the teacher will be able to display more professional knowing-in-action.

Argyris and Schön's work has been widely used as a conceptual framework in the study of teachers' theories of action. However, other researchers question the dualism involved in Argyris and Schön's theory of practice.

**Shulman's reactions to Schön's theory in action.** Shulman (1988), although supportive of Schön's work, was critical of Schön's use of dichotomies. Shulman (1988) wrote that Schön

perpetuates dichotomies. He offers the dichotomy between school knowledge and reflection-in-action, between teaching and coaching, between technical rationality and artistry, between the determinate and the indeterminate. I worry that his divided worlds are too neat, too clean - and quite misleading. (p. 33)

Based on his own research, Shulman (1986, 1987) believed it was important to avoid the "either-or-thinking" (Shulman, 1988, p. 37) when it came to teachers' theories of action. Teachers are "capable of teaching in a manner that combines technical and the reflective, the theoretical and practical, the universal and the concrete" (p. 33). As a professional, the teacher is involved in an interplay between "technical rationality and reflection-in-action" (p. 35) and to "assign virtue to only one of the sides" (p. 37) is detrimental to all concerned. Teaching is a complex endeavor and teachers' theories of actions are, likewise, complex and cannot be easily and simply classified.
Research in Teachers' Theories of Action

Two educational researchers, who have approached the study of teachers' personal theories of action from a curriculum theory stance, are McCutcheon (1995) and Clandinin (1986). In research done alone or with colleagues, McCutcheon and Clandinin have approached this area of teacher thinking research from slightly different angles.

McCutcheon and colleagues. Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) describe teaching as a complex task, which involves intentional and skillful action. A teacher needs to possess "practical knowledge" (p. 54), which is the kind of knowledge Argyris and Schön called theories of action. The term practical knowledge is used to "distinguish it from 'educational theory'" (p. 54).

Practical theories of teaching are

the conceptual structures and visions that provide teachers with reasons for acting as they do, and for choosing the teaching activities and curriculum materials they choose in order to be effective. They are the principles or propositions that undergrid and guide teachers' appreciations, decisions, and actions. (Sanders & McCutcheon, 1986, pp. 54-55)

The practical theories of teaching a teacher holds may be either explicit or implicit. Teachers use multiple theories to guide the practical work of teaching. The practical theories a teacher holds involve value choices, her view of effective teaching, and what opportunities she wants her students to have. Sanders and McCutcheon (1986), in their theory of teachers' practical theories of action, believe "teaching is practical work carried out in a socially
constructed, complex, and institutionalized world of schooling. The world shapes action and gives context to its meaning" (pp. 50-51).

Ross, Cornett, and McCutcheon (1992) add more emphasis to the social influences on aspects of teachers' personal theories of action. According to their position, "teachers' practical knowledge and theories focuses on social mediation and the influence of social and institutional contexts of teaching" (p. 10). In this view, teaching involves "complex, context-bound professional tasks" (p. 14) and educational researchers have to be sensitive to the cultural environment of teaching (p. 16). The teachers' theories of action contain "common elements underlying their practice" (McCutcheon, 1992, p. 196) and some teachers can be "influenced by workshops, graduate courses, and compelling literature" (p. 196). McCutcheon (1995) defines teachers' practical theories of action as

interrelated concepts, beliefs, and images teachers hold about their work. They guide the decision-making process before and during teaching and form the interpretive lens teachers apply to their post-teaching reflections. These reflections inform teachers' future decision making as well. In sum, they affect teachers' preactive and interactive planning and postactive reflections. (p. 34)

Clandinin and colleagues. Clandinin (1986) focused her early research on personal practical knowledge, a special kind of knowledge teachers use in their practice. Personal practical knowledge, according to Clandinin (1985), "is neither theoretical, in the sense of theories of learning, teaching, and curriculum, nor merely practical" (p. 362). The teacher's own personal practical knowledge combines both kinds of knowledge in unique ways
(Clandinin, 1986). It is not possible to capture all of a teacher's understanding but a good deal can be learned about a teacher by investigating her personal practical knowledge. The knowledge the teacher possesses and uses is embodied in her practices (Clandinin, 1985, 1986) and is expressed in the form of "images in action" (Clandinin, 1986).

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) expanded on the idea of personal practical knowledge. In addition to images, a teacher's knowledge can be expressed in terms of rules or maxims she personally employs, in practical principles, in a personal philosophy, in metaphors, in storied narratives, and in the rhythms of routines of her practice. A teacher's personal practical knowledge involves a kind of "dwelling in" (p. 90). The dwelling in "is the knowledge in which we live and that lives in us" (p. 90). When a new idea or concept becomes part of the teacher and "is no longer an idea per se but is an idea in practice" (p. 90), it becomes part of the teacher's personal practical knowledge and dwells in the teacher.

In more recent works, Clandinin and Connelly (1995, 1996) and Connelly and Clandinin (1999) have expanded their research focus to include not only the personal aspects of teaching but also the in-classroom and the out-of-classroom context, which influence a teacher's knowledge. Clandinin and Connelly (1995) use the metaphor, professional knowledge landscapes, to denote the factors that influence a teacher's knowledge. The professional knowledge landscape is "positioned at the interface of theory and practice in
teachers' lives" (p. 4) and "is composed of a wide variety of components and influenced by a wide variety of people, places, and things" (p. 5).

McCutcheon and Clandinin's research on teachers' theories of action, practical knowledge, and professional knowledge landscape have contributed to an improved understanding of what influences teachers, their thinking, and their teaching.

In the next section, I will look at the teacher thinking research, which focused on prekindergarten or preschool teachers.

**Studies on Prekindergarten/Preschool Teacher Thinking**

The study of teacher thinking has been a viable research topic for more than 20 years, but the vast majority of the research has been done with elementary and high school teachers (Fang, 1996, p. 59). In an extended search, I found six studies of North America preschool/prekindergarten teachers, which could be directly classified as belonging to or associated with the teacher thinking literature. Several other studies focused on preschool or prekindergarten teachers, but the main emphasis was not on teacher thinking (e.g., Ayers, 1989). The following six studies are described in chronological order and it is possible to see the evolution, different strands, and trends of the teacher thinking literature. The earlier preschool teacher thinking studies focused on teacher planning and teacher thought processes. The more recent preschool teacher thinking studies focused on theories of action.
Instructional planning in a laboratory preschool. Hill, Yinger, and Robins (1983) studied how six preschool teachers plan the curriculum for the care and education of children, 2 1/2 to 5 years old, in a laboratory preschool. The article focused on the planning, which is defined as "preparing a framework for guiding future action" (p. 182). The research found the teachers' planning took on many forms and that individual teachers used unique strategies that worked for her and for the children she taught.

In planning for the children, the teachers took into consideration the available supplies and materials, the characteristics of the group of children, the characteristics of individual children, the center's goals, and the teacher's role. The factors the six preschool teachers were most likely to consider were materials and individual children's characteristics, interests, and needs.

The center was based on a constructivist philosophy, where children were considered to be active learners and where they could construct knowledge through discovery and guided discovery. For this reason, the teachers felt it was important to have an "object-rich environment" (p. 185). The availability and selection of materials and the arrangements of the materials were important considerations during planning. If a planned activity did not flow smoothly, the teachers would rearrange the materials and physical environment as a way of restructuring the activity.

The teachers considered the characteristics, needs, and interests of individual children when planning. The teachers referred to this process as an "up-side down pyramid" (p. 187) where they integrated plans for individual
children into the group plans. The materials and activities developed for individual children were available for any of the children to use or participate in, but the teachers guided the specific child to the material or activity. The up-side down pyramid approach allowed the teachers to make their "plans for individuals part of the daily group activities" (p. 188).

The researchers concluded, "teacher planning is a complex cognitive activity that proceeds in a variety of forms and begins from a number of different points" (p. 192). Preschool teachers' most common starting points, available materials and individual children, make sense in that the demands of preschool teaching are very different because of the age of the children and "due to the absence of a clear subject agenda" (p. 192).

**A Teacher at work: Professional development.** Yonemura (1986) conducted a qualitative study on Jean, a nursery school teacher in a laboratory school at a major research university. The aim of the study was to disclose the nursery school teacher's practical knowledge that guided her teaching and to examine her professional development. Yonemura examined the teacher's thinking, values, and beliefs and considered how these influenced the teacher's practice.

Jean cared for the children she taught and considered them to be competent, capable, and knowing human beings. Jean thought it was important for children to share in the teaching-learning process and to share in the decision making. Time was an important element in Jean's teaching and she provided large blocks of time for children to play and supported the
children's need for time to accomplish self-chosen tasks. An important goal for Jean was to assist children in developing as individuals and as group members.

Jean's curriculum consisted of helping children to live fully in the "insistent present" (p. 66). Learning was both an individual task and a "community venture" (p. 77). The curriculum was not some "random or hit-miss but was energetically undertaken by the children more or less spontaneously and by Jean more or less purposefully" (p. 77). Education, in Jean's view, was not something that could be broken up into small fragments, but had to be approached from a holistic perspective. Jean felt this type of curriculum was a foundation for future learning.

A key component of Jean's professional practice was her reflection on and about her teaching. She consistently monitored her teaching to "ensure consistency with her educational beliefs and intentions" (p. 45). When Jean was constrained by the system in which she worked, she would search for and strive to do what was best for the children. What was best was strongly connected to her values and beliefs. Yonemura illustrated Jean's beliefs and values acted as guides for her teaching.

**Thought processes underlying preschool teachers' classroom decisions.** Spodek (1987) studied the thought processes underlying the teaching decisions of four preschool teachers. The aim of the study was "to identify the theories-in-use that underlie the day-to-day classroom decisions of preschool teachers" (p. 200). The four teachers had bachelor's degrees in
early childhood education, child development, or elementary education. Three teachers taught in half-day programs and two of the three taught in the same preschool. The fourth preschool teacher taught in an extended day childcare program. All the teachers had some experience in teaching, but Spodek did not elaborate further on the teachers' years of experience.

From observations and interviews, Spodek identified 730 concepts and beliefs held by the teachers. The concepts and beliefs were classified into two broad divisions: "'scientific concepts' and 'value beliefs'" (p. 201). Only 8 of the concepts and beliefs were held in common by all four preschool teachers. Twenty-one additional concepts and beliefs were held in common by three of the four preschool teachers. After analyzing the concepts and data, Spodek (1987) concluded

relatively few of the theories used by the [preschool] teachers were grounded in reliable knowledge of child development. Rather the teachers' decisions were often opportunistic and seem to be rooted in a form of personal practical knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1984) rather than the technical knowledge of child development and learning theory. (p. 206)

Given the fact Spodek found so few commonalities among the preschool teachers, he believed it would be "difficult to identify a common core of professional thought among [preschool] teachers" (p. 207).

**The implicit theories of early childhood teachers.** Spodek (1988a, 1988b) also wrote about the same four preschool teachers from the 1987 study and compared them with the findings of a study done on five primary school teachers. The expanded study focused on the nine teachers' implicit theories,
which Spodek did not define. According to the findings of this expanded study, the preschool teachers held fewer concepts and beliefs in common than did the primary teachers. Spodek (1988a) concluded

the diversity of teachers' implicit theories at all levels, however, seem to suggest that there are fewer commonalities among the implicit theories of early childhood education teachers than might be expected - fewer implicit theories about common goals, common values, about common processes, and about common procedures. (p. 28)

Beginning preschool teachers' implicit theories. Li (1992), a student of Spodek, conducted a case study of two beginning preschool teachers and their implicit theories of action. Li defined a teacher's implicit theory as the "conceptions of a teacher's personal values, beliefs, and rationales that underlie teaching. [They] are not usually explicitly articulated in speech or writing by the teacher, but can be elicited" (p. 6).

The two teachers had bachelor's degrees, but not in early childhood or child development. Megan had a degree in psychology and Ann had a degree in health education. At the time of the study, Megan was in her first year of teaching. Ann had taught at Head Start one year before moving to the same daycare center as Megan.

Li observed the teachers one to two mornings a week for a 10-week period. Even though each teacher was there for a full day, Li only observed them in the morning because "the teachers were most active in the morning" (p. 36). Three interviews were conducted with each teacher. Adapting a variation of categories developed and used by Clandinin (1983), Spodek (1987), and Yonemura (1986), Li analyzed and classified the teachers' concepts.
and beliefs into three broad categories: views about children; perspectives on education and teaching; and interpersonal relations.

Based on the findings of her study, Li (1992) concluded the new preschool teachers possessed a wide range of implicit theories about educational goals, child development, teaching, discipline, child’s learning, teacher role, and so forth. On some domains, these two teachers shared similar opinions, which indicated that there may be some basic common knowledge in preschool teacher’ implicit theories. (p. 89)

**Frameworks of practice: Five stories of teacher practical knowledge.**

Wien’s (1995) qualitative study was aimed at understanding why it was difficult for childcare teachers to construct and use developmentally appropriate practices in their childcare classrooms. Five childcare teachers, who worked in five different daycare centers in a downtown area of a large Canadian city, were randomly selected to participate in this study. The five teachers varied in experience and education (See Table 2.1).
Based on her research of the five childcare teachers, Wien identified two frameworks of practice: teacher dominion and developmental appropriateness. In teacher dominion, the "location of power" is in the teacher. The teacher decides what the children will learn and then transmits the "knowledge through direct instruction" (Wien, 1995, p. 4). In developmental appropriateness, the teacher and children share power, both are active agents "who seek out and construct knowledge through active interaction with others" (p. 4). These two framework support different views
of the children, of their development, and of the teacher's role. Of the five teachers, only Liz, who had just completed a 16 month in-service training in High Scope, a well-known early childhood curriculum, exhibited a "clear allegiance" (p. xii) to developmentally appropriate practice in both words and practice. One teacher moved between the two frameworks of practice. The other three teachers' teaching practices were classified in the teacher dominion framework.

Wien concluded three factors influenced the teachers' ability to construct and use developmentally appropriateness as a framework of practice. First, the teacher needed to know and understand developmentally appropriate practices including a thorough understanding of the concepts, words, meanings, and actions related to developmentally appropriateness. Second, the teacher was influenced by the context of the center. The center's philosophy, the administration, and her co-workers could support or hinder a framework of developmentally appropriate practice. Third, the teacher's inclinations to reflect on her teaching, a desire to strive to improve her practice, and to grow professionally were powerful determinants in the selection of a framework of practice.

The implicit theories of emotion of four experienced preschool teachers. The aim of Delaney's (1995) qualitative study was "to uncover the content and structure of the teachers' thinking about children's emotions and emotional development" (p. 199). The subjects of her study were four educated, experienced, but "ordinary" preschool teachers (p. 6). Each teacher
had a master's degree: two were in early childhood education, one was in elementary education, and one was in education. The master degrees had been obtained in the 1960s and 1970s. All the teachers taught in the same suburban school district and had taught more than twenty years in a state supported prekindergarten program. Delaney considered the four teachers ordinary as "no one designated them as 'exemplars' or 'expert' pedagogues" (p. 6) and Delaney wanted to give ordinary teachers a voice in the teacher thinking literature. The teachers were in their last year of teaching before retirement.

Delaney found the teachers' thinking to be well organized, stable, and accessible. The core of each teacher's thinking was her beliefs about the nature of children and all of the other beliefs stemmed from and related to this core belief. The four teachers had shared beliefs and shared categories, but the specific "content and organization of the categories [were] unique for each teacher" (p. 203). The teachers were influenced by the context in which they were teaching and much of their knowledge was socially constructed.

The knowledge structures the teachers' displayed "were not solely formed by their own thinking and the social setting of prekindergarten. They were also formed by the larger context of the field of early childhood education" (p. 227). Based on the teachers' remarks regarding their formal education and the inservice training they had received, Delaney believed the teachers used ideas from the field of early childhood education as a "source for putting their [own] ideas in context" (p. 229). Based on her observations,
Delaney found the thinking of the four preschool teachers was "rooted deeply in the history of ideas in early childhood and [seemed] to have more in common with a trans-Atlantic view of teaching young children than with local elementary school colleagues" (p. 236).

Delaney's study of four preschool teachers' thinking illustrated many beliefs of the teachers came from the social construction of knowledge and were shared because of (a) the culture of the prekindergarten setting, (b) "a strong theoretical element in the fabric of early childhood education" (p. 240), and (c) "a deep history of ideas in early childhood" (p. 229). Delaney concluded the four educated, experienced preschool teachers had "distinct, but related, stable, implicit theories of emotion that are unique to the field of early childhood education" (p. 241). Based on the work of neo-Freudians, early childhood educators believe "the total classroom climate should promote the child's emotional development and healthy personality growth. The teacher's role is to draw out the child's inner feelings and help the child to feel how worthwhile she was" (Delaney, 1995, pp. 33-34). The early childhood educator must "show constant patience, supportive reassurance, and tolerance to assure stable personality growth" (p. 34).

The six studies described above provide glimpses of the preschool, prekindergarten, or childcare teachers' thinking. This dissertation focuses on the theories of action of three educated, experienced, exemplary prekindergarten teachers. In order to analyze and illuminate the three teachers' theories of action, three conceptual frameworks will be used:
(a) idea-based social constructivism, (b) discourse from two different perspectives, and (c) language of practice. These three provide the means to look at teachers' theories of action from slightly different angles.

In the next section, I will describe constructivism and place idea-based social constructivism within that framework.

**Constructivism**

Constructivism, as it is currently used, is a term applied to a wide array of philosophical and psychological perspectives on how people construct knowledge (Schwandt, 1994). The root word, construct, means to form, make, or create by combining parts or elements. From the constructivism view, knowledge is not something that is discovered or found, but it is constructed, made, or created. How the knowledge is constructed depends on which philosophical or psychological perspective one takes (Ernest, 1995).

The literature on constructivism clearly demonstrates a rather dualistic stance on how knowledge is constructed (Ernest, 1995; Prawat, 1996a). Toward one end of a constructivist continuum is radical constructivism (von Glaserfeld, 1995) or cognitive constructivism, which focuses on the individual knower and how he, independently, constructs knowledge. Toward the other end of the spectrum is social constructionism (Gergen, 1995), which focuses on the construction of knowledge through the language of one's culture and society. There are numerous variations of constructivism on this continuum and the differences among the constructivist variations can be significant (Ernest, 1995; Prawat, 1996a).
Prawat (1996a) examined six different variations of constructivism: radical constructivism, information processing constructivism, sociocultural, symbolic interactionalist, social constructionism, and idea-based social constructivism. Four of the six variations can be classified by their position on whether knowledge is first constructed inside the individual mind and then applied to the outside world or is first constructed in the world and then accepted and/or re-constructed by the mind. This dualism is often referred to as the mind-world dilemma (Prawat, 1996a) or the individual-social primacy (Cole & Wertsch, 1996).

The connecting link for all variations of social constructivism is the "premise that knowledge is [in someway] a social product" (Prawat & Floden, 1994, p. 37). Socially produced knowledge is the generally agreed upon outcome "but there is little agreement about basic processes: what aspects of knowledge best lend themselves to negotiation, and what it means to negotiate this knowledge" (p. 37).

The focus of social constructionism, which Prawat (1999) later called social constructivism, is on linguistics, that is a "symbolic or language-oriented social constructivism" (Prawat & Peterson, 1999, p. 212). From this perspective, social constructivism can be divided into two categories. One category of this language-oriented social constructivism locates "mind in language and thus in the world" (p. 212). The second category views language as "the mechanism for bringing world to mind" (p. 212). In either case, the focus is on language and its role in knowledge construction rather than on
whether knowledge comes first through the mind or through the world. Idea-based constructivism avoids the mind/world dualism by seeing mind/world/language as interacting simultaneously in the construction of knowledge.

It is important to keep in mind constructivism, particularly social constructivism, is a "broad movement with many different specific schools and internal disagreements" (Chinn, 1998, p. 79). Table 2.2 illustrates the different positions of the six variations of constructivism according to Prawat (1996a), Prawat & Peterson (1999), and Schwandt (1994). The following classification of constructivism represents only one version of the different strands or categories of constructivism. Another version is Moshman's (1982) three categories of constructivism: exogenous, endogenous, and dialectical.

Of the six variations of constructivism in Table 2.2, radical constructivism and social constructionism/constructivism are the most common strands of constructivist thought (Schwandt, 1997). In recent years, some of the radical constructivists, in reexamining their position on the individual/social focus, are moving or have moved toward viewing the individual construction and social construction as complementary processes (Ernest, 1995). Some of the sociocultural constructivists, particularly those who called themselves neo-Vygotskians (Case, 1996), are taking or have taken a like position in viewing the individual and social constructions as an interactional dynamic process rather than the social having primacy over the individual (Ernest, 1995).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Constructivism</th>
<th>Individual/Mind Focus or World/Social Focus</th>
<th>Names Associated with This Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radical Constructivism</td>
<td>Individual Focus (Inside-out)</td>
<td>von Glasersfeld, Piaget, Kant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information Processing</td>
<td>Social Focus (Outside-in)</td>
<td>Beyer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociocultural</td>
<td>Social Focus</td>
<td>Early Vygotsky, Cole, Wertsch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Symbolic interactionalist</td>
<td>Individual Focus</td>
<td>Blumer, George Herbert Mead, Cobb &amp; Yackel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructionism &amp;</td>
<td>Does not focus on mind and/or world. Focus is on</td>
<td>Later Vygotsky, Wittgenstein, Gergen, Rorty,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Constructivism</td>
<td>linguistics/symbolic or language-oriented</td>
<td>Berger &amp; Luckmann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idea-Based Social Constructivism</td>
<td>Individual focus and social focus and linguistic focus simultaneously</td>
<td>Peirce, Dewey, Prawat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Six Types of Constructivism and Their Positions on Individual/Social Focus
Ernest (1995) observed "there are almost as many varieties of constructivism as there are researchers" (p. 459). Many researchers who study teacher thinking usually take a constructivist's stance of some kind. Until recently most of the research in teacher thinking tended to be from a more radical constructivist stance, that is, it looked at teacher thinking from an individual or mind focus. More recently the trend has been to give more consideration to the social/world focus (e.g., Clandinin & Connelly's *Teachers' Professional Knowledge Landscapes*).

As the views of constructivism/constructionism have changed, expanded, and evolved, researchers have more frameworks from which to examine teacher thinking. With the increased interest in the impact of the social/world on individual teachers, the study of teacher's theories of action is broadening to include both the individual and social focuses as equally important areas of study. In this study I have elected to use the idea-based social constructivism as a conceptual framework for understanding how the three prekindergarten teachers developed their theories of action. In the next section I will provide a brief overview of the key points of idea-based social constructivism.

**Idea-based Social Constructivism**

Idea-based constructivism is rooted in the work of John Dewey and other pragmatists and is a form of symbolic social constructivism (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). This variation of social constructivism avoids the
mind/world dualism by seeing mind/world/language as interacting simultaneously in the construction of knowledge.

Idea-based social constructivism "assigns a prominent role to the social and to the individual in the development of meaning" (Prawat, 1996a, p. 223). Learning occurs through a multiple-step process, which occur simultaneously. In order to describe them I will talk about first, second, and third, but the reader should keep in mind the steps often occur simultaneously and/or in a different order.

The learner may, at first, come in contact with a network of ideas, which are "socially authored" by a discipline, group, and/or community. The ideas are expressed through the discourse of the particular entity, which authored them (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). Using the specific language, the members of the discourse community learn to look at the world in similar ways and "they develop similar anticipations" about the world (Prawat & Floden, 1994, p. 44).

An idea, Dewey wrote, "is a draft drawn upon existing things, an intention to act so as to arrange them in a certain way" (1908/1977, p. 102). To Dewey, ideas are "always a working hypotheses concerning the attaining of particular empirical results and are tentative programs (or sketches of method) for attaining them" (1908/1977, p. 108). Ideas, in effect, direct actions and actions are at the heart of ideas (Dewey, 1929/1988).

The next step in the learning process of idea-based social constructivism involves the testing of the hypotheses. The learner, first,
explores the "territory mapped out" by the ideas (Prawat, 1993, p. 13) or compares it with her past actions and experiences. During this exploration, the learner has to test the ideas for herself. The learner has to determine, through some form of interactive inquiry, if the idea has merit for her, for the specific context, and for the situation in which the learner finds herself (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). Dewey and Peirce are convinced that an idea has merit and works if it fits the learner's personal needs, the situation, and the context (Dewey, 1908/1977).

A third step in this idea-based social construction of knowledge involves the learner remaining "open to the possibility of changing" (Prawat & Peterson, 1999, p. 216) the idea. Some ideas are better than others are and the learner has to test out or validate or modify or change the idea given three factors: the personal, the situational, and the contextual.

Idea-based social constructivism combines the social, especially the language and discourse, the personal, especially personal needs and experiences, and actions and interactions with the world in a pragmatic construction of knowledge and meaning making (Prawat, 1995).

In the next section, I will describe two views of discourse and the impact they have on knowledge construction.

**Two Views of Discourse**

Discourse is an important aspect of the symbolic or language-oriented social constructivism. The social constructivists approach discourse in a variety of ways. I have selected two approaches, which can illuminate the
professional discourse of the three prekindergarten teachers involved in this study. Gee (1989, 1992, 1997), an American linguist, brings a linguistic perspective to his theory of Discourse (with a capital "D"). Bakhtin (1981, 1986), a Russian philosophical anthropologist, brings a philosophy of language view to the development and understanding of professional discourse.

**Gee**

Gee (1989) defines discourse (with a lower case "d") as connected stretches of language. Gee (1989, 1992, 1997) developed a theory of Discourse (with a capital "D") that encompasses a wider range of meaning. According to Gee (1992), "Discourses are composed of people, of objects (like books), and of characteristic ways of talking, acting, interacting, thinking, believing, and valuing, and sometimes characteristic ways of writing, reading, and/or interpreting" (p. 20). Discourses are a "way of being in the world, they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 1989, pp. 6-7).

Discourses are acquired through social practices. The primary Discourse is acquired as a member of a family unit, the primary socializing group. The primary Discourse is the one an individual first uses to "make sense of the world and [to] interact with others" (Gee, 1989, p. 7). Parts of an individual's primary Discourse become "carriers or foundations for Discourses acquired later in life" (p. 8).
As the individual moves beyond the family unit, she acquires any number of secondary Discourses from other social communities, institutions, groups, organizations, etc. Memberships in these different types of social entities often demand their own particular Discourses. An individual's primary Discourse could be compatible or incompatible with secondary Discourses. In many cases, different Discourses, whether primary or secondary, can interfere with each other and, in some cases, aspects of one Discourse can be transferred to another Discourse (Gee, 1989, 1992, 1997).

The exposure to different Discourses does not mean, however, that the individual simply absorbs, accepts, or assimilates the various Discourses. The human mind looks for patterns in the world and the mind is a "flexible and adaptable pattern recognizer" (Gee, 1997, p. 236). The Discourses an individual possesses can act as a guide in both the recognition and selection of patterns. Discourses can become connecting devices between the discourse community and the patterns in the world, "nudging" individuals toward some norm (Gee, 1992, p. 49).

A Discourse is embodied in the individual's social practice and how the Discourse is manifested depends on what the individual brings to the social practice. Individuals in a discourse community may hold similar or "converging theories" (p. 49), but they are not identical for a number of reasons. First, each individual belongs to multiple sociocultural groups and, therefore, different Discourses and the "cultural models and patterns associated with each group can influence the [individual] in unique ways,
depending on the different mix" (Gee, 1997, p. 240) of Discourses. Second, "each individual is biologically and in, particular neurally quite different from every other" (p. 24) and these biological and brain network differences influence how Discourses are both structured and embodied in an individual's thinking, behaviors, and social practices.

When an individual selects a profession, becomes educated, and socialized into the profession, she learns to speak, think, and act like a member of that profession (Gee, 1992). In becoming a professional, the individual masters the Discourse of that profession. Mastering the professional discourse is based on: (a) how well the individual's primary Discourse lays a foundation for acceptance of the professional, secondary Discourse, (b) how the individual's other secondary Discourses complement the professional discourse; and (c) how the individual's unique biological makeup and brain structure influence the construction of the Discourse(s). The individual's own embodied view of the professional discourse is "never completely ideosycratic [sic]" (Clark, 1998, p. 93), because in the testing and the accommodation of the professional discourse, the individual accepts many of the commonalities of that particular discourse or else she would not be in that discourse. Therefore, "even idiosyncrasy is socially colored and bounded" (Buchmann, 1989, p. 102) by the professional discourse.

In the next section, I will describe Bakhtin's view of professional discourse and how an individual accommodates the worldview of her chosen professional discourse.
Bakhtin

Bakhtin (1981) takes a similar view of discourse in that it is "a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (p. 259). A discourse, according to Bakhtin, facilitates the construction of a worldview which insures a "maximum of mutual understanding" (p. 271).

As an individual comes into contact with the discourse, a dialogic relationship ensues. It is through "the process of living interaction" with the discourse that the language becomes "individualized " (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276) and takes shape for the individual. "Responsive understanding," Bakhtin (1981) wrote, "is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding" (pp. 280-281).

It is not possible for an individual to passively adopt a discourse and then to truly understand it. "A passive understanding . . . is no understanding at all, it is only the abstract aspect of meaning" (p. 281). Bakhtin (1981) explains that every concrete act of understanding is active: it assimilates the word to be understood into its own conceptual system filled with specific objects and emotional expressions, and is indissolubly merged with the response. . . . Primacy belongs to the understanding, it prepares the ground for an active and engaged understanding. Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and responding are dialectically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other. . . . An active understanding, one that assimilates the word under consideration into a new conceptual system, that of the one striving to understand, establishes a series of complex relationships, consonances and dissonances with the word and enriches it with new elements. (p. 282)
As the individual develops an active understanding, the discourse, for her, begins to "knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristics" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 289). The professional discourse takes on not only a shared vocabulary but assumes "intentional dimensions" (p. 289), that is, the discourse can drive the social practices of the individual.

How does one develop an understanding and accommodate a specific discourse? At first, "one's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). If the individual encounters an "internally persuasive discourse" (p. 342) and enters into a dialogic relationship with it, the discourse becomes "tightly interwoven with one's own words" (p. 345). The internally persuasive discourse, according to Bakhtin, is "half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 345). The individual actively engages in evaluating the discourse and through evaluation develops understanding.

Understanding is impossible without evaluation. Understanding cannot be separated from evaluation: they are simultaneous and constitute a unified integral act. The person who understands approaches the work with his own already formed worldview, from his own viewpoint, from his own position. (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 142).

As the individual engages in a dialogical encounter, through evaluation and the development of understanding, the internally persuasive discourse opens or "awakens new and independent" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345) possibilities. The "structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each
of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346). It is through a "sharpened dialogic relationship" (p. 352) that an individual is able to acquire a professional discourse, which becomes one's own.

In the next section, I will discuss the language of practice, a concept connected to professional discourse.

Language of Practice

Yinger (1987) defines the term language of practice as thinking and acting "in ways appropriate to the demands of the profession" (p. 293). Language of practice is a metaphor used to describe the vocabulary, specific terms, and special meanings as well as patterns of thoughts and actions used by a member of a profession. The patterns of thought and action "constitute a kind of syntax and semantics for action" (p. 295). The language of practice is "a system of meaning and guidelines for effective practice" (p. 295). Other terms in the literature which represent concepts similar to language of practice are "ground of professional practice" (Oberg, 1989), "conversation of practice" (Buchmann, 1990; Yinger, 1988, 1990), "framework of action" (Wien, 1995), and "community of practice" (Lemke, 1997).

Yinger believes a language of practice exists for teaching and it is possible to codify such a language without destroying "its character, [and] stripping it of its meaning and vitality" (Yinger, 1987, p. 309). Yinger, in developing his conception of language of practice, looked to another
discipline that had developed its own codified, professional language. In the next section, I will describe the conceptual framework upon which Yinger based his ideas.

**Conceptual Framework for the Language of Practice**

Yinger's conceptual framework for his idea of a language of practice is based on the work of Christopher Alexander, a professor of architecture at the University of California, Berkeley. Alexander (1979) and his associates (1975, 1977) developed a theory of architecture, building, and planning based on a "pattern language." Alexander (1979) believed people could create almost any kind of building or type of community by using the pattern language, which would "allow them to articulate and communicate an infinite variety of designs within a system which gives them coherence" (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977, book jacket).

The elements of this codified language are its patterns. A pattern identifies a common problem, topic, or issue, and then describes a general solution that could be used over and over again in a variety of situations. This general, often abstract, solution could be modified and adapted to a particular context and this could be done "without losing the essence that is central to" (Alexander et al., 1977, p. xi) the pattern and solution. "A pattern language gives each person who uses it, the power to create an infinite variety of new and unique buildings, just as his ordinary language gives him the power to create an infinite variety of sentences" (Alexander, 1979, p. 167).
Alexander and his associates identified 253 patterns that, as a whole, make-up a codified language of practice for their theory of architecture. The pattern language is a network composed of sequences, going from larger patterns to smaller patterns and is a system, which connects a pattern, a context, and a solution. An example of a larger pattern topic would be "COMMON LAND" and another topic would be "HOUSE FOR A SMALL FAMILY" (Alexander et al., 1977, pp. xxiii-xxiv, capitalization in the original). An example of a smaller pattern topic would be "SUNNY PLACE" and another would be "COOKING LAYOUT" (pp. xxix-xxx). From the 253 currently established patterns, millions of combinations are possible (Yinger, 1987).

The pattern language is a shared language which is "extremely practical" (Alexander et al., 1977, p. x). The patterns are viewed as hypotheses which represents the "current best guess as to what . . . will work to solve the problem presented" (p. xv). The patterns are "all tentative, all free to evolve under the impact of new experience and observation" (p. xv). The patterns together form a coherent language allowing the practitioner to "create an infinite variety of combinations" (p. xi) unique to his or her situation, preferences, and context. The pattern language is a framework, a way to organize and represent the specific tasks of a profession while providing a means to take action appropriate for the task at hand (Alexander, 1979).

Alexander's concept of pattern language is similar to van Hiele's concept of structure, an organized way of viewing and being in the world.
According to van Hiele (1986), a math educator/philosopher from the Netherlands, the use of structures saves humans from "a never-ending life of trial and error" (p. 24). The recognition and use of structures "enables people to understand each other" (p. 24) and allows people to "act in situations that are not exactly the same as those they have met before" (p. 24). Structures help a person develop insight and insight is demonstrated when the person acts "in a new situation adequately and with intention" (p. 24).

The theories and ideas behind a pattern language and structure and insight can provide a foundation for exploring a language of practice for teaching.

**A Language of Practice for Teaching**

The language of practice concept is congruent with Hirst's (1983, 1990) concept of educational theory and practice. According to Hirst (1983), theoretical knowledge is primarily concerned with explanation while the function of practical theory is to determine practice (p. 3). Educational theory is a "domain of practical theory, concerned with formulating and justifying principles of action for a range of practical activities" (Hirst, 1983, p. 3). In his view, professional knowledge gained from practice is as important as that gained from theory. Hirst (1990) believes

the professional activities that any teacher engages in are what they are by virtue of the 'theory' that informs them, by virtue of the concepts, beliefs and principles that the teacher employs. And whether that teacher is indeed acting professionally turns on whether that 'theory' is rationally defensible in terms of the best knowledge and understanding of such situations and of what ought to be done in such circumstances. (p. 74)

53
Hirst (1983) contends educational practice should be analyzed from "a consideration of current practice, the rules and principles it actually embodies and the knowledge, beliefs and principles that the practitioners employ in both characterising [sic] that practice and deciding what ought to be done" (p. 16). An analysis of educational practice in this manner leads to an "operational educational theory" (p. 16) which includes "particular technical terms, beliefs and principles concerned with specifically educational practices and institutions . . . [and] will be embedded within a much wider general body of discourse" (p. 16). A specific knowledge community arises from this operational educational theory.

When a teacher enters the teaching profession, she enters this knowledge community, which has developed a culture and language particular to that specific community (Craig, 1995). The professional culture and language the teacher has acquired as a result of her "formal and informal education, training and socialization" (Hirst, 1983, p. 18) will influence her concept of the teaching profession and in turn influence and mediate her view of the teaching world. This knowledge community or cognitive community consists of "interpenetrating parts: a body of common knowledge and means of communication" (Schwab, 1975, p. 39). The knowledge consists of that which can be mediated by symbols or tools and that which can be directly experienced. Johnson (1989) sees this knowledge as embodied knowledge, which combines meaning, conduct, and understanding with "bodily
perception, motor skills, actions patterns, and spatio-temporal orientation" (p. 366). The knowing and doing are intertwined components of what Scribner (1985) calls knowledge at work, a working knowledge that is influenced by the patterns of one's profession and one's creative application of that knowledge to shape and adapt to the specific context and situations of one's work (p. 206).

Integrated patterns of words, behaviors, routines, activities, expectations, meanings, understandings, ways of thinking, and actions denote the knowledge and language of practice of a particular culture or community (Yinger, 1987, p. 295). This "language of practice for teaching must be a language of action, a language of practical action" (p. 313).

When Yinger (1987) wrote about this concept, he admitted that a formal, language of practice for teaching did not yet exist. In 1992, Yinger and Hendericks-Lee published a pattern language or language of practice for teacher education, which provided a "theoretical consistency and a knowledge-based orientation" (p. 369) for the creating a new model for a teacher education program. Yinger and Hendericks-Lee's teacher education pattern language became a framework used to guide planning and practice in their teacher education program. Eighty-nine patterns were identified and included broad categories of patterns such as professional ways of doing, professional ways of knowing, professional ways of being, knowledge-related activities, etc. Each pattern consisted of "a rationale, a prescriptive statement, a list of essential pattern indicators, and a statement of the pattern's

In the next section, I will address the concept of a language of practice for the field of early childhood education.

**Early Childhood Education Language of Practice**

The National Association for the Education of Young Children through its publications, particularly *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and *Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children* (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992), has created, through a deliberative, collective process, both a professional discourse and a pattern language or language of practice for the field of early childhood education. These patterns, together, form a coherent language or framework that allows the early childhood educator to think and act in an infinite variety of combinations unique to her situation, preferences, and context while at the same time allowing her actions to be compatible with current knowledge and best practices.

What impacts the development of a professional discourse and a language of practice? The following section should illuminate the political, social, cultural, and historical factors, which have contributed to the current state of the professional discourse and the language practice for the field of early childhood education.
NAEYC: History and Influences

Past and current political, social, cultural, and historical factors have influenced and continue to influence professional discourse and the language of practice. In order to understand the current professional discourse and language of practices in the field of early childhood education it is necessary to look at the past. Eisner (1985a) explains "in all fields, but especially in education, the need to understand the values and history beneath practices being employed is crucial" (p. 112).

In the following sections, I will, first, describe the concept of nursery schools and the creation of the National Association of Nursery Education, referred to as NANE. Next, I will describe the first two collaborative efforts between the nursery educators and the federal government: The W. P. A. Nursery Schools (Emergency Nursery Schools), and the Lanham Child Care Centers. Third, I will briefly describe how NANE became the National Association for the Education of Young Children or NAEYC. Fourth, I will paint a picture of the political and social factors that hindered collaboration between the federal government and early childhood educators when Head Start was created. Fifth, I will elaborate on NAEYC's efforts to become a major force in improving the quality of early education and care for young children in this country.

Nursery Schools: A New Institution

Until the early part of the 20th century, kindergartens in this country included the education of children younger than five years of age. When
kindergartens became affiliated with public schools, however, the programs were limited to five-year-olds. Separate programs for two-, three-, and four-year-olds were then established and the term nursery school was given to this "new kind of institution" (Beatty, 1995, p. 132.) The first nursery schools were established in the United States before World War I (Beatty, 1995, p. 134) and by 1930 there were at least 262 nursery schools in operation (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 3).

The nursery schools experimented with "pedagogical method [and were seen] as a source of empirical information about what environment and educational procedures were best for young children" (Beatty, 1995, p. 133). The first nursery schools, were "more future-oriented than kindergartens" (Beatty, 1995, p. 132). Unlike kindergartens, the nursery schools were not affiliated with public schools.

**National Association for Nursery Education (NANE): A New Organization**

As the numbers of nursery schools increased, the early nursery school programs were "deluged with requests for information" (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 3). There was a need for a way to centralize and disseminate professional information and share experiences. Twenty-five individuals, lead by Patty Smith Hill, professor at Teachers College, attended the first national meeting devoted to nursery school education in 1925 (Hewes, 1976, p. 303). The group became the first National Committee on Nursery Schools, whose mission was to establish a system for providing appropriate nursery school information and for educating teachers and others about nursery school education (Senn,
1975). The nursery school committee also began investigating whether they should join an existing organization or whether they should form a new organization devoted exclusively to nursery education (Hewes, 1976/1996).

A number of different organizations, such as the International Kindergarten Union and the National Educational Association, courted the National Committee on Nursery Schools and wanted the nursery school educators to join their organizations. At the 1929 Nursery School national conference, debates were held as to the consequences of being a separate organization. Teacher educators were concerned that a separate organization would create a "disruption of their integrated sequence of nursery school, kindergarten, and primary grades. They predicted that it would make acceptance of nursery schools in public schools more difficult" (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 5).

Despite the strong debate and various publications, the nursery school educators voted to form a separate organization. NANE, the National Association for Nursery Education, was created. The new organization was viewed as a more multidisciplinary and integrated association than the other educational organizations (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 5). NANE gave the nursery school educators "a sense of... being together in an educational movement... and [we] joined forces to secure a better educational environment and a better educational experience" (Stoddard as quoted in Senn, 1975, p. 20) for young children.
The NANE focused on five aims. First, the main emphasis should be on the "young child in the family and community" (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 5). Second, there should be strong ties within individual communities to best meet community needs (p. 5). Third, NANE should be affiliated with other professional associations (p. 5). Fourth, NANE would publish both research reports and practical information and make this available to its members and to the public (p. 5). Fifth, it would conduct conferences to disseminate information from a diverse range of disciplines which would add information and knowledge to the field and help develop the "expertise of the early childhood education profession" (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 6).

As a result of NANE accomplishments and acknowledged expertise in the field of nursery education, the federal government looked to the widely recognized organization to assist in the development of the what was to become the federal government's first foray into the field of early education and care, the Federal Work Relief Project's Emergency Nursery Schools (Heinig & Hymes, 1979, p. 7)

**Emergency Nursery Schools and NANE: A Collaborative Effort**

The purpose of Emergency Nursery Schools program, which was later called the Work Progress Administration (W. P. A.) Nursery Schools, was to provide work for unemployed teachers. From the beginning of the Emergency Nursery Schools project there "was an insistence, from the top, on down, on professional guidance and professional direction" (Heinig & Hymes,
Harry Hopkins, a federal official, is quoted as saying "The politicians and bureaucrats don't know how to run nursery schools; let's turn for help to the people who do" (p. 11).

The federal government asked for the help and assistance of NANE in designing, developing, and implementing the emergency nursery schools. NANE members saw this involvement as "their chance to experiment on a large scale and an opportunity to broaden its services to the field of public education [because] they wanted to do everything possible to see that this public nursery school experiment went well" (Beatty, 1995, p. 179). The nursery school educators "were actively involved in the... [emergency] nursery schools from their inception" (Beatty, 1995, p. 180).

The Emergency Nursery School project was sponsored by the U. S. Department of Education because "nursery schools were recognized as educational institutions. No one wanted the Emergency Nursery Schools to be simply child-minding or baby-sitting centers" (Heinig & Hymes, 1979, p. 11). The "emergency nursery schools were called 'schools' and were to be controlled by state and local education agencies" (Beatty, 1995, p. 179).

In 1935, the name of the Emergency Nursery School project was changed to the Work Progress Administration (W. P. A.) Nursery Schools. At the height of the program, more than 1900 W. P. A. Nursery Schools were in operation and at its end, in 1942, nine hundred forty four W. P. A. Nursery Schools were still operating. (Beatty, 1995).
The involvement of the educated and experienced nursery school leaders and educators contributed to the success of the federally funded nursery school project. The nursery education leaders saw the federally sponsored nursery school programs as a "universal preschool experiment and hoped they might become permanent" (Beatty, 1995, p. 183). Even though the W. P. A. Nursery School project did not become permanent, the nursery school movement was "broadened and enhanced" (Heinig & Hymes, 1979, p. 21).

As the W. P. A. Nursery School project was ending, the federal government began another major project dealing with the early education and care of young children. The government again looked to the nursery school leaders and educators to assist in the development of what came to be called the Lanham Child Care Centers.

**Federally Sponsored Lanham Child Care Centers: Another Collaboration**

In 1942, the scope of the Lanham Act, a bill passed by Congress in 1940 to assist war-impacted communities, was extended to include childcare so mothers could work in war-related industries. The remaining 944 W. P. A. Nursery Schools became Lanham Child Care Centers and in just a few years more than 2,000 Lanham Child Care Centers were in operation (Beatty, 1995). The federal government wanted to provide a "preschool education for young children of working mothers during the war to the alternative of providing [day] care" (Beatty, 1995, p. 187). As a result the Lanham Child Care Centers retained much of the nursery school educational concept primarily because of
the work of the nursery school educators, the requirements imposed by the federal government, and the involvement of local school districts.

The nursery school leaders provided guidance and leadership in the establishment and implementation of the Lanham Child Care Centers. The nursery school educators supported the federal government's endeavors to provide educational childcare by: (a) writing guidelines for the centers, (b) providing information about nursery school education, (c) facilitating the education of teachers who worked in the Lanham Child Care Centers, and (d) "supervising and running the wartime children's centers" (Beatty, 1995).

The nursery school educators had hoped the Lanham Child Care Centers "would be models for federal support for early childhood education" (Beatty, 1995, p. 192). Within six months after War World II ended, the federal government withdrew all funds for the Lanham Child Care Centers.

From 1933 to 1946, the federal government had funded nursery schools and/or childcare centers and the success of the projects was influenced by the active collaboration between the federal government, the state and local educational bodies, and NANE nursery school leaders and educators. The professional knowledge and expertise of the people involved in the nursery school movement helped guide the federal government efforts. This collaboration came to an end in 1946, but the nursery school movement continued.

A great deal had been learned about early childhood education from the 1920 through the end of World War II. The forty-sixth yearbook of the
National Society for the Study of Education (Henry, 1947) was devoted to early childhood education. Information regarding early childhood education, its aims and goals, its educational programs, the curriculum, the organization and administration of programs as well as teacher education were explored in depth (Light, 1947, p. 5). The National Society for the Study of Education called for early childhood educators to find some way to synthesize “the results of research, for selecting that which is of importance to those interested in guiding the development of children, and for making the results available quickly and in an authoritative form” (Light, 1947, p. 4). In discussing where early childhood was going, Goodykoontz, Davis, and Gabbard (1947) stated their position in this way: “We appear in this country to have arrived at some decisions, some rather widely accepted hopes for the future [regarding early childhood education]. It remains to be seen whether it is the near future” (p. 69).

An early childhood education for each child was not in the near future. NANE did, however, keep the dream alive and kept the nursery school/early childhood education moving forward in spite of the fact that the federal government and most state and local education bodies ignored the early education and care of young children for the next twenty years.

**NANE to NAEYC**

NANE recognized the “need for national leadership in nursery education” (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 10), and they took leadership in advocating for the quality early education and care of young children. They continued to
(a) conduct conferences, (b) publish pamphlets, books, films, and a journal, (c) disseminate information about early education and care, and (d) advocate for educated early childhood educators. The organization efforts were hampered, however, by "lack of funds, by lack of a permanent headquarters, [and] by lack of any paid staff" (Hymes, 1946, p. 1).

In 1964, after years of debate and controversy, the National Association for Nursery Education changed its name to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, now referred to as NAEYC (Witherspoon, 1976). The new name reflected the association's expanded mission and goals. NAEYC expanded focus included early education and care of children from birth to age eight, not just nursery school education. NAEYC wanted to maintain its commitment to being a multidisciplinary organization and to continue to stress "the importance of all portions of a child's development" (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 12). NAEYC positioned itself to be a player in the field of early childhood education, but major problems were ahead.

In the mid 1960s, the federal government began Project Head Start, its third major initiative into the early education of young children. Unlike the first two federal programs, the W. P. A. Nursery Schools and the Lanham Child Care Centers, the federal government did not seek the assistance of the early childhood professionals in the development and implementation of Project Head Start, a program for disadvantaged preschool children. NAEYC and the accumulated knowledge and experience of early childhood educators were ignored.
**Head Start**

In 1964 the United States Congress passed the Economic Opportunity Act to fight the War on Poverty, the label given to efforts to combat poverty. Project Head Start became one of the federally sponsored programs which was to fight the effects of poverty (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). The idea for Project Head Start originated from work done by President Kennedy’s Panel on Mental Retardation in the early 1960s (Davens, 1979, p. 88).

In 1964, President Johnson appointed Sargent Shriver to head the War on Poverty. Shriver, who was a relative of President Kennedy, saw a connection between the types of work, research, and recommendations accomplished by the President Kennedy’s Panel of Mental Retardation and the needs of young disadvantaged children. Shriver believed young disadvantaged children would benefit from specialized preparation for school (Shriver, 1979).

Shriver contacted Dr. Robert Cooke, who was the Kennedy family pediatrician and who had served on President Kennedy’s Panel of Mental Retardation, and asked him to organize and chair the Project Head Start Planning Committee. Dr. Cooke personally selected thirteen individuals, eleven of whom had ties to President Kennedy’s Panel on Mental Retardation to be on the committee that would plan Head Start (Beatty, 1995, p. 194). The committee consisted primarily of medical doctors and psychologists. In addition there was one social worker, one individual from public health nursing, and two educators: John Niemeyer, president of Bank Street College,
and James L. Hymes, a professor of education at the University of Maryland (Beatty, 1995, p. 194; Hymes, 1979, p. 31). Only three women were on the committee and none of them were connected to the early childhood education profession.

Unlike its earlier two ventures into early education and care, the W. P. A. Nursery Schools and the Lanham Child Care Centers, the federal government did not look to the early childhood community to provide professional guidance and direction during the creation and implementation of Head Start. The many female early childhood education professionals who possessed knowledge, experience, and expertise in early education of young children were excluded.

**Prevailing view of the times.** A book detailing the creation and implementation of Project Head Start provides a history of Head Start told in the words of the original planners and first staff members (Zigler & Valentine, 1979). In reading the words of many of the original thirteen on the planning committee it is evident why the early childhood professional women were excluded. According to Zigler and Valentine (1979), at the time Head Start was created “there were no programs for either the disadvantaged or the middle-class child that were intended to stimulate intellectual growth” (p. 10). The existing nursery school programs which were available were “designed for social and emotional maturation” (p. 10) not for intellectual development and academic success.
Conflict existed between the early childhood educators' concern for the whole child and the political agenda of preparing poverty's children for academic success in school. For a period of time the government felt the most important aspect of early childhood education component of Head Start should be on cognitive development and preparation for school. During this era cognitive development became the "watchword for many researchers and educators" (Evans, 1975, p. 3). This view is reflected in the federally sponsored Educational Policies Commission's 1966 report titled the *Universal Opportunity for Early Childhood Education*. The report stated, "The development of intellectual ability and intellectual interest is fundamental to the achievement of all the goals of American education" (Educational Policies Commission, 1966, p. 1). The Commission concluded that by age six, children "have already developed a considerable part of [their] intellectual ability" (p. 1). Starting school at age six, according to the Commission, was obsolete and that children should start school at age four in order to be more intellectually prepared for life (p.1). The report advocated "not preschooling but . . . schooling" (p. 7).

The Committee for Economic Development further supported this view in a report titled *Education for the Urban Disadvantaged from Preschool to Employment*. The report stated "the most effective point at which to influence the cumulative process of education is in the early preschool years" (Committee for Economic Development, 1971, p. 17). Research, according to the report, had demonstrated that "improvements can be anticipated in IQ
scores for low-income children of four and five who are exposed to structured, scheduled, consistent classroom environments ... [and] success in preschool programs depends on carefully defined objectives.” (p. 34).

Goodlad, Klein, and Novotney (1973), who conducted an extensive study of 22 preschools/nursery schools, exemplify an example of this emphasis on cognitive development. The researchers concluded, in a rather scathing report, that there was a persistent “resistance to cognitively oriented programs among . . . the preschool education establishment” (p. 54). Goodlad et al. (1973) wrote:

A major conclusion emerging from our data is that the overwhelming majority of the nursery schools . . . conduct a rather narrowly prescribed traditional program. The children draw and paint, listen to music, play with blocks and toys, listen to and discuss stories, and play together outdoors every day, except when the weather is discouraging. They extend their association with stories and words into what is usually is regarded as reading readiness; they combine nature walks, care of pets, and the like into informal explorations in science. Cooking usually is included as a form of organized play, and the children participate in some role-playing and rhythms. They talk in small groups, run and jump, and observe a set of rules pertaining to respect for another, the teacher, and things in their environment. . . . Most of the schools in our sample were providing approximately the same thing, demonstrating a narrower range of schooling. (p. 135)

Goodlad et al. (1973), further stated “given the traditional, middle-class, and elitist raison d’être for nursery schools, the affective and social realms of development” (p. 133) were ranked as important aspects of schooling for young children. "Emotional development, social-interpersonal skills, and the arts and creative expression were ranked first, second, and third . . . and 'academic skills' ranked at the bottom of the list” (p.133).
Schriver, the individual who, in the beginning, was driving the agenda for Head Start, exhibited this prevailing view of the importance of intellectual development over the whole child concept advocated by NAEYC and early childhood educators. According to Schriver, "the fundamental idea behind Head Start was to get kids ready so they would have a chance in school" (Shriver, 1979, p. 59). The Head Start Planning Committee called the project "Getting Ready for School" (p. 59).

In 1964 and in early 1965, Shriver talked to numerous people about his view of what disadvantaged children needed. Shriver wanted to establish a summer program to serve at least 100,000 children so they would be ready for school in the fall. In his search for information, Shriver discovered that there were people who were knowledgeable about child development. Shriver (1979) stated:

I learned there are 'experts' in child development, and I talked to some of them. One was Dr. Jerome Bruner at Harvard. . . . He was supposed to be . . . one of the world’s greatest theorists in child development. He thought if we enrolled 2,500 it would be a tremendous effort, and it was questionable in his mind as to whether there were enough qualified teachers to handle any more than 2,500; and it would be difficult to find the right places. . . . I thought to myself that it would be stupid for us to try to reach only 2,500 children. We had to devise programs that could have mass application, mass effectiveness. They could not be just particularized, individualized projects. I remember being very discouraged after talking to Dr. Bruner. (pp. 58-59)

Based on the evidence he had accumulated, Shriver testified to Congress that the Head Start program could raise the IQ of disadvantaged children by 8 to 10 points (Vinovskis, 1995, p. 247).
The view of the original Head Start planning committee. The Head Start Planning Committee "was composed of people with different backgrounds and experiences" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The committee believed "the early years of childhood are the most critical point in the poverty cycle [and] special programs can be devised for four- and five-year-olds which will improve the child’s opportunities and achievements" (p. 32). The committee members believed young children needed a different kind of early education experience than what was advocated by NAEYC. George Bain (1979) stated that "the Planning Committee was in agreement that Head Start must reach beyond traditional [nursery schools] or imported traditions and look toward the future needs of disadvantaged children" (p. 74). John H. Niemeyer (1979), one of the committee members who had some knowledge of early childhood, recalled the committee wanted a program that was "different from a typical school program for four- and five-year olds” (p. 102).

Unlike the W. P. A. Nursery Schools and the Lanham Child Care Centers which were affiliated with and run by local schools, the Head Start Planning Committee did not want Head Start connected to schools or be called schools (Osborn & Hymes, 1979). Jacqueline Grennan Wexler (1979), a social worker and one of the three women on the committee, was adamant that public schools should not be the ones to handle Head Start.

I and many of my colleagues [on the committee] were . . . convinced that if the programs were the sole possession of the established school systems, they would become prey to the rigidities and the vested interests that are . . . inseparable form established bureaucracies. (p. 113)
The committee, also, had difficulty with calling people who work with young children teachers. Edward Davens (1979) remembered the original plan of the Committee was to limit the initial summer effort to 100,000 children in programs of very high quality, with well-prepared and highly motivated "child developers." (We had some trouble with the term "teacher" in this context). (p. 90)

By the end of summer of 1965, however, 525,000 children had access to Head Start. Davens stated "By necessity quality was diluted. Because of the short supply of professionals who were well trained in this special area" (p. 90). James Hymes (1979), the Committee member who had had experience in early childhood education, was concerned about the staffing of Head Start. He explained

I, probably more than the others on the Planning Committee, knew the extreme scarcity of good teachers of young children through out the country. Also, I think that more than other members I knew how very few early childhood teacher-training centers existed. I was more aware of the great misunderstanding and misconceptions prevalent everywhere about the nature of a good program for young children. . . . I was struck by the irony that a committee charged with planning the largest group program for young children since the Works Progress Administration nursery schools and the Lanham Act child-care centers had only two members on it from the profession of early-childhood education, and no ties to the major professional organization. (Hymes, 1979, pp. 94-95)

**Hymes' and Niemeyer's attempts to influence Head Start.** Hymes and Niemeyer attempted to bring an early childhood/nursery school educational component to Project Head Start, but they were outnumbered (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992, p. 42). Even though the committee was critical of what they referred to as the traditional nursery school, Hymes and Niemeyer
still were able to insert some influence into the educational component of Head Start.

In the early months of 1965, the federal government established a Head Start Division as part of the Office of Economic Opportunity. An administrative staff was hired to oversee the actual development and implementation of Project Head Start. Dr. Hymes was appalled that "this huge program for young children was actually getting underway without a single soul who was an expert on Early Childhood Education ‘in’ on any of the operating decisions" (Osborn & Hymes, 1979, p. 41). Dr. Hymes (1979) insisted there should be at least one paid ECE professional on the Head Start administrative staff (p. 95). The federal government did hire one ECE consultant, part-time, for a period of ninety days to work in the Washington office. Dr. D. Keith Osborn, who was teaching at Merrill-Palmer Institute in Detroit, was hired to work three days a week in the newly formed Project Head Start office (Osborn & Hymes, 1979, p. 41). Since Osborn was the only hired early childhood educator at the federal level, it became his job to try to bring an early childhood education knowledge base to the political arena as Head Start was being developed and implemented in the months before the summer of 1965 (Osborn & Hymes, 1979).

Niemeyer (1979) volunteered to assume responsibility for getting the first Head Start Program guide prepared. Using the funds he was allotted, Niemeyer hired Jeannette Galambos Stone, "a very creative and highly experienced early-childhood educator to do the writing" (Niemeyer, 1979, p. 73)
103). Stone (1979) wrote the first Head Start guide, a curriculum manual titled Daily Planning #1 (p. 163). Stone’s manual “was designed to represent a philosophical overview of education” (Stone, 1979, p. 164). Stone explained that “my conception of a preschool as a laboratory for exploration and play had been formed during my training as a teacher and confirmed by years of teaching experience” (p. 164). In the manual, she stressed the need for “a laboratory-style education for children – that is, experimentation with raw materials, adventures in problem solving, experience with expressive media and dramatic play, and development of language, all to contribute to intellectual growth” (p. 165). The manual received mixed reviews, was criticized as meeting only the emotional and social needs of children, and was seen as being anti-intellectual (Stone, 1979).

The make-up of the original Head Start Planning Committee, the rush to get Head Start off the ground, the prevailing attitude and misconceptions about nursery school education, the emphasis on raising children’s cognitive intelligence, and the public agenda of the War on Poverty preordained the fifty years of early childhood/nursery school education research, experience, and written literature would be shunned and that having qualified, educated early childhood education teachers would have a very low priority in the Head Start program.

In 1979, Hymes summarized his perception of Head Start:

I sensed in the early Head Start planning days an ‘anti-public school feeling,’ a feeling that the schools had let the poor down, and that only the schools had done this... I am afraid that Head Start did not help
us find a proper and permanent place for early childhood education in our government array. . . . In the committee we never did face up to the disadvantaged young child's need for skilled and trained teachers; we never did face up to the need for top-flight educational leadership in what was to be a massive educational program. In 1965 I detected a feeling that "anyone can teach young kids," and that feeling persists today. . . . Throughout, at all levels, Head Start was never staffed to produce consistently good educational programs, and Head Start children were shortchanged because of this. (Hymes, 1979, pp. 96-97)

**Further Conflicts between the Head Start Agenda and the Goals of NAEYC**

Even though NAEYC and the early childhood education professional women were left out of the planning and implementation of Project Head Start, they did become involved in various aspects of its operation at a later date (Beatty, 1995, p. 195). However, their endeavors to establish and provide a quality education and care for young children were waged against a federal agenda that placed quality early education and care at the bottom of its goals. Conflicts and disagreements between the early childhood educators and federal government centered on appropriate curriculum for young children, the need for college educated early childhood teachers, childcare standards and regulations, and the federal government's role in being a guiding force in providing quality early education and care for young children.

If the NAEYC leaders and early childhood educators had participated in the planning in the early stages of Head Start's development things might have been different (Hymes, 1979). Omwake (1979) believed the early childhood professionals would have [helped] both federal and local officials establish guidelines for the educational aspect. But lack of unanimity of opinion . . . regarding program goals and approaches contributed to the erosion of
good working relationships between the office staff of Head Start and the professional consultants. (Omwake, 1979, p. 222)

**Curriculum Models.** Curriculum was an issue between the early childhood professionals and the Head Start administrators. Cognitive goals were the main thrust of the educational component in both the general Head Start philosophy and in the aims of the Head Start curriculum (Miller, 1979, p. 195) and this contrasted with the view of NAEYC of fostering all aspects of a child's development. The Office of Child Development (OCD), the separate federal agency that managed Project Head Start after it was moved from the Office of Economic Opportunity, wanted to "determine what types of programs [would be] most effective with young disadvantaged children” (Miller, 1979, p. 195). From 1969 through 1972, the OCD funded the Head Start Planned Variation study, which was a "large-scale attempt . . . to compare the effects of eleven different curricular models" (Miller, 1979, p. 200) on disadvantaged children and to determine the curriculum model(s) that would best advance the abilities of Head Start children. The results of the research on the effects of the curriculum models showed that "the more didactic and academic programs [had] produced better gains on achievement and IQ tests" (Miller, 1979, p. 212, italics in the original). The Planned Variation study did not, however, produce a single method or model that was best for advancing the cognitive development of disadvantaged children. The different programs were difficult and expensive to replicate and when the monies dried up, the majority of the curriculum models disappeared.
Educated teachers vs. anyone can teach young children. The need for educated and skilled early childhood teachers was another major issue between the early childhood professionals and the Head Start administration. The Community Action Agencies that ran Head Start Programs at the local levels “displayed an almost disparaging attitude toward the professionals in early childhood education” (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992, p.43). The agencies placed an emphasis on hiring parents and paraprofessionals (Omwake, 1979, p. 222). In effect, “the employment function . . . was taking precedence over the educative function” (Omwake, 1979, p. 222). The local Head Start agencies believed that the university-educated early childhood teachers “were not flexible enough to welcome parents into the program, to involve themselves in children’s health care and nutrition training, and to work with social service agencies” (Mills, 1998, p. 178). As a result, the Head Start agencies began training their own caregivers or teachers, many of whom were either parents of the children in Head Start or unemployed or low-income people in the communities being served (Mills, 1998).

In the early 1970s, the Office of Child Development (OCD) established the Child Development Associate Program (CDA). Zigler, who was the OCD director at that time, was instrumental in establishing the CDA credential. Zigler explained his reasoning this way:

The need for such a program grew out of the practical problem that there was no way that the nation could afford to provide a teacher with a bachelor’s degree for . . . children in Head Start or any other early childhood program. We needed a cadre of trained caregivers who knew how to meet children’s developmental needs and who were at
the same time affordable. . . . [I] realize that some people really do have a way with children and that these were the people we needed in preschool classrooms. They didn't have to go to college to prove their ability. What we needed was some type of credential based on direction observation. (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992, pp. 159-160)

According to Zigler, the early childhood education establishment had to be convinced that "competency-based training was valid. Many of these people had fought for years to set up B.A. programs in early childhood education in colleges, and the CDA . . . [was] undercutting what they had fought so long to achieve" (Zigler & Muenchow, 1992, pp. 161). In the end the NAEYC did support the CDA concept (Beatty, 1995, p. 198) because the alternative was to have no standards for those who taught in Head Start.

The CDA credential was born as a result of the prevailing attitude that anyone can teach young children and that a college education was not a necessary ingredient for being an effective teacher. Thus, the CDA program established the standard that a college degree was not necessary for a teacher in Head Start. Only the 19% of Head Starts operated by public school systems required their teachers to have a degree (Mills, 1998). All other Head Start agencies relied "largely on teachers who [had] received a child development (CDA) credential" (Mills, 1998, p. 178).

A CDA was the standard requirement for Head Start teachers until just recently. According to the 1998 Reauthorization Act of Head Start at least 50% of the teachers in Head Start must have a degree in early childhood education by the year 2003 (COATS Human Services Reauthorization Act of 1998, 1998).
Childcare standards and regulations. In addition to conflicts regarding curriculum and educated teachers, a third area of conflict between the federal government and NAEYC dealt with childcare standards and regulations. In 1968, the federal government established the Interagency Day Care Requirements Committee, whose task was to develop standards for federally sponsored childcare and other funded programs for very young children. There were no early childhood professionals on the committee (Omwake, 1969). The Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Labor Department approved the Interagency Day Care Requirements. The requirements put into place were minimal, insured only custodial care, and did nothing to advocate for quality early education and care of young children (Omwake, 1969).

Federal government’s role in improving early education and care. In 1969, the Comprehensive Preschool Education and Child Day Care Act was introduced in Congress, the key objective of which was to bring together the federally sponsored childcare, Head Start, and preschool programs and to include some federally funding for the early education and care of young children (Beatty, 1995). In 1971, Congress passed the bill, which was renamed the Comprehensive Child Development Act, but President Richard Nixon vetoed the bill. Nixon, in explaining why he vetoed the bill, said “For the Federal Government to plunge headlong financially into supporting child development . . . would commit the vast moral authority of the National
Government to the side of communal approaches to child rearing against the family-centered approach” (Nixon quoted in Zigler & Muenchow, 1992, p. 146).

President Nixon’s words set the tone for the federal government’s involvement and agenda in regards to early education and care for the 1970s and the 1980s. The message was clear: early education and care of young children are family matters and the federal government should not be involved or should be involved as little as possible. There would be no efforts from the federal government to improve the quality of early education and care of young children. If anything was going to be done, it would have to be done outside of the federal government.

**The Lesson for NAEYC**

The 1962 president of NANE, Glenn Hawkes, warned “we must be represented more often when national issues are discussed and determined” (Hawkes, 1962, p. 154). Early childhood educators were not represented and they were left out of the largest and most significant early childhood education projects undertaken by the federal government.

The members of the NAEYC were concerned with what was happening to the early education and care of young children. Eveline Omwake, who was president of NAEYC in 1969, exhibited the frustrations felt by many of the early childhood professionals. In a presidential message to NAEYC, she stated:
An honest look at the last few years, when it seemed as if we were at long last beginning to move ahead in early childhood education, is a disheartening exercise. . . . In many situations lack of child development knowledge on the part of personnel at all levels is accountable for irresponsibly conducted projects. . . . [There is] the lack of any solid foundation for a good national program. (Omwake, 1969, p. 130)

Omwake (1969) specifically criticized the federal government’s approval of the Interagency Day Care Requirements, which required the most minimal of standards. Omwake (1969) further explained “the reason for this conditions might be found in the glaring omission of any knowledgeable authority in early childhood education or child development on the Panel itself” (p. 131). She criticized Head Start for its “continued push to involve nonprofessionals in place of professional and to appoint sketchily trained para-professionals to positions of authority” (Omwake, 1969, p. 131).

Omwake (1969) concluded:

It will be clear to you by now that your usually optimistic president takes a dim view of the immediate future, at least so far as government-involved projects are concerned. The federal agencies had a great opportunity to vitally affect children’s lives and influence early childhood education in positive ways. They muffed it. (p. 131)

Omwake’s words not only reflected the feelings of many in the ECE field but also awakened NAEYC to the need to take action to improve the early education and care of young children. The federal government had failed to advocate quality early education and care of young children. If anything was going to be done to improve the field of early childhood education, NAEYC and its members would have to do it. In its carefully planned and orchestrated efforts to influence and improve the quality of early
childhood education and care, NAEYC became “an association to be reckoned with” (Hewes, 1976/1996, p. 15).

**NAEYC: The Influential Years**

NAEYC acknowledged “that young children are more important than recognized by the larger society . . . [and] children deserve more attention and better care, services, and educational opportunities” (Witherspoon, 1976, p. 333) than they were receiving. The new purpose of NAEYC was to lead and consolidate “the efforts of individuals and groups working to achieve healthy development and constructive education for all young children” (NAEYC, 1987/1996, p. 1). NAEYC planned an agenda “devoted to assuring the provision of high quality early childhood programs for young children” (p. 1).

In order to accomplish its goals NAEYC had to transform itself from a small volunteer association into a larger, more powerful organization. In 1969, a permanent national headquarters was established in Washington, DC, a larger professional staff was hired, and travel expenses were allocated to its officers, board, and committee members (Witherspoon, 1976, p. 336).

NAEYC reinvented itself, positioned itself to be a major player in the field of early childhood education, and became the largest organization of early childhood educators. It has developed and implemented educational and political agendas that have impacted the early education and care of young children not only at the federal level but also in each of the fifty states. NAEYC undertook numerous projects that have had and continue to have an impact on the early education and care of young children and on the
professional discourse and the language of practice of the early childhood education field.

The stated mission of NAEYC is to advocate, lead, and consolidate efforts to achieve high quality early childhood programs for young children (NAEYC, 1999). The organization is accomplishing its mission by focusing on three broad goals: (a) to improve professional practice and promote standards to insure high quality early education and care, (b) to improve the public’s understanding and to advocate support and appropriate funding for high quality programs, and (c) to develop and maintain a powerful organization that can accomplish the first two goals (NAEYC, 1999).

The first goal has had the most impact on the professional discourse and language of practice of early childhood professionals. Within this goal, NAEYC has undertaken major projects in two areas: (a) to improve early childhood program practices and (b) to improve early childhood professional development and professionalism. The most important projects, in chronological order, are:

1. Early childhood teacher education guidelines
2. The accreditation of early childhood education programs
3. Developmentally appropriate practice
4. Early childhood teacher certification
5. Curriculum guidelines for early childhood programs

The projects have taken the form of published position papers and books and have been widely disseminated and accepted by the early childhood
community (Wien, 1995, p. 7). Once the position papers are made public, NAEYC informs the appropriate people at the local, state, and federal governmental levels and actively lobbies for improved early education and care of young children. The following sections of the paper will describe these five influential projects and the reader can understand how the early childhood professional discourse and language of practice has been influenced by NAEYC and its publications.

1982: Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines. In 1982, NAEYC published its first set of influential guidelines, the Early Childhood Teacher Education Guidelines for Four-and Five-Year Programs (NAEYC, 1982). This was followed by the Guidelines for Early Childhood Education Programs in Associate Degree Granting Institutions (NAEYC, 1985). The purpose of the guidelines was “to establish a standard of excellence for new and existing Early Childhood teacher education programs” (NAEYC, 1982, p. xi). The guidelines were “to serve as goals that programs can attempt to achieve rather than reflections of current practice” (p. xi).

The guidelines were developed through a consensus building process involving hundreds of early childhood professionals who drew on their knowledge bases, research, and other professional standards (p. xi). The first draft of guidelines was submitted to over 250 early childhood professionals who represented 101 educational institutions (p. xi). After receiving input from the professionals and institutions, the guidelines were revised and then presented for discussion to NAEYC members attending the annual NAEYC
conference. Final revisions were made based upon the discussion and recommendations made by the NAEYC members. The NAEYC governing board gave final approval to the early childhood teacher education guidelines. NAEYC (1982) explained:

These guidelines reflect the current state of professional knowledge and experience regarding an optimum early childhood teacher education program. This document is viewed as a dynamic statement that will be revised based on need and as new knowledge is acquired concerning the education of children and the education of teachers. (p. xii)

In 1996, in conjunction with the Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children and the National Board for Professional Standards, NAEYC published a major revision of the early childhood teacher education guidelines. The 1996 guidelines “describe the common core of knowledge, performances, and dispositions that are desired outcomes of preparation for early childhood professionals” (NAEYC, 1996, p. 3). The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education commonly referred to as NCATE, approved the 1996 guidelines. Any four- or five-year institution that wants its early childhood teacher education program to receive NCATE accreditation must meet the NAEYC teacher preparation guidelines (NAEYC, 1996). Currently, the American Associate Early Childhood Educators Association is developing a similar but voluntary accreditation for associate degree programs in which the NAEYC guidelines must be met in order for the two-year early childhood teacher education program to be accredited.
With the creation of the 1982 early childhood teacher education guidelines, NAEYC established a six-part pattern it would use in developing subsequent guidelines and documents to guide and influence the field of early childhood education. First, call on the expertise of its members, use research, and the current knowledge base in development of the guidelines. Second, build a consensus among those working on the document, those who would be most effected by the document, from its members, and from other organizations and institutions. Third, revise, revise, and revise until the document or guidelines reflect a broad consensus. Fifth, make it explicit that the guidelines (a) reflect the current state of knowledge, (b) were built on the understanding that things change, and, (c) would need to be revised at regular intervals. Sixth, encourage the implementation of, dialogue about, and research on the guidelines. The professional discourse involved in the creation of the guidelines was influential in the development and evolution of a language of practice for the early childhood education field.

1984: The accreditation of early childhood education programs. In 1984, NAEYC implemented a voluntary accreditation program for early childhood centers and programs. The goal of the accreditation program was to develop standards to use to insure quality in early childhood centers and to help parents identify quality early childhood education centers. NAEYC had "never been involved in an activity more critical to the improvement of quality in early childhood programs than the development of the accreditation system" (NAEYC, 1984, p. ix). NAEYC, through a group process involving
thousands of early childhood professionals, developed, “shaped, nourished, revised, and remolded” (NAEYC, 1984, p. ix) a set of criteria, which could be used to identify high-quality early education programs. The set of criteria was based on “extensive review of research as well as the wisdom of thousands of practitioners” (NAEYC, 1998b, p. vi). The language, choice of words, and shared meaning/understanding were crucial in the development of the criteria (p. vi). The accreditation criteria presented an “acceptable, contemporary consensus” (NAEYC, 1984, p. ix) of what were indicators of quality at the time of its creation.

Approximately 6,000 early childhood education centers have been accredited through NAEYC accreditation program (NAEYC, 1998e). This state currently has 201 NAEYC accredited centers (NAEYC, 1998e). Of the 39 states that currently fund some type of prekindergarten program, five states, Arizona, Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Nebraska, require their prekindergarten programs to be accredited by NAEYC (Mitchell, Ripple, & Chanana, 1998).

In 1998, NAEYC completed a major revision of the accreditation criteria, and it again drew “on input from thousands of early childhood educators” (NAEYC, 1998b, p. vii) and on current research in the early childhood education field. The 1998 criteria are aligned with the 1997 version of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and also include information on appropriate teaching practices in kindergarten.
1986: Developmentally appropriate practice (DAP). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp, 1986), commonly referred to as DAP, began as NAEYC's position paper on developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs. The first edition of developmentally appropriate practice was published in 1986, and it contained NAEYC's definition of and guidelines for developmentally appropriate practices for infant, toddler, and preschool programs (Bredekamp, 1986). In 1987, an expanded version of the book was published in which guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice in the primary grades serving 5- through 8-year olds were added (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 62).

Two factors fueled the creation of the developmentally appropriate practice document. First, the NAEYC center accreditation process mentioned developmentally appropriate activities, materials, and expectations, but no clear definition or explanation of what was developmentally appropriate existed at that time. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice*, first as a position statement and then as a book, was created to address the need for clarification regarding developmentally appropriate practices. Second, NAEYC saw another trend toward an "increased emphasis on formal instruction in academic skills... in early childhood programs" (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 1). At the same time, the federal government again was looking at early childhood education as a way of helping children succeed academically in school. NAEYC wanted to articulate what was known about child development, developmentally appropriate practices, the constructivist teaching of young
children, and the whole child concept as a way to influence the quality of early education and care. NAEYC, in effect, wanted to influence the early education and care of young children in a positive way.

Like NAEYC’s first two major projects, the development of the developmentally appropriate practice position statement and guidelines involved input and feedback from “literally thousands of early childhood practitioners” (New & Mallory, 1994, p. 1). NAEYC members and other professionals researched, debated, and deliberated about current information and knowledge in the field of early childhood education. The early childhood professionals examined their “practices in light of current knowledge of child development and learning” (Bredekamp, 1986, p. v). This project took a number of years to complete and the resulting position statement and guidelines represented “the early childhood profession’s consensus definition of developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood programs” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. iv).

In the 1987 version, the concept of developmental appropriateness included definitions and explanations of age appropriateness and individual appropriateness. The guidelines described how developmental appropriateness could be “applied to four components of early childhood programs: curriculum; adult-child interactions; relations between the home and program; and developmental evaluation of children” (Bredekamp, 1987, p. 2). Research and published literature were cited to support each of the guidelines. In the document, NAEYC advocated “the field’s long-standing
core values of respect for and nurturing of young children as among the necessary means to achieve the democratic goals of a just and compassionate society” (New & Mallory, 1994, p. 1).

*Developmentally Appropriate Practice* is believed to be “the most influential document guiding the field of early childhood education today” (Charlesworth, 1998a; Hart, Burts, & Charlesworth, 1997). The guidelines “met a need in the profession” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. v). More than half a million copies of the 1987 version of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* were sold as well as several million brochures describing DAP (p. v). In addition to the book and brochures, DAP information was presented at national, state, and local conferences. The journal, *Young Children*, published numerous articles about DAP. During the late 1980s and in the 1990s, DAP became a common research topic in the field of early childhood education. DAP guidelines have been adopted “by numerous state departments of education” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. v). Developmentally appropriate practice has been widely accepted by the vast majority of early childhood professionals and its concepts, guidelines, and vocabulary have become the professional discourse and the language of practice for early childhood professionals.

Although developmentally appropriate practice was widely accepted, there were some academicians who expressed major concerns with the document (Williams, 1996). The criticisms cover a wide range of viewpoints and worldviews. For example, Spodek (1991) described developmentally
appropriate practices as being too narrow, too limiting, and too conservative. Jipson (1991) described DAP as being not only very positivistic and but also as being culturally biased. Lubeck (1994) characterized the intent of developmentally appropriate practice as forcing the dominant class’s views and beliefs upon the entire field by creating an official knowledge and by doing so continue the existing social inequities. Numerous articles were published and many discussions were held at major conferences dealing with DAP. Two edited books addressed and debated the various views of developmentally appropriate practices: *Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education Curriculum: Beginning the Dialogue* (Kessler & Swadener, 1992) and *Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Practices: Challenges for Early Childhood Education* (Mallory & New, 1994).

NAEYC believed one of the most important contribution of the developmentally appropriate practice guidelines was “that they created an opportunity for increased conversation within and outside [the] field about . . . early childhood practice” (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. v). The resulting publications, controversies, interpretations, discussions, debates, research, and deliberations facilitated an on-going discussion, review, and clarification of DAP.

In keeping with NAEYC’s policy of viewing its position statements as being representative of a dynamic, growing, and changing field, the 1987 *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* version underwent extensive review and revisions. The review procedure was similar to other projects. Thousands of
early childhood educators/practitioners had input into the revisions. In 1997, the revised edition of *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* was published and it reflected the "current understandings, values, and goals at the time of publication" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. v).

Developmentally appropriate practice, as explained in the 1997 revision, result from the process of professionals making decisions about the well being and education of children based on at least three important kinds of information or knowledge:

1. *what is known about child development and learning...*
2. *what is known about the strengths, interests, and needs of each individual child in the group...*
3. *knowledge of the social and cultural contexts in which children live.*
   (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, pp. 8-9)

The 1997 developmentally appropriate guidelines were divided into five "interrelated dimensions of early childhood professional practice: creating a caring community of learners, teaching to enhance development and learning, constructing appropriate curriculum, assessing children's development and learning, and establishing reciprocal relationships with families" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 16).

The revised developmentally appropriate practice guidelines are considered to be "general principles to guide the complex decisions of teachers; [they] cannot – and should not attempt – to prescribe actual behavior because so many important factors, including the specific context and individual children and families, vary across classrooms" (Bredekamp, 1997, p. 36). The teacher is seen as a decision-maker who must use her
knowledge of (a) child development, (b) culture, (c) pedagogy, (d) curriculum development, content, and implementation, (e) how to adapt it to children's individual strengths, needs and interests, and (f) parents to inform her practice. The developmentally appropriate practice guidelines are seen as a "starting point for decision-making" (Charlesworth, 1998b. p. 293).

NAEYC had two goals for the 1997 DAP revisions. The first was to "improve the quality of current early childhood practice" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 4). The second goal was to "continue to encourage the kind of questioning and debate among early childhood professionals that are necessary for the continued growth of professional knowledge in the field" (p. 4).

1991: Early childhood teacher certification. The Association of Teacher Educators, referred to as ATE, and NAEYC developed early childhood teacher certification guidelines "to inform decision-makers about certification standards for teachers in programs serving children from birth through eight years of age" (NAEYC, 1991/1994, p. 1). NAEYC and ATE wanted to provide a framework states could use and adopt for early childhood teacher certifications standards, which reflected the current knowledge base of the early childhood profession. The early childhood teacher certification standards, like the previous NAEYC endeavors, were reached through a consensus building process. A draft was presented for discussions to NAEYC members at the NAEYC annual conference. ATE also presented the draft to its members. The resulting discussion and feedback
were used to develop a revised draft of the early childhood teacher
certification guidelines. A revised draft was mailed to a "national sample of
900 early childhood teacher educators and state department certification
specialists" (NAEYC, 1991/1994, p. 1). Feedback was also requested from
twenty-five related professional organizations. ATE and NAEYC developed a
final version based on the feedback they had received (p. 1).

Once the document was finalized and approved by both NAEYC and
ATE, NAEYC and its affiliates began lobbying for states to develop or revise
their early childhood teacher certification to reflect the NAEYC position. This
state is one of the states that has revamped its teacher certification categories
by eliminating the kindergarten teacher certification and the elementary
education, Grades 1-8 certification. In the place of the K-8 certification, this
state has an early childhood teacher license encompassing prekindergarten to
third grade and another license for middle childhood, grades 4 to 9.

1992: Curriculum guidelines for early childhood programs. NAEYC
and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State
Departments of Education developed guidelines for determining and making
decisions about appropriate curriculum content and assessment in programs
serving children ages three through eight. The guidelines were the
"culmination of more than a decade of work defining best practice for early
childhood programs" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 2). The guidelines
were written, in part, as a response to the 1987 version of Developmentally
Appropriate Practice. The guidelines for developmentally appropriate practice
"were not intended to address all aspects of early childhood education programs, and they are relatively silent on what to teach" (p. 3). The curriculum guidelines were developed to help teachers make "informed decisions about appropriate curriculum content [as well as] advocate for more appropriate approaches" (p. 10). The guidelines were endorsed and supported by ten other organizations (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992).

The theoretical framework of the NAEYC curriculum guidelines was based on the constructivist learning theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, Erikson, and Dewey (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992). Theories inform practice and impact an early childhood educator's beliefs about how children learn, what children should have opportunities to learn, and these beliefs in turn guide and influence teaching practice. Seven broad assumptions about learning and teaching derived from these theories informed the development of the NAEYC curriculum guidelines. These seven assumptions about teaching and learning are:

1. "Children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure" (p. 14).
2. "Children construct knowledge" (p. 14).
3. "Children learn through social interaction with adults and other children" (p. 15).
4. "Children's learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to utilization" (p. 16).
5. "Children learn through play" (p. 16).
6. "Children's interests and 'need to know' motivate learning" (p. 16).
7. "Human development and learning are characterized by individual variation" (p. 17).

During the development of the curriculum guidelines, the authors identified two curriculum orientations, as defined by Eisner (1979a), as being compatible with NAEYC's theoretical framework: personal relevance and development of cognitive processes (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 17). In a personal relevance orientation the emphasis is on helping individual children develop personal meaning (Eisner, 1979a, p. 57). The teacher's role is to facilitate, support, co-plan, and provide a resource-rich environment that meets the children's needs, interests, and explorations for meaning and relevance (Eisner, 1979a). The development of cognitive processes orientation focuses on helping children learn how to learn and on providing the children with opportunities to develop, use, and strengthen all of their abilities (Eisner, 1979a, p. 5).

The NAEYC curriculum guidelines consist of twenty statements early childhood professionals could use in planning curriculum (See Appendix A). NAEYC saw child development knowledge and curriculum theory as two "important and . . . intersecting strands of work within the field of early childhood education" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 5). The goal was "to bring these disciplines more closely together through implementation of the guidelines" (p. 5). The guidelines were careful not to "dictate curriculum because good curriculum must be individually appropriate to the needs of the
children in a program. In addition, it must be culturally salient and locally relevant and meaningful in the context of a specific community" (p. 11). The guidelines did, however, provide early childhood educators with principles they could use to guide their thinking and help them determine a course of action regarding curriculum (p. 19).

**NAEYC Today**

NAEYC continues to grow and currently has a membership of more than 103,000 and has a large network of more than 400 local, state, and regional affiliates (NAEYC, 1999). NAEYC publishes journals, books, pamphlets, videos, and posters, and these materials are widely disseminated. NAEYC keeps the cost of its publications low so early childhood practitioners can afford them. NAEYC sponsors two national conferences each year as well as several videoconferences. The affiliates also sponsor local, state, and regional conferences.

The 103,000 members receive six issues of NAEYC's journal, *Young Children*, which contains not only articles dealing with the research, theory, and practice but also with current legislative information that may impact the early education and care of young children. More than 23,000 NAEYC members hold comprehensive membership and in addition to *Young Children*, receive six newly published NAEYC books each year.

NAEYC and its affiliates actively advocate and support quality early education and care for young children. They state their positions to federal
and state governments and lobby for legislation that supports quality early childhood education.

Quality early education and care of very young children had been, for the most part, ignored by the federal government and state departments of education and welfare. Without help or assistance from government, NAEYC has developed and established the standards and guidelines for quality early education and care. Through its on-going position statements, publications, memberships, conferences, and lobbying efforts, NAEYC has advocated for quality early education and care of young children and through this advocacy has informed, shaped, and influenced the field of early childhood education on a national basis. Through a process of professional discourse at a variety of levels, NAEYC has shaped the language of practice of its early childhood educators.

Summary

This study was aimed at understanding the theories of actions of three educated, experienced, exemplary prekindergarten teachers in different non-public school prekindergarten settings. It is a study in teacher thinking. Teachers' theories of action was the main conceptual framework of this study. Idea-based social construction, discourse theory according to Gee and Bakhtin, and the language of practice provided three slightly different perspectives for examining and analyzing the three prekindergarten teachers' theories of action.
This review of relevant literature has examined five major topics, which can assist in understanding the theories of action of the three prekindergarten teachers. First, teacher thinking was discussed with special emphasis on teachers' theories of action. Six studies of preschool or prekindergarten teacher thinking were reviewed. Second, constructivism and its different strands were briefly discussed. An explanation of idea-based social constructivism was given. Third, two views of discourse theory were described: Gee's Discourse theory and Bakhtin's view of professional discourse. Fourth, a description was given of the language of practice and its conceptual framework. Fifth, the historical, political, and social factors that have impacted the professional discourse and language of practice of the field of early childhood education were described. The role the National Association for the Education of Young Children has played in influencing the field was elaborated upon.

These five topics help set the stage for understanding the theories of action of the three prekindergarten teachers in this study.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This was a qualitative, non-manipulative, naturalistic inquiry whose purpose was to develop an understanding of the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers. The basic methodological framework used for this study was educational connoisseurship and criticism, a form of qualitative inquiry developed by Elliot Eisner. Teachers' theories of action (McCutcheon, 1995), was the major conceptual framework of this study. Three other conceptual frameworks were used to examine, analyze, and interpret the teachers' theories of action: Idea-based social constructivism (Prawat & Peterson, 1999); two views of discourse - Gee's (1989, 1992, 1997) Discourse theory and Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) view of professional discourse; and the language of practice (Yinger, 1987). The different conceptual frameworks will allow the reader to view the three teachers' theories of action from slightly different angles.

In this chapter, I will describe the research paradigm, the research approach, and research methods used in this study. I will first discuss the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach for this study and then
proceed to discuss qualitative research, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, arts-based research, and educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, the particular qualitative research genre used in this study. This information should assist the reader in understanding educational connoisseurship and educational criticism and its position within the qualitative research family. This will be followed by methodology information regarding design of the study, conceptual frameworks, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis, creditability of the study, ethical considerations, and challenges to writing educational criticisms.

Rationale for a Qualitative Research Approach

Qualitative educational research, according to Eisner (1991a), is "about trying to understand what teachers and children do in the settings in which they work" (p. 11). Eisner explains that

to know what schools are like, their strengths and their weaknesses, we need to be able to see what occurs in them, and we need to be able to tell others what we have seen in ways that are vivid and insightful. (1991a, p. 22)

I selected the qualitative research paradigm and an approach for this research which would allow me to (a) develop an understanding of the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers and (b) write in a form that allowed me to tell others what I saw in ways that were vivid and insightful. The particular genre of qualitative research I used for this study was educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, a form of art-based research developed and advocated

Educational connoisseurship/educational criticism is a small but growing genre in qualitative research. In order for the reader to understand where educational connoisseurship and educational criticism are situated within the qualitative research family, I have developed a simplified chart to locate its position (See Figure 3.1). Charts, diagrams, and lists of qualitative research approaches can be both “informative and provocative” (Wolcott, 1992, p. 9) and subject to criticism yet they can be “a useful means for locating major landmarks on the qualitative horizon” (p. 9).
Lincoln (1990) believes we still tend to operate on an accumulation "model of knowledge: knowledge as hierarchy, taxonomy, or pyramid" (p. 84). These models of knowledge are constructions we use to try to understand and make sense of information. Until "new models of knowledge and knowledge accumulation" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 84) are developed we rely on existing models to organize information.

I developed the chart from information found in the works of Barone and Eisner (1997), Denzin and Lincoln (1994), Eisner (1991a, 1998), Guba and Lincoln (1994), and Schwandt (1990, 1994). The chart I created provided a way to organize complex information using a model of knowledge that helped me visualize the relationships between the research paradigms and research genres. The chart was also developed as a way to organize the following explanation of the qualitative research approach I selected and to assist the reader in locating educational connoisseurship and educational criticism within a research field that is "multiparadigmatic in focus" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3).

In the next section, I will begin by providing a brief explanation of qualitative research. Second, I will describe the constructivist-interpretive dimension of qualitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 13). Third, I will discuss the arts-based approach and educational connoisseurship and criticism.
Figure 3.1: Educational Connoisseurship and Educational Criticism's Location on the Qualitative Research Landscape (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Eisner, 1991, 1998; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; and Schwandt, 1990, 1994).
Qualitative Research

A generic definition of qualitative research, provided by Denzin and Lincoln (1994), states that it is "multimethod in focus, involving an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its subject matter" (p. 2). The qualitative researchers "study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret" (p. 2) the qualities of the experience. The term qualitative is defined as "relating to, or involving quality or kind" (Gove, 1976, p. 1858). The term quality has numerous meanings some of which are: (a) a particular and essential character; (b) a special or distinguishing attribute; or (c) something that serves to identify a subject of perception or thought in the respect in which it is considered (p. 1858). "Quality is a general term applicable to any trait or characteristic; it is frequently used in relation to inherent traits not immediately apparent and ascertained only after experience or examination" (p. 1858).

The qualitative researcher believes characteristics, traits, or qualities may not be immediately apparent and can only be understood through experience or through a careful examination of them. The qualities or "variables are complex, interwoven, and difficult to measure" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 7), and understanding is more likely to be gained from an emic or insider's point of view. For this reason, an extended time is needed to observe.

What characteristics of qualitative research allow us to understand the qualities of the subject under study?
Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Eisner (1991a) offers six common features that make a study qualitative, "each of which contributes in different ways to the overall character of a qualitative study" (p. 32). First, qualitative research is field focused, that is, the research occurs where the action is and the research can include anything that contributes to developing an understanding of the phenomena being studied. Qualitative researchers study the "situations and objects intact [and] observe, interview, record, describe, interpret, and appraise settings as they are" (p. 33).

The second feature is the researcher-as-the instrument. Qualitative researchers

must see what is to be seen, given some frame of reference and some set of intentions. The self is the instrument that engages the situation and makes sense of it. This is done most often without the aid of an observation schedule; it is not a matter of checking behaviors, but rather of perceiving their presence and interpreting their significance. (Eisner, 1991a, pp. 33-34)

The third feature of qualitative research is its interpretive character. The researcher explains or interprets why something is taking place and what meaning it has for the people experiencing it. The qualitative researcher has to penetrate the surface and look for insight into the phenomena being studied.

Fourth, when writing the results of the qualitative study, the researcher uses expressive language. The presence of voice is evident in the text. "Good
qualitative writing helps readers experience" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 38) the phenomena vicariously.

Fifth, the qualitative researcher pays attention to the particulars (Eisner, 1991a, p. 38). Close attention is paid to the details of the phenomena being studied. The qualitative research provides “a sense of the uniqueness of the case” (p. 39).

The sixth feature deals with the criteria for assessing the qualitative research. Different paradigms often have their own criteria for assessing the research. Eisner (1991a) feels that “qualitative research becomes believable because of its coherence, insight, and instrumental utility” (p. 39).

The majority of qualitative research approaches do have many of these six features in common even though each research is “shaped by multiple ethical and political positions” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 3). The various “approaches allow us to know and understand different things about the world” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 9). What are the different approaches or kinds of qualitative research?

**Kinds of Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is not a single way of doing research. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) believe qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosses disciplines, fields, and subject matter. A complex, interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surround the term *qualitative research*. These include the traditions associated with positivism, poststructuralism, and the many qualitative research perspectives, or methods, connected to cultural and interpretive studies. . . . Multiple theoretical paradigms claim use of qualitative research methods and strategies, from
constructivism to cultural studies, feminism, Marxism, and ethnic models of study. Qualitative research is used in many separate disciplines. It does not belong to a single discipline. (pp. 1 & 3)

Qualitative research, then, is an “umbrella term for various philosophical orientations to interpretive research” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 9). Currently, “at the most general level, four major interpretive paradigms structure qualitative research: positivist and postpositivist, constructivist-interpretive, critical, and feminist-poststructural” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 13).

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) believe philosophic underpinnings “shape our understanding of the . . . research enterprise” (p. 1). A philosophic understanding of inquiry assists in “forming a frame of reference about the nature of inquiry” (p. 1). The answers to a series of philosophical questions can help pinpoint some major differences between the different interpretive paradigms of qualitative research. These questions concern ontology, epistemology, logic, and teleology.

What is the nature of the world? What is real? What counts as evidence? What is the relationship between the knower and the known? What role do values play in understanding? Are casual links between bits of information possible? What is research for? (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p. 4)

The answers to these questions undergrid the philosophical differences between the different interpretative paradigms within the qualitative research field.

Qualitative research, then, is conducted by researchers who have different paradigmatic beliefs. Within each paradigm there can be many
research approaches. The preferred research paradigm and approach "reflect personal choices [which] are embedded in our cultural and historical contexts" (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 8). What makes a researcher select one paradigm over another or one approach over another?

Choice of Qualitative Approach

The worldview the researcher holds influences the paradigm he or she selects. Before selecting a qualitative research approach, the qualitative researcher should carefully investigate and consider his or her own philosophical beliefs, worldview, or paradigmatic focus. Maguire (1987), in discussing paradigms, worldviews, and research, stated "underlying assumptions of world views are so fundamentally different that they create lenses, or windows from which to observe and make sense of social reality" (p. 14). Each of us has a worldview that influences how we see the world and these views are often tacitly shaped. "Different discourses produce different truths" (Cherryholmes, 1988, p. 106). Our basic assumptions about human nature, the nature of reality, and nature of knowledge "shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it" (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986, p. 3).

The key to how I view the world rests with the paradigm window I look through when viewing and interpreting the world in which I live. My worldview "provides a place to stand from which to view reality" (Maguire, 1987, p. 12). The word view or paradigm window from which I look shapes not only what I look at, but also how I look at things, what I decide to see or
not to see, whether something is a problem or not, or whether something has value or not. I, as a researcher, bring my worldview to any research studies I may conduct. My life experiences, education, profession, and beliefs have influenced my views. "The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, framework (theory, ontology) that specifics a set of questions (epistemology) that are then examined (methodology, analysis in specific ways" (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 11).

As a researcher I must know and be aware of the worldview I hold, and I should be knowledgeable about other worldviews. I should be willing to be open to other viewpoints, study them, and learn from them. I need to be willing to grow and develop intellectually, socially and emotionally, but in the final analysis I have to find a match between my worldview and the qualitative approach I use in conducting research.

van Manen (1990) asks

why then should one adopt one research approach other another? The choice should reflect more than mere whim, preference, taste, or fashion. Rather, the method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator (a parent or teacher) in the first place. (p. 2)

Wolcott (1992) tells us "qualitative researchers position themselves by identifying the underlying ideas and assumptions that drive their work and by identifying the procedures they intend to follow" (p. 7). The different interpretative paradigms inherently lean toward certain forms of qualitative research based on different ideas and assumptions as well as expected outcomes.
Constructivist-Interpretive Paradigm of Qualitative Research

This study was based on a constructivist-interpretive paradigm that is compatible with my worldview. Constructivist and interpretive are “general descriptors for a loosely coupled family of methodological and philosophical persuasions” (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118). The constructivist-interpretive paradigm is based on a phenomenological and hermeneutical/dialectical approach to understanding the world view of others, that is to develop an understanding of “the emic points of view, for understanding meaning, for Verstehen” (p. 118).

Phenomenology, the study of the lifeworld or Lebenswelt, is the quintessence of a reality that is lived, experienced, and endured. The everyday life is that province of reality in which we encounter directly, as the condition of our life, natural and social givens as pregiven realities with which we must try to cope. (Schütz & Luckmann, 1983, p. 1)

Phenomenology “aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences. It attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world” (van Manen, p. 1990, p. 9).

The constructivist/interpretivist view of hermeneutics is based on the idea that hermeneutics or understanding is “a primary and universal way of our being in the world” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 63). The hermeneutic/dialectic aspect “aims to produce as informed and sophisticated a construction” (Guba, 1990, p. 26) or reconstruction of the way the world was experienced by those in it - both the researched and the researcher (Lincoln, 1990, p. 73).
To do research based on phenomenology and hermeneutics is always to question the way we experience the world, to want to know the world in which we live as human beings. And since to know the world is profoundly to be in the world in a certain way, the act of researching-questioning-theorizing is the intentional act of attaching ourselves to the world, to become more fully part of it, or better, to become the world. Research is a caring act: we want to know that which is most essential to being. (van Manen, 1990, p. 5)

Although the constructivists and interpretivists "share a common intellectual heritage" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 118) and are grouped together in Denzin and Lincoln's classification of the four major interpretive paradigms in qualitative research, the constructivist researchers tend to be "preoccupied with related but somewhat different concerns from those of their interpretivist counterparts" (p. 125).

In the next section I will address how the constructivists differ from the interpretivists, and I will describe the concerns the constructivists hold.

**Constructivist Component of the Constructivist-Interpretative Paradigm**

The constructivists agree with the interpretivists regarding the importance of the study of the lifeworld as it is experienced. The constructivists, however, tend to find the "notions of objectivism, empirical realism, objective truth, and essentialism" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 125) problematic and are "deeply committed to the contrary view" (p. 125).

It is important to note that "the terrain of constructivist approaches is marked by multiple uses of the term" (Schwandt, 1994, p. 126). The constructivist philosophy, upon which the constructivist component of the constructivist-interpretative research paradigm is based, was influenced by
the work of Nelson Goodman, who is considered to be a “Harvard patriarch of post-modern philosophy” (West, 1989, p. 189). Goodman’s philosophical positions are unique and complex, therefore he “doesn’t fit on an ordinary philosophical spectrum” (West, 1989, p. 191). He is not a pragmatist “yet no other label comes closer in characterizing” (West, 1989, p. 192) his philosophy.

Goodman’s constructivist philosophy is “at one blow a philosophy of science, a philosophy of art, and a philosophy of cognition” (Bruner, 1986, p. 95). Goodman (1984) calls it a philosophy of understanding.

The genuine and significant differences between art and science are compatible with their common cognitive function [that is the advancement of understanding]; and the philosophy of science and the philosophy of art are embraced within epistemology conceived as the philosophy of understanding. (p. 148)

Goodman (1978) assumes a pluralistic view of the world(s). He is “not speaking in terms of multiple possible alternatives to a single actual world but of multiple actual worlds” (p. 2). These “worlds themselves may be built in many ways” (p. 5). Goodman (1984) explains:

We do not make stars as we make bricks; not all making is a matter of molding mud. The worldmaking mainly in question here is making not with hands but with minds, or rather with languages or other symbol systems. Yet when I say that worlds are made, I mean it literally. (p. 42)

Worldmaking “always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking” (Goodman, 1978, p. 6). This view of worldmaking “sees the world into versions and [the] versions making worlds” (Goodman, 1984, p. 29). This view also “inquires into what makes a version right and a world well-built” (Goodman, 1984, p. 29). Goodman (1984) explains that
the world of a true version is a construct; the features are not conferred upon something independent of the version but combined with one another to make the world of that version. The world is not the version itself; the version may have features - such as being in English or consisting of words - that its world does not. But the world depends upon the version. (p. 34)

Furthermore, "the forms and the laws in our worlds do not lie there ready-made to be discovered but are imposed by world-versions we contrive - in the sciences, the arts, perception, and everyday practice" (Goodman, 1984, p. 21). The result is pluralism. "A number of independently acceptable systems can be constructed, none of which has a claim to epistemological primacy" (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 24). "None of them tells us the way the world is, but each of them tells us a way the world is" (Goodman, 1972, p. 31).

Goodman (1978) questions the concept of objectivity. He believes that "what we find, or succeed making, is heavily dependent on how and what we seek" (p. 39). What we see depends on our "conceptual schemata. 'There is no innocent eye'" (Goodman, 1972, p. 142). Experience "depends upon its maker; but the maker is the human mind" (p. 416). The schemata one uses are "tools the knower uses in coping with what comes to him. He invents them, alters them, chooses among alternatives, reject and replaces or reinstates them" (p. 416).

Goodman also questions "truth" (p. 155) and "certainty" (p. 159) and "knowledge" (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 162) in his philosophy of understanding. "For a concept with greater reach than truth, consider "rightness" (p. 155). Goodman explains that
rightness is a matter of fitting and working. . . . The fitting here is not a fitting onto - not a correspondence or matching or mirroring of independent Reality - but a fitting into a context or discourse or standing complex of other symbols. . . . Fitting is neither passive nor one-way, but an active process of fitting together; the fit has to be made, and the making may involve minor or major adjustments in what is being fitted into or what is being fitted in or both. (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 158)

Goodman does not "jettison truth altogether but [keeps] it, somewhat modified, for a subordinate role" (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 159). Certainty, however, "is unsalvageable" (p. 159). In the place of certainty, Goodman suggests the concept of "adoption [since] we can adopt habits, strategies, vocabularies, styles, as well as statements. Adoption is a matter of putting to work, of making or trying to make a fit" (p. 159). This fitting "is tested by the working. What counts is not so much the working of what is fitted in as the working of the resultant whole" (p. 158).

In the "pursuit of knowledge others [try] to arrive at an accurate and comprehensive description of the 'the real' readymade world" (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 163). Since there is not a real, readymade world, knowledge is "plagued with certainty and uncertainty alike" (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 161). In Goodman's reconceptualized philosophy "knowledge gives way to understanding" (p. 161). When the goal of any cognitive endeavor is the advancement of understanding, the endeavor starts from what happens to be currently adopted and proceeds to integrate and organize, weed out and supplement, not in order to arrive at truth about something ready made but in order to make something right - to construct something that works cognitively, that fits together and handles new cases, that may implement further inquiry and invention. (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 163)
How does a constructivist researcher use Goodman's ideas for conducting inquiry into the lifeworld and worldmaking of others as well as one's own lifeworld? What position does the constructivist researcher take on ontology, epistemology, and methodology? In the next section, these questions will be addressed.

**Constructivist Research**

From the constructivist point of view, knowledge “is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true but problematic and ever changing” (Guba, 1990, p. 26). Although the “ontology/epistemology distinction is obliterated” (p. 27) in the constructivist paradigm, it is often necessary to discuss them separately. Ontologically, many constructivists tend to take a position of relativism (Guba, 1990, p. 27), the idea that basic concepts such as “rationality, truth, reality, right, the good, or norms must be understood as relative to a specific conceptual scheme, theoretical framework, paradigm, form of life, society, or culture” (Bernstein, 1983, p. 8). These concepts have to be viewed from historical, social, linguistic, cultural, and individual perspectives. Multiple, socially constructed realities exist in the “form of multiple mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific, dependent for their form and content on the persons who hold them” (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

Epistemologically, the constructivist researcher takes a transactional and subjectivist position which sees understanding “as created in interaction among investigator and respondents” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). If
realities are constructed and exist in the "respondents' minds, subjective interaction seems to be the only way to access them" (Guba, 1990, p. 26).

The methods employed by constructivist researchers are those which are most likely to allow the identification of a "variety of constructions" (Guba, 1990, p. 26) or realities that exist in the life-worlds of those being researched. The constructivist methods aid in the disclosure of these life-worlds.

The constructivist paradigm has as "its central focus . . . the presentation of multiple, holistic, competing, and often conflicting realities" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 73). In the presentation of these socially constructed realities, the researcher produces an account of the lifeworld of the researched in such a way that aids "the reader in understanding the nuances and subtleties" (Lincoln, 1990, p. 73) and realities of that particular life-world. If the research is written in a vivid and insightful manner, the reader may be able to vicariously experience a version of that life-world by reconstructing his/her own understanding of the phenomena studied.

"Constructivism thus intends neither to predict and control the 'real' world nor to transform it but to reconstruct the 'world' at the only point at which it exists: in the minds of the constructors" (Guba, 1990, p. 27).

This study was based on educational connoisseurship and educational criticism, a form of art-based research, which is one of the approaches in the constructivist research paradigm. In the next section, I will briefly describe the characteristics of arts-based research.
Arts-Based Research

Arts-based research is grounded on the premises Goodman put forth in his philosophy of understanding. Goodman (1978) states that the arts must be taken no less seriously than the sciences as modes of discovery, creation, and enlargement of knowledge in the broad sense of advancement of understanding, and thus that the philosophy of art should be conceived as an integral part of metaphysics and epistemology. (p. 102)

Philosophy of art and the philosophy of science are not in opposition to each other. Both the arts and sciences want to advance understanding and they "proceed in much the same way with their searching and building" (Goodman, 1978, p. 107). The difference between art and science is not between feeling and fact, intuition and inference, delight and deliberation, synthesis and analysis, sensation and cerebration, concreteness and abstraction, passion and action, mediacy and immediacy, or truth and beauty, but rather a difference in domination of certain specific characteristics of symbols. (Goodman, 1972, p. 118)

Elliot Eisner has been instrumental in developing and advocating arts-based educational research. Eisner (1985a), like Goodman, believed, that "scientific procedures are not the only forms through which human understanding is secured and scientific methods are not the only ways through which human influence can be confidently created" (p. 103). Eisner (1985a) felt that research could be conducted from an artistic paradigm as well as from a scientific paradigm. Eisner saw arts-based educational inquiry as another way to describe, interpret, and evaluate educational settings (p. 103). The arts-based approach offered educational researchers the opportunity to
conduct research from something other than a social science paradigm (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 73).

Many of the research techniques used in arts-based research are similar to those used in other qualitative research approaches. Wolcott (1992), in discussing the basic techniques in qualitative inquiry, classifies the “data-gathering techniques” (p. 19) into three categories: “Experiencing, with emphasis on sensory data, particularly watching and listening; enquiring [sic], in which the researcher's role becomes more intrusive than that of a 'mere observer'; and examining, in which the researcher makes use of materials prepared by others” (p. 19).

Arts-based research does involve experiencing, inquiring, and examining. However, how these are interpreted and utilized within an arts-based approach may be somewhat different from other qualitative approaches. Qualitative inquiry from an arts-based research approach “places a high premium on the idiosyncratic [and] on the exploitation of the researcher's unique strengths” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 169), experiences, and knowledge base. While doing research, the arts-based researcher must be willing to spend the time necessary to develop an understanding of the phenomena being studied and be willing to shift focus as new questions and insights begin to emerge. “Flexibility, adjustment, and iteractivity are three hallmarks” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 170) of the arts-based approach. This approach does not have a set method or systematic procedures to follow. “There are no routines to prescribe, no rules to direct one's steps, no algorithms to calculate.
There are desires, flexible aims, and the need to remain in touch with what's important" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 170). The aim of arts-based educational research is to "produce a perceptive, insightful, or illuminating study of the educational world" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 169).

Both the inquiry and the resulting text of arts-based research can be "defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities of design elements" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 73). At least seven elements of art-based educational research have been identified and these aesthetic features may be "in evidence to some degree in all educational research activity [but] the more pronounced they are, the more the research may be characterized as arts-based" (p. 73), but not every arts-based research will display all seven elements.

1. The arts-based researcher writes or creates a "virtual world" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 74). The researcher, through a vivid and insightful rendering of the life-world of the subject(s) or topic under study, invites the reader to vicariously participate "in the experiences of a . . . classroom and [in] making judgments about the rightness of certain of their own educational practices as well as the conditions that tend to foster them" (p. 74). The reader constructs a mental world of this situation by juxtaposing his or her own experiences with those rendered in the researcher' account of the life-world of the individual or classroom being studied.

2. The texts produced by the arts-based researcher have a certain degree of ambiguity (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 74). The presence of ambiguity
is evident by the various literary techniques the researcher uses as a way of engaging the reader in the text. Creating blanks or gaps in the text invites the reader to participate more fully in the text by persuading the “readers to contribute answers to the dilemmas posed within the text” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 75). Goodman explains “multiplicity of meaning, subtle and complex ambiguity, is frequently a positive and vital feature of literacy, as opposed to scientific, discourse” (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 55).

3. A third feature of arts-based research is “the use of expressive language” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 75). The researcher, when she creates the text, makes use of language that is “metaphorical and evocative” (p. 75). The use of metaphor allows the researcher and the reader to transfer “a schema of labels for sorting a given realm to sorting of another realm” (Goodman, 1984, p. 61). A metaphor is “far from being a mere matter of ornament, it participates fully in the progress of knowledge: in replacing some stale ‘natural’ kinds with novel and illuminating categories, in contriving facts, in revising theory, and in bringing us new worlds” (Goodman, 1984, p. 71). The use of expressive language in the research text can not only express meaning but also facility meaning by way of inferences. Dewey (1934) believed the expression exhibited in aesthetic works is not just a mere statement of the experience but can constitute an experience (p. 85).

4. Arts-based researchers makes “use of contextualized and vernacular language” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 76). Arts-based researchers “depend on nontechnical, everyday, vernacular forms of speech that are more directly
associated with lived experiences” (p. 76). Goodman (1978) tells us that “worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand” (p. 6), and the language or symbol systems we use impact the construction of the world we make or remake. If the arts-based researcher is trying to construct or reconstruct a version of a life-world, the use of contextualized and vernacular language will come closer to representing what the life-world is like as experienced by the researched.

5. Arts-based research text promotes empathy (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77). The constructivists believe “the emotions function cognitively” (Goodman, 1968, p. 248) and “sensation and perception and feeling and reason are all facets of cognition, they affect and are affected by each other” (Goodman, 1984, p. 180). The cognitive use of emotions “involves discriminating and relating them in order to gauge and grasp the work and integrate it with the rest of our experience and the world” (Goodman, 1968, p. 248). Empathic understanding facilitates the reader’s “achievement of intersubjectivity” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77), a connecting and understanding the lifeworld of the researched and, often, the researcher. The writing and language used in arts-based research permits the “re-creation of the mental atmosphere, thoughts, feelings, and motivations” (p. 77) of the researched. If the research text achieves its aim, the “readers are brought to vicariously experience events from a different perspective” (p. 77).

6. The arts-based research exhibits the “personal signature of the researcher/writer” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77). The researcher brings her
own life-world to her research and what she sees, interprets, and evaluates “shapes the reality in accordance within her own particular thesis, or controlling insight” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 77). This “personal dimension enters into [the] work” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 169) and the “personal stylistic features are neither liabilities nor elements that are easily replicable” (p. 169).

7. The last element identified by Barone and Eisner (1997) is the “presence of aesthetic form” (p. 78). Each piece of arts-based research is viewed as unique and its “uniqueness is evident in the composition” (p. 78) and arrangement of the work. Goodman (1978) states “the artist’s resources - modes of reference, literal and nonliteral, linguistic and nonlinguistic, denotational and non-denotational, in many media - seem more varied and impressive than the scientist’s” (p. 106). The arts-based researcher makes use of the resources which can best portrait the uniqueness of the case and can assist in the “searching and building” (Goodman, 1978, p. 107) the versions of the worlds encountered in the research. The arts-based research approach uses a different language (symbol system) than science in the advancement of understanding and in the “creation and comprehension of our worlds” (Goodman, 1968, p. 265).

The elements of arts-based research allow the created work to further the understanding of the phenomena studied. Goodman (1984) stated that works work when by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising visual intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts, and marking off neglected significant kinds, they participate in the organization and
reorganization of experience, and thus in the making and remaking of our worlds. (p. 180)

In the next section I will describe educational connoisseurship and criticism.

**Educational Connoisseurship and Educational Criticism**

Educational connoisseurship and educational criticism are based on assumptions and long-standing practices rooted in the arts and humanities (Eisner, 1991b, p. 174). This genre of qualitative research conceptualizes teaching as an artistic activity and embraces epistemological pluralism (Eisner, 1998, p. 67). Art critics use specific methods to "heighten awareness of works of art" (p. 67) and educational critics apply similar methods to heighten the awareness of educational practices and to help others to see and understand what has occurred. The philosophical foundations of this approach are based not only on the work of Nelson Goodman (1972, 1978, 1984), but also on the works of John Dewey (1930, 1934), Susanne Langer (1957), and Michael Polanyi (1958, 1966) (Eisner, 1998, p. 117).

The two aspects of this approach, connoisseurship and criticism, are intertwined. In order to construct an educational criticism, the writer must possess a high degree of connoisseurship regarding the educational phenomena being studied. The Latin root of connoisseur is cognosere, which means to know or to understand (Flinders, 1993, p. 117). A connoisseur is someone who knows, who is knowledgeable and informed within a particular field. . . . That is, they know what to look for. Their perceptual acuity is highly attuned to the phenomena they seek to understand. This ability to see and hear is not just physiological, but
rather learned. Indeed, connoisseurship is a cultural achievement. It must be actively pursued through a combination of direct experience and reflective inquiry. (Flinders, 1993, p. 117)

Connoisseurship involves the art of appreciation (Eisner, 1985a, p. 105), and the ability to appreciate comes from an in-depth knowledge and understanding about a particular field. Appreciation, however, "does not mean necessarily liking something, although one might like what one experiences. Appreciation here means awareness and an understanding of what one has experienced. Such awareness provides the basis for judgment" (Eisner, 1985a, p. 92).

The second aspect of this approach is criticism. The common connotation of the criticism is that it is negative and involved with fault finding. Dewey (1930) explains that criticism has a different meaning in the arts.

Criticism, I hardly need point out, is not fault finding. It is not pointing out evils to be reformed. It is judgment engaged in discriminating among values. It is taking thought as to what is better and worse in any field at any time, with some consciousness of *why* the better is better and *why* the worse is worse. Critical judgment is therefore not the enemy of creative production but its friend and ally. (Dewey, 1930, p. 12)

This judgment, "as an act of controlled inquiry, demands a rich background and a disciplined insight" (Dewey, 1934, p. 300). Connoisseurship provides the rich background and insight that makes the appreciation of a particular topic possible. Connoisseurship, although private, provides criticism with its subject matter (Eisner, 1985a, p. 93).
Criticism is the art of disclosure, and it is a public art (Eisner, 1985a, p. 105). Criticism is a judgment and the "material out of which judgment grows is the work, but it is the [work] as it enters into the experience of the critic by interaction with his own sensitivity and his knowledge and funded store from past experiences" (Dewey, 1934, pp. 309-310). The critic discloses what he or she has perceived and provides an insightful rendering and does so "with such clearness that the reader has a new clue and guide in his own experience" (p. 314). "The function of the criticism is the reeducation of perception of works of art; it is an auxiliary in the process of learning to see and hear" (p. 324). A well done criticism perfects the "power to perceive" (p. 325) and enables the reader to direct his or her perceptions to a "fuller and more ordered appreciation of the content of works of art" (p. 324).

Education connoisseurship and criticism views teaching as an artistic activity. "What distinguishes skilled teaching – its intellectual, social, personal, and political achievements – are no less subtle than what distinguishes a beautiful painting or good literature (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 344). Educational critics seek to identify and recognize exemplary educational practices (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 350). If the educational community wants to know what schools are like, their strengths and their weaknesses, we need to be able to see what occurs in them, and we need to be able to tell others what we have seen in ways that are vivid and insightful. We need to achieve a critic’s level of educational connoisseurship to recognize what counts, and we need to create a form of educational criticism to make what we see clear to those who have a stake in our schools. (Eisner, 1991a, p. 22)
Hatch (1994) contends that "we need educational criticism because we have to have meaningful descriptions of what happens when teaching and learning take place" (p. 364). It is important to know "what goes on in classrooms in multiple ways" (p. 364). Educational research needs "accounts like this one... in order to get beyond the simplistic scoring systems that dominate our educational discussions" (Hatch, 1994, p. 365).

The educational critic constructs an educational criticism,

an illuminative description with perceptive comments interpreting and appraising a set of observations to promote an understanding on the part of the reader. A piece of criticism is a rendering, a linguistic recreation of what the critic encountered and considered, leading to readers' appreciation of it... an awareness of it, a comprehension of it. (McCutcheon, 1979, p. 6)

Eisner (1991a) has identified four dimensions common to the construction of an educational criticism. These dimensions are description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. The four dimensions are intertwined and often woven throughout the criticism. For the purposes of discussion, each dimension will be addressed separately in the following sections.

**Description.** Description is the first dimension of educational criticism. The educational researcher/critic constructs a detailed, vivid, insightful description, or rendering of the educational phenomena being studied. The writing of this description is both artistic and factual (Eisner, 1985a, p. 182). The factual part of the description can include any facts the critic believes would inform the reader. The factual description usually includes (a) direct
quotes of the teachers' and/or students' comments or discourse, (b) descriptions of the physical characteristics of the teachers, children, classroom, school, and community, (c) an account of the daily routines and happenings in the classroom, and (d) information from or about documents and artifacts. The facts are incorporated into a literary rendering of the story of the teacher or class or educational experience.

In the writing of the description, the educational researcher/critic writes in such a way as to "enable the readers to participate vicariously in the events described. . . . It should enable the readers to get a feel for the place or process and . . . for the experience of those who occupy the situation" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 89). The criticism should help the reader to see and understand what has occurred. Creating a picture for the reader to see "requires artistry in the treatment of narrative language, and . . . this achievement means shaping text, hearing its cadences, selecting just the right word or phrase, employing apt metaphor" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 89).

As a cognitive pluralist, the educational critic is aware that there is more than one way of knowing. For this reason the educational critic makes use of various literary techniques including the use of metaphors to enhance the reader's opportunities to understand in multiple ways. Eisner (1991a) tells us

- the function of the [writing] is not mere embellishment or ornamentation or making something 'literary', it is epistemic. Its aim is to help the reader know. One source of knowing is visualization. Another is emotion. How a situation feels is not less important than
how it looks. The descriptive dimension of educational criticism makes both possible. (pp. 89-90)

The factual and artistic descriptive aspect of an educational criticism should allow the reader to experience and understand the educational phenomena being studied.

**Interpretation.** The second dimension of educational criticism is interpretive. Interpretation in educational criticism can be classified into two components: intrinsic and extrinsic (McCutcheon, 1979, p. 10). Drawing on information originating from the field of art criticism, McCutcheon (1979) describes intrinsic interpretation as focusing on identification of the “work, its essential components, and their meaning” (p. 10). In educational criticism, intrinsic interpretation focuses on identification of patterns apparent in this particular case and in determining their meanings. Intrinsic interpretation involves providing “thick descriptions” (Geertz, 1973, p. 7), a detailed description and interpretation of the meaning of the particular and/or unique social actions. This involves interpreting the social actions by “recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions, strategies, motivations, that characterize a particular episode” (Schwandt, 1997, p. 161).

Extrinsic interpretation, from the art criticism perspective, focuses on the work’s relationship to historical, political, social conditions as well as to the “psychological dimensions of the artist’s personality” (McCutcheon, 1979, p. 10). During the extrinsic aspect of interpretation, the educational critic draws upon concepts and theories from educational psychology, sociology,
history of education, philosophy of education, as well as other disciplines (Eisner, 1985a, p. 183). The reason for "employing theory in educational criticism, however, is not to predict or control events. It is, rather, to edify – to identify the factors that bear upon a particular educational practice, and to shed light on potential consequences of that practice" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81).

The interpretation explains the meaning of the description and what has happened in the educational setting being studied. The critic's perspectives and schemata influence the interpretation. The educational critic's "points of view are not only used to focus the study, but also to explain its findings" (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 349). The conceptual frameworks the critics applies to the study also guide the construction of the interpretations (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 355)

In the educational criticism there is no clear demarcation between description and interpretation. The two are usually intertwined in the criticism.

**Evaluation.** The third dimension of educational criticism has been called evaluation (Eisner, 1991a), appraisal (McCutcheon, 1979), and normative (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a). Evaluation involves making judgments, appraisal involves analyzing the quality and/or value of the action, and normative involves applying, inferring, or discovering a norm or standard. Regardless of the term used, this dimension of educational criticism "deals
with the task of making value judgments about the educational merits of what has been described and interpreted” (Eisner, 1985a, p. 183).

The educational critic renders judgments about the educational value of educational events by “using criteria that are appropriate to their character” (Eisner, 1985a, p. 184). Since there are “multiple views of educational virtue there is no single ‘good’ in education” (p. 184). However, the critic attempts to apply what is considered educationally sound, and the criteria should “be suited to the ‘species’ of educational practice, described, interpreted, and appraised” (p. 184).

The educational critic searches for goodness-of-fit or rightness-of-fit (Goodman & Elgin, 1988). If the educational practice is considered a system, then from a constructivist viewpoint, “systems are subject to multiple standards of rightness” (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 12), and “the relevant standards of rightness depend on what we want a system to do” (p. 17). “Rightness . . . of a work . . . is tested by our success in discovering and applying what is exemplified” (Goodman, 1978, p. 137). The educational critic seeks to “recognize exemplary practice” (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 350) and undertakes the task, within the criticism, to help others “understand what constitutes ‘goodness’ in those domains where goodness counts” (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 351).

The educational critic makes judgments based on criteria of what is good and right about a given educational setting. The tasks of the educational critic are complex, involve noticing and identifying the subtleties, are related
to a specific context, and require a wide knowledge and experiential base from which to make judgments. In constructing the evaluation, the educational critic relies on her role as connoisseur of the given educational phenomena or system. The role of connoisseurship is a critical one in all dimensions but it is especially critical for evaluation component of the criticism.

**Thematics.** Eisner draws from the arts for a term to describe the final dimension of an educational criticism: thematics (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81). Thematics can be defined as “relating to, or constituting, a topic of discourse, or a subject, of artistic or cultural expression” (Gove, 1976, p. 2370). Thematics is a common characteristic of works in the arts and humanities (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81). Barone and Eisner (1997) explain that in an artistic work “the theme is a pervasive quality in the text. It resurfaces throughout, and provides coherence and unity in the essay, critique, or piece of literary fiction” (p. 81).

There is a major difference, however, between thematics in works of art and in an educational criticism. In works of art, the themes are often implicit, lurking “beneath the surface of the text, subtly guiding the reading while remaining out of sight” (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81). In educational criticism the thematics are “often made explicit, the central insight or insights are pronounced and explained in the critical analysis (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81) or they can be “provided throughout the course of the criticism” (Eisner, 1991b, p. 178).
The educational critic, as she interacts with the data, carefully and methodically, constructs or reconstructs the recurring messages or themes of the educational phenomena being studied. The themes are the major or important features in the study. What the educational critic sees, describes, interprets, and identifies as themes are influenced by a number of factors. Goodman (1972) reminds us that “there is no innocent eye” (p. 142). The educational connoisseurship/critic brings her experiences, skills, knowledge base, and frames of reference to the setting. The conceptual framework(s) the educational critic uses will influence what she identifies as themes. The study can produce multiple themes. The themes become “distillations of what has been encountered. In a sense, they provide a summary of the essential features” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 104). The development of thematics is a cognitive endeavor to advance understanding of the case being presented.

Thematics also serve another purpose in an educational criticism. “Thematics is a part of a conceptual structure that says that random selection is not the only way to generalize” (Eisner, 1991b, p. 177). When the themes are identified, there is an identification of general principles or findings from a single case, a study of a particular setting. A case of a teacher or classroom, although context specific and uniquely its own case, is a sample of a larger class and what is learned about a particular case “can have relevance for the class to which it belongs” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 103). Themes do not offer a prescription for understanding any given classroom, but themes can “still serve a heuristic function. They provide a premise for framing expectations”
(Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 353). The themes of one case could be applied to other settings by way of naturalistic generalization. Stake (1995) explains that "naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (p. 85). If the educational criticism accomplishes its purpose, the reader will engage with the case and increase or advance his or her understanding. The reader now perceives the case in a different way and will use that new perception to help understand new cases.

The four dimensions of an educational criticism, description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics often flow back and forth within the criticism. In this section of the paper the four have been treated separately but in the actual interactions of the educational connoisseur/critic with the information from the case and in the construction of the case, the four are intertwined.

**Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism and this Study**

When I began to seriously consider what I wanted to study and how I wanted to study it, I reread Wolcott’s (1992) *Posturing in Qualitative Inquiry*. He tells new researchers to “assess options in terms of your own circumstances and talents” (p. 18). He also tells us that to conduct any inquiry one must have both an idea of what one is attempting to accomplish and an idea of how to proceed. But posturing [positioning] is not only a matter of identifying a strategy and capitalizing on researcher talents, it is also a personal matter influenced by the kinds of information and kinds of memberships available to and
valued by academicians individually. Prior professional commitments . . . also exert an influence and extract a corresponding commitment over the problems we select and the data-gathering techniques with which we pursue them. (pp. 41-41)

I have been and am interested in several different aspects of curriculum and instruction, early childhood education, and teacher education. I carefully weighted various areas of interest and decided to focus on early childhood teachers' theories of action and how the theories are visible in the classroom and in the teachers' teaching. I specifically wanted to study teachers who were educated, experienced, and exemplary. I have felt that good teaching is an artistic endeavor. I agree with Flinders and Eisner (1994a) that "any endeavor that exhibits consummate skill and imaginative thought, that is practiced with interest and affection, and that offers satisfaction in a job well done, may be regarded as artistic in the full sense of what art entails" (p. 343).

The premises on which educational connoisseurship and criticism are based, i.e., a constructivist philosophy, pluralistic ways of knowing, advancement of understanding, and methods rooted in the arts and humanities, are compatible with my worldview. Educational criticism, if done well, could offer a form of understanding that is not as readily available through other methods of research (Flinders, 1987, p. 36).

Wolcott (1992) advises the researcher to look at what he or she can bring to the research. What I bring to the research is twenty plus years of experience working with in-service and pre-service early childhood teachers. I have had varied experiences in this field. I was involved in a nursery school
for three years. I worked with Head Start teachers in an eleven county area. The Head Start centers were in urban, suburban, and rural areas. I provided individualized in-service training, on-site, through role modeling and coaching. I was a CDA (Child Development Associate) trainer and assisted teachers in obtaining their CDA credential. I have taught in an early childhood education program at a two-year college. I supervised ECE student teachers that were in the last quarter of their degree program. I have been in over 100 student teaching placement sites in an eight county area and have worked with over 300 student teachers. I have seen many different cooperating teachers during this time. During the last five years I have spent two mornings a week in an early childhood laboratory school working with second quarter ECE majors and the children. I bring a wealth of experience and, I think, knowledge to this study. The compatibility or match among research topic, methodology, and my knowledge and experience has influenced the design and construction of this study.

In the next section of the paper I will discuss the design of the study and the conceptual frameworks used in constructing the case.

**Design of the Study, Emergent Focus, and Conceptual Frameworks**

In research, the term design denotes the researcher’s plan of how he or she will conduct the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 58). In qualitative research, the researcher develops a plan based on theoretical assumptions that underlie qualitative research. From the onset, I planned to “study things in their natural settings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 2) and to “observe,
interview, record, describe, interpret, and appraise [the] settings as they are” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 33). The qualitative researcher's plans, by necessity and intent, must be flexible. The researcher-as-instrument brings the tools of her education, knowledge, and experience to the research project and these tools help shape and influence the research. The researcher might bring a “prefigured focus” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 176) to the research but the focus often needs “to be modified and remolded as [she] proceeds” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 58). After initial observations and interviews the focus may be modified or a new focus may emerge. In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to be open to new and unexpected qualities.

The prefigured focus of this study was to investigate the implicit theories of actions of several prekindergarten teachers. It was to be a study in teacher thinking. I had planned to do a collective case study (Stake, 1994, 1995) using Eisner's educational connoisseurship and criticism. From my preliminary review of the literature, I was expecting the teachers' theories of action to be mostly implicit as well as be individualistic and idiosyncratic. After the first semi-structured interview and several observations, it became clear to me that what I appeared to be hearing and seeing did not support my preliminary ideas that the teachers' theories of action were basically implicit, individualistic, and/or idiosyncratic. Yes, the teachers were individuals and had had different lives and educational experiences and were teaching in different settings (See Table 3.1 Selection of Participants), however, their theories of action were not only explicit but were very similar in nature. At
this point, I had to return to the literature to see if I could locate information about what I perceived from my observations and interviews.

Needless to say, I was perplexed because most of the teacher thinking literature regarding theories of action focused on either the implicit nature of theories of action or the individualistic nature of theories of action. On closer examination of the literature, I found references within studies as to how teachers' theories were similar but the studies focused on the differences.

As I was interviewing and observing, I kept asking myself, "What was happening here?" The data analysis was ongoing during the data collection process. As researchers "we tend to seek what we know how to find. What we know how to find is influenced by the tools we have learned to use" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 186). Because of my interest in the social construction of knowledge, the focus of the study shifted to the (a) teachers' explicit theories of action, (b) what had influenced them, and (c) why did they appear to be so similar. The original conceptual framework, theories of action, remained but the focus was on the explicit theories instead of the implicit theories. Three other conceptual frameworks were added to assist in explaining the similarities in the teachers' theories of action: Idea-based social constructivism (Prawat & Peterson, 1999); two views of discourse, Gee's (1989, 1992, 1997) Discourse theory and Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) view of professional discourse; and the language of practice (Yinger, 1987).
Selection of Participants

The aim of this study was understanding the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers. A collective case study design was selected because it allowed me to study a "number of cases jointly" (Stake, 1994, p. 237). By studying three teachers I had more opportunities to learn and to better understand theories of action. According to Stake (1994), "opportunities to learn is of primary importance (p. 244).

The selection of participants is one of the most important aspects of a research design (G. McCutcheon, personal communication, December 14, 1998). The strategy of selection "rests on the multiple purposes of illuminating, interpreting and understanding" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 27). Patton (1990) stresses the importance of selecting "information-rich cases for study in depth" (p. 169). As I was focusing, in-depth, on a small sample, it was important that I select the participants purposefully (Patton, 1990, p. 169). I carefully outlined nine criteria as a way of finding participants from whom I could learn a great deal and who would most likely provide rich, detailed information regarding theories of action.

The following is a list of the criteria used to select participants for this study:

1. A recognition by their local and/or professional communities as being an excellent teacher. This could be a recommendation from Early Childhood Education college faculty, particularly student teaching supervisors, who had seen the teacher teach. It could be based on teaching awards received.
It could be based on a reputation within their local communities and/or their schools or agencies for being an excellent teacher.

2. Had a degree in early childhood education.

3. Had five or more years teaching experience working with 3 and 4 year olds in a group setting.


5. Was willing to have me in their classroom throughout the school year.

6. Would have time to be interviewed numerous times during the year.

7. Desired to participate in the research study.

8. Approval of their immediate supervisors and school or agency or board.

9. Be within a reasonable driving distance of where I would be living the year I would do my research. I wanted to make numerous visits over the course of the school year, therefore, driving time and distance was a factor that had to be considered.

I made contact with different professionals in the area I had designated as being within a reasonable driving distance. I asked early childhood professionals such as college supervisors of ECE student teachers, educational coordinators, center directors, and other teachers and professionals, etc., for names of prekindergarten teachers they believed to be exemplary. From the initial list, I contacted the teachers or the childcare centers where they were working or had worked. A number were no longer teaching 3 and 4 year old children in a center setting. One was teaching the second grade. Several were
still in early childhood education but held positions in administration or other non-classroom positions. One had moved and another was leaving her position in December. One was providing home childcare. From the three remaining teachers, I made preliminary classroom visits and conducted short interviews. The three teachers met all the criteria and agreed to become participants in this study.

I did not, in the selection process, look for different variables such as types of childcare settings or types of degree or teacher ages or different years of experience. However, the three selected prekindergarten teachers were: (a) different ages, (b) had different years of experiences, (c) were in three different types of early childhood settings, and (d) had different degrees. The teachers ranged in age from late twenties to early sixties and the years of experience varied from 6 to 35 years. The teachers were in different early childhood settings: Head Start, a part-time childcare facility on a college campus, and a traditional nursery school in a private, alternative school. The teachers had different degrees: (a) one had an associate degree of applied science in early childhood education, (b) one had a bachelor’s degree in education, and (c) one had a master’s degree in early childhood education. The degrees were awarded in different decades from different types of colleges and universities. The bachelor’s degree was earned in the 1970s at a small, liberal arts college. The associate degree was earned in the 1980s at an urban community college. The master’s degree was earned in the 1990s at a major, research university (See Table 3.1).
All three teachers had had or currently had teaching certification from the state although they did not need the certificates for their current positions.

Although the selection process did not include these variables, these variables have contributed significantly to this study's findings.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Years of Teaching</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>When &amp; Where Degree Was Earned</th>
<th>Type of Center</th>
<th>Center License and Accreditation</th>
<th>Teaching Recognition and Awards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>1990s at a major research university in the Midwest. A traditional college student</td>
<td>Urban Head Start Center that offered full day care</td>
<td>Center is licensed by the state and has NAEYC Accreditation</td>
<td>Received the State Association for the Education of Young Children Teacher of the Year Award in 1990s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audrey</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>1970s at a small, liberal arts college in the Midwest. A traditional college student</td>
<td>Nursery School in a private, alternative school in a town of less than 5,000</td>
<td>Center is licensed by the state</td>
<td>Reputation within her local community and school as being an excellent teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>60s</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Associate</td>
<td>1980s at an urban community college in the Midwest. Non-traditional student</td>
<td>Part-time childcare on an urban college campus. Also serves as a laboratory school for ECE majors</td>
<td>Center is licensed by the state and has NAEYC Accreditation</td>
<td>Received the State Association for the Education of Young Children Teacher of the Year Award in 1980s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Chart of the Participants
Data Sources and Collection

In educational connoisseurship and criticism, any data source that can contribute to understanding what is going on “is an appropriate resource” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 82). Whatever information “is relevant for seeing more acutely and understanding more deeply is fair game” (p. 82). The most appropriate and informative data sources for this qualitative study were observations of selected participants, videotaping, interviews, and documents.

Observation

The richest and most important source of information for the educational researcher/critic is the “direct observation of school and classroom life” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 182). The principal factors to attend to during observation are “what people do and say, and how they do and say it” (p. 182). During our observations, we, as educational connoisseurs/critics, live in a situation and try, by being self-conscious of our own experience and its relationship to the phenomenal world, to make sense of the complex social scene in which we live. . . . It is important to focus our attention on two targets: one of these is the individual events themselves, the other is what those events do to our experience. (Eisner, 1991a, pp. 182-183)

It is extremely important for the educational researcher/critic to possess a heighten awareness of the experiences she is observing. Eisner refers to this awareness has “enlightened self-consciousness [and it is] the stuff out of which educational criticism is built” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 183).

When the aim of observation is to develop an understanding of the phenomena being studied, the educational researcher/critic must allocate
sufficient time to adequately develop a feel for what is happening in the situation. The observations may continue for months or even years (Eisner, 1991a, p. 170).

The observations for this study began in fall of 1997 and continued until school was out in either May or June 1998. I purposefully wanted to see the beginning of the year and follow the teachers through their school year. Each teacher was visited approximately fifteen times and each visit was three to five hours in length. The nursery school visits were three hours in the mornings since the children were there only three hours each morning. The full day Head Start was open from 7:30 to 5:30. I staggered my observation times to encompass the entire day. The part-time campus childcare was open from 7:00 to 4:00. I also staggered my observations times to obtain a feel of the teacher’s day.

Wolcott (1992) classified educational connoisseurship and educational criticism as a type of nonparticipant observation study (p. 31). I would, however, classify my educational researcher/critic role as a participant observer and would place my position as an “observer as participant” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 40), which is a place on the participant-observation continuum. This position is similar to what Spradley (1980) classified as moderate participation (p. 60). My primary purpose was to observe while in the classroom but I did interact with the teachers and students.

In my role as educational connoisseur, I observed using the conceptual schemata I brought to the research. Goodman (1972) explained that
"perception depends heavily on conceptual schema. . . . Our schemata may change and evolve, be revised or replaced, by suggested or informed, by factors of all kinds; but without some schema there is no perception" (p. 142).

I took observational notes while in the classroom and immediately after leaving the classroom I added to the notes. The notes were both descriptive and analytical. I focused on what was happening and tried to relate it to what I knew about early childhood education and also to what I needed to find out. These field notes or observations were later typed. In addition I often wrote in a "field journal" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 281) in which I included my thoughts about the research and questions I felt it important to seek answers for from the teacher(s), from the literature, and from my dissertation advisor.

**Videotaping**

I asked each teacher if I could videotape for a two to three hour segment. Each teacher obtained permission from her supervisors and/or boards, and parents. I videotaped each teacher one time. At the conclusion of the videotaping, I gave the videotape to the teacher for her review. I left it up to her if she wanted me to have the tape. When each teacher had finished with her tape, she gave the tape back to me. I did not ask for any additional information but one teacher gave me a checklist she used to critique her teaching and another gave me an audiotape of her reaction to a segment of what was happening on the tape. All the teachers shared the tapes with their families. Two teachers asked if they could make copies of their tapes. One wanted to edit her copy of the tape to show parents.
I wanted to have the videotapes so that I could carefully analyze them to see if my perceptions of what I had been seeing in the classroom were on target. Granted every day is different in a classroom, but there are some similarities that are apparent on a daily basis. The videotapes provided me with one more source of data.

**Interviews**

An interview can be defined as a face-to-face meeting, a private conversation, a formal meeting, a conversation to obtain information from someone, or to question someone in order to discover personal qualities (Gove, 1976, p. 1183-1184). Interviews can take a number of different forms and can have multiple uses (Fontana & Frey, 1994, p. 361).

In qualitative research interviewing can be conducted in different forms. Interviewing can be informal or formal, open-ended, or semi-structured. Rubin and Rubin (1995) believe "qualitative interviewing is more than a set of skills, it is also a philosophy, an approach to learning" (p. 2). There are several components to this philosophy. First, "understanding is achieved by encouraging people to describe their worlds in their own terms" (p. 2). Second, the qualitative interview involves "a relationships between the interviewer and interviewee that imposes obligations on both sides" (p. 2).

Kvale (1996) offers the following about qualitative research interviews from a phenomenological perspective:

If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them. In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived world, hears
them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world. The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge. An interview is literally an *inter view*, an interchange of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest. (p. 1-2)

Kvale (1996) advocates for what he calls a semi-structured lifeworld interview, which is "an interview whose purpose is to obtain descriptions of the lifeworld of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (p. 6). The interview is constructive in nature because the knowledge that emerges during the interview is accomplished "through the interaction of the partners in the interview construction" (p. 11).

In this research study, informal and formal interviews were conducted. At each observation, short discussions were held and the information the teachers related was noted. Three more formal, semi-structured interviews were conducted with each teacher. The interviews were scheduled at the convenience of the teachers and were conducted away from the teacher's classroom. Each of the formal interviews was at least one hour in length but no more than 2 1/2 hours in length. I had developed a list of questions for each interview (see Appendix B). The questions were guidelines only. Other questions were asked as the interview progressed. During the interview I took notes of key points. With the teachers' permission, each interview was audiotaped. The teachers shared freely and openly their ideas as related to the questions that I asked or that arose from the interview. Often the teachers
would add information in order to clarify their answers and would expand their comments beyond the questions asked.

Using a Panasonic tape recorder/transcriber, I personally transcribed each interview tape. Literature regarding transcriptions usually portray transcripts as having little value (Stake, 1995, p. 66). Kvale (1996) cautions against depending too heavily on the written transcript. He explains a transcript is a transgression, a transformation of one narrative mode - oral discourse - into another narrative mode - written discourse. To transcribe means to transform, to change from one from another. Attempts at verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that are inadequate. (p. 166)

I found transcribing to be very time consuming but the process was extremely valuable in the development of my understanding of the teachers’ theories of action and their teaching lifeworlds. As I listened to the tapes I was transcribing, I heard things I did not remember from the live interviews. I was extremely careful in transcribing word for word. I would have to back the tape up to see if I had the exact words. Sometimes I did not have the exact words. I found that I tended to translate the teachers’ words into my own way of talking and thinking. By listening to segments of the tape over and over, I was able to capture the teachers’ words and at the same time increase my understanding of the teachers’ lifeworlds. Later when I would read the transcript, I could hear the teachers’ voices “in my head.” This process would have been lost if I had hired someone to transcribe the tapes.

Another reason for developing a verbatim transcript was to create documents that could be entered into NUD*IST, a qualitative software
analysis package. From the nine interviews, I literally had hundreds of pages of interview data. During the early stages of data analysis, I used NUD*IST, and I was able to categorize, code, and analyze a large amount of information. The depth and richness of data as well as a way of carefully analyzing it added to my understanding of the teachers’ theories of action and their teaching lifeworlds. This in turn helped me create a more vivid and insight rendering of their stories.

In addition to interviewing the three teachers, I also interviewed either their supervisor or someone who knew their teaching or a teaching peer. I interviewed the Head Start teacher’s immediate supervisor, who had daily contact with her. For Maggie, the laboratory schoolteacher, I interviewed a faculty member who had supervised ECE college students in Maggie’s classroom, and whose child had been in Maggie’s classroom for two years. Audrey taught in a private, alternative school that was very democratic in a nature. Audrey did not have a supervisor, center director, or principal. The teachers and a board of parents ran the school. I interviewed a teaching peer of Audrey. The individual and Audrey shared space and often teaching duties.

Each of these semi-structured interviews with the supervisor, college supervisor of student teachers, and a teaching peer were scheduled and lasted from one to two hours. Two of the interviews were taped. The Head Start supervisor did not want to be taped so I had to rely on handwritten notes. I transcribed the two other interviews and added them to the NUD*IST
database. The information from these interviews corroborated what I had observed and heard from my research.

When doing the data analysis and selecting quotes to use in the criticism, I was very aware of not having the exact words of the Head Start supervisor. I missed not having her words and "voice" in my thinking and in the database. This lack of direct quotes and voice reinforced the importance of having accurate transcriptions.

In educational connoisseurship and criticism, the educational researchers/critics "not only watch and see, they talk to others and listen to what they have to say" (Eisner, 1991a, pp. 81-82). The goal of educational connoisseurship and criticism is "aimed at understanding what is going on" (p. 82) and the interview is "powerful resource for learning how people perceive" (p. 81) their teaching lifeworlds.

Interviewing was an extremely important part of this research study. The interview process allowed me to gain insights about the teachers and to understand the teachers' teaching lifeworlds and their theories of action.

**Documents and Artifacts**

Another important data source in educational connoisseurship and criticism are documents and artifacts. In each classroom there were numerous artifacts of the children's work, which I was able to observe and examine. Each of the teachers had information they shared with parents. In two of the centers the teachers gave me written information about the centers, their classrooms, and their curriculum. These documents ranged from such things...
as a play the children had developed, school or center information, parent handbooks, newsletters, and printed curriculum information, which they had written.

The Head Start teacher was unable to provide me with the same degree of written information as the other two teachers. The agency for which she worked had guidelines on what could be shared or disseminated. I was free to view any of the information on the parent bulletin board but was unable to make copies of the information. The Head Start teacher was required to do her written plans in a spiral bound curriculum notebook developed by the agency. The curriculum notebook with the teacher's plans was left open for parents to look at, and I was able to look at it but the information could not be copied. At the end of the year the curriculum notebook had to be turned into the supervisor who in turn sent it to the central office. The Head Start teacher did provide me with information that she developed or adapted from other sources, but these were things that (1) did not originate in the central office or developed by them, and/or (2) that she did not have to send to the central office. Kate was very willing to explain things to me and allowed me to examine all the written information she had in her room. She did share the commercial materials on High Scope and the software package she used for her observations of the children. Kate gave me a copy of the printed documentation she and the children developed from a project on cars. Even though I did not have written copies of all the information Kate used, I was
able to study and analyze different types of information while I was in the center.

In educational connoisseurship and criticism, it is essential that separate data sources not become “fragmented and atomic” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 185). It is important to remember “the context as a whole is a primary source of information [and] actions within it constitute a subtext that can reveal the meanings people share within that context” (p. 185).

The documents and artifacts were analyzed in relationship to what I had observed and what I had heard in the interviews. They were one more way of gaining insight and developing understanding of the teachers’ theories of action and their teaching lifeworlds.

**Data Analysis**

In constructivist research, data is viewed as “stemming from an interaction between the inquirer and the data sources. Data are the *constructions* offered by or in the sources; data analysis leads to a *reconstruction* of those constructions” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 332). The processes of data analysis “is essentially a synthetic one in which the constructions that have emerged (been shaped by) inquirer-source interactions are reconstructed into meaningful wholes. Data analysis is thus not a matter of data *reduction,* as is frequently claimed, but of *induction* ” (p. 333).

Data analysis for the educational critic involves taking data and organizing what has been seen, heard, and read into a coherent, vivid, insightful rendering of the events experienced. The educational critic looks
for patterns and themes and situates them in a historical, political, philosophical, and/or educational context. Data analysis for the educational critic is done throughout the research process. This ongoing data analysis helps shape the study and allows for an emergent focus.

With emergent focus significance is determined by selecting out of the interactions those that count, given the frame of reference, theory, conceptual system, or set of values the [researcher] brings to the scene. The point here is that perceiving the significant is a cognitive achievement. (Eisner, 1991a, p. 188)

The following procedures were followed for the data analysis of this study: on-going analysis, coding, sub-coding, creation of working reports, and the identification of themes. From my interaction with the data sources and resulting data as well as the on-going data analysis and with the final, in-depth analysis, I constructed a rendering of the theories of action of the three prekindergarten teachers.

**Procedures**

During the data collection process of this study, the data analysis was ongoing. Each time I observed, interviewed, and studied documents I was interacting with the information and trying to understand and find meaning in what I perceived. "Information becomes data only if a researcher is able to make it meaningful" (Eisner, 1991a, p. 185). As explained above, I entered the field with a prefigured focus, but a slightly different focus emerged as I interacted with and analyzed the data. It was necessary for me to be flexible and to make the necessary adjustments to search for the most significant factors as I constantly interacted with the information. After the data
collection period was completed, I began a more intense, in-depth analysis of the data.

From my interaction with the data I constructed several large patterns or categories which I then coded. When developing the categories and coding them, I kept in mind Eisner’s (1991a) advice to avoid fragmentizing the data or atomizing it. It is important to realize the “context as a whole is a primary source of information; actions within it constitute a subtext that can reveal the meanings people share within the context” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 185). After the initial coding, I returned to the data for further analysis. I began to create sub-codes to interact further with the data. I kept searching for what was meaningful and significant.

From this in-depth and comprehensive interaction with the data, significant themes were constructed. Themes provided a “summary of the essential features” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 104) of the study. The construction of themes in an educational criticism “means identifying the recurring messages that pervade the situation” (p. 185).

The database of interview and observation data was carefully scrutinized to identify the quotations and observation passages, which could best capture the context and would support the constructions I created. The intent was to create a vivid and insightful rendering that would allow the reader to also interact with the data so she or he could experience the lifeworlds of the three teachers.
NUD*IST.

NUD*IST, a leading qualitative data analysis software package, was purchased with the intent to use it to help manage the large amount of data I accumulated during this study. NUD*IST stands for Non-numerical Unstructured Data - Indexing, Searching, and Theorizing. NUD*IST was designed to provide flexibility in coding, to allow the researcher to remain close to the data, and to assist in the search for patterns or themes.

Problems with the qualitative data analysis software. The preliminary data analysis was accomplished using NUD*IST 4. I had planned on using this software package for all the data analysis, but I ran into a major problem. I had to buy a new computer. After purchasing another Macintosh computer, I tried to use NUD*IST 4, but I could not get it to work on my new computer. After hours of frustrating efforts, I contacted the company from which I purchased the software. I was told there were problems with compatibility of NUD*IST 4 and newer Macintosh computers, specifically those using Mac OS 8.0 or 8.5 operating systems. The company representative said the best advice was to purchase a PC and the PC version of NUD*IST. Their second best advice was to purchase an older Macintosh with operating system compatible with NUD*IST 4. Their third best advice was to wait until the software developer up-dated NUD*IST so it would be compatible with Mac Os 8.5.

I did not want to buy a PC and spend another $400 on a PC version of NUD*IST, and I did not want to buy an older Macintosh. I did borrow an
older Macintosh PowerBook, but the operating system was too old for NUD*IST 4 so the software did not work on it, either. At this point I contacted the software developer. I was informed that I should read the recommended minimum equipment information on the NUD*IST 4 box and it would clearly state the software was compatible only with Macintosh computers using system 7 and nothing else. I was also told they were working on the compatibility problems and I would receive information when the "annoying glitches" had been fixed.

At this point, I decided I could not wait for the compatibility issues to be resolved. I developed charts using the nodes and categories I had created when I did the preliminary data analysis. After printing copies of the interviews and observations, I read and reread them carefully. I then made code marks in the margins of the interviews when I came to data that fit a particular node. Next, I would write down the interview number and page number on the node charts I had developed. As I went through the data, I sometimes added new nodes or expanded existing node. When I did this, I had to revise my node charts. After numerous readings of the data and double and triple checking my coding, I used the word processor features of copy and paste as I went through each interview, classifying and categorizing the margin codes into separate documents representing the different nodes. I followed this process to keep track of data that would support and illustrate the teachers' theories of action. In effect, I generated my own reports. If I had
been able to use NUD*IST, the reports could have been generated more quickly.

What did I learn about using qualitative software for data analysis? First, make sure you have good, working computer with enough memory and speed to handle your data. Second, before purchasing any qualitative software, make sure it is compatible with the operating system of your computer. Read the equipment requirements very carefully. Third, don't change computers half way through data analysis.

Ten months after I purchased my new computer, the software developers had fixed the compatibility problems, but I had already completed my data analysis. I am glad I did not wait to do the data analysis. The paper, pencil, word processing approach to data analysis was slow, laborious, and very time consuming, but I felt closer to the data than I did when I was using NUD*IST during the preliminary data analysis.

Credibility

Educational criticism, an arts-based research approach, influenced by the philosophies, theories, and practices of the arts and humanities, resides within the constructivist-interpretive paradigm of qualitative research. As explained earlier in this chapter, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm is based on assumptions that are different from other paradigms. From the constructivist point of view, understanding “is a human construction, never certifiable as ultimately true but problematic and ever changing” (Guba, 1990, p. 26). The constructivists also embrace pluralism. There are many ways of
knowing, many ways of worldmaking, and many versions of the world. Because this research paradigm and approach are based on different assumptions and practices than most educational research, it cannot be judged or evaluated using words and concepts from other paradigms.

How then should educational criticism be judged? Let us return to Nelson Goodman, the pragmatic constructivist philosopher, and his philosophy of understanding and views of worldmaking. The “universes of the worlds as well as worlds themselves may be build in many ways” (Goodman, 1978, p. 5). In these different world versions we should be searching for “rightness” and “fit” (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 155). “No philosophical pronouncement can provide a general criterion or rules for determining rightness” (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 157). The ways of evaluating or judging what is right vary widely and are “up to practitioners and theoreticians in each field” (Goodman & Elgin, 1988, p. 156). To the constructivist “rightness is a matter of fitting and working . . . a fitting into a context or discourse or standing complex of other symbols” (Goodman & Elgin, p. 158). How is rightness a matter of fitting or working? Goodman (1984) explains that

works work when by stimulating inquisitive looking, sharpening perception, raising intelligence, widening perspectives, bringing out new connections and contrasts, and marking off neglected significant kinds, they participate in the organization and reorganization of experience, and thus in making and remaking of our worlds. (pp. 179-180)
The fit is right when the work informs us, "inform not by supplying information but by forming or re-forming or transforming" (Goodman, 1984, p. 180) our perceptions. The works work "by interacting with all our experience and all our cognitive processes in the continuing advancement of our understanding" (Goodman, 1984, p. 180). If the fit is right, "we begin to develop a new sensitivity, we can see something new [and we can] see new connections and make new discriminations" (Goodman, 1984, p. 193).

In educational criticism, the educational critic/researcher strives to construct a work or case that is a strong, coherent, perceptive, insightful, and vivid study of the educational phenomena being studied. If the educational criticism works, the reader should be able to develop a new awareness for the subject, should be able to interact with the work, and should be able to advance his or her understanding.

Structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy are the reasonable standards educational critics use to insure rightness-of-fit and credibility (Eisner, 1991a, p. 110). The three reasonable standards are a tightly woven set of criteria that at times overlap and provide support for each other.

**Structural Corroboration**

Structural corroboration is a concept and term borrowed from the field of art criticism. Pepper (1949), defined structural corroboration as the "corroboration of fact with fact. It is not a multiplicity of observations of one identical fact, but an observed convergence of many different facts toward one
result” (p. 7). Structural corroboration is a procedure for collecting different forms of information and “using it to establish links that eventually create a whole that is supported by the bits of evidence that constitute it” (Eisner, 1994, p. 237).

The educational researcher/critic searches for multiple forms of evidence that would support or contradict his or her interpretation. The strength of the case depends on the relevance and weight of the evidence cited in the educational criticism. The educational researcher/critic continually asks the following questions: (a) Do the multiple sources of evidence support the interpretation and conclusion? (b) does the case seem coherent? (c) do the pieces of the case fit? (d) do the facts support each other? (e) does it make sense? (f) does the evidence show any recurrent themes? and (g) are the facts consistent? (Eisner, 1994, p. 237). The educational critic seeks sufficient evidence that will foster the credibility of the educational criticism. “The tight argument, the coherent case, the strength of the evidence are terms that suggest rightness-of-fit” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 111).

**Consensual Validation**

Consensual validation is the second reasonable standard used by the educational critic to insure rightness of fit and credibility. The term consensual means made by mutual consent or agreement. Validation is the process of determining the degree of validity. Consensual validation, then, is agreeing by mutual consent to the degree of validity of the educational criticism. Consensual validation
in the arts and humanities is not secured by seeking consensus among critics, but by considering the reasons critics give, the descriptions they provide, the cogency of their arguments, the incisiveness of their observations, the coherence of the case, and, undoubtedly, the elegance of the language. (Eisner, 1991a, pp. 112-113)

It is, “at base, agreement among competent others that the description, interpretation, and thematics of an educational situation are right” (Eisner, 1991a, p. 112)

Consensual validation does not mean there are no differences among knowledgeable peers or like-minded researchers regarding the educational criticism. The knowledgeable peers, in their reading of a specific educational criticism, may be focusing on different dimensions or may bring a different perspective or interpretation to the criticism (Eisner, 1991a, p. 113). Goodman (1972) reminds us “there is no one right way of describing or seeing or picturing the world” (p. 83). None of the world versions tell “us the way the world is, but each of them tells us a way the world is” (Goodman, 1972, p. 31). The different views can contribute to a broader view of the educational phenomena. What is important is that the knowledgeable peers find structural corroboration and internal coherence within the educational criticism. If the criticism can assist the reader in understanding the educational phenomena being studied in a new and more sensitive way, the criticism is successful in the advancement of understanding. This leads us to the third reason standard for rightness of fit and credibility, referential adequacy.
Referential Adequacy

A third reasonable standard for insuring credibility is referential adequacy. The word referential means containing or constituting a reference. It can mean pointing to something out of itself. Adequacy can mean sufficient. Referential adequacy means to contain sufficient references that can point or lead to understanding the conclusions that have been drawn and to what has been written. The referential adequacy of a criticism can be determined by "checking the relationship between what the critic has to say and the subject matter of his or her criticism" (Eisner, 1994, p. 239). If the educational critic's work is referentially adequate we will be able to find in the object, event, or situation what the cues point to. It is in this sense that criticism is a highly empirical undertaking. We look to the phenomena to test the adequacy of critical discourse (Eisner, 1994, p. 239).

A successful educational criticism should provide a vivid, insightful rendering of the educational phenomena. If the criticism is referentially adequate, the reader will be able to "experience qualities within the situation that the critic claims to be there" (Flinders & Eisner, 1994a, p. 354). If the criticism succeeds in re-educating (Dewey, 1934, p. 324) one's perceptions and if the criticism assists the reader in seeing new connections then the criticism is referentially adequate.

Structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy are the reasonable standards used to insure rightness-of-fit and credibility for an educational criticism (Eisner, 1991a, p. 110). If the
educational criticism works it will advance understanding. Goodman and Elgin (1988) tell us that in our cognitive endeavors we should strive for advancement of understanding "not in order to arrive at truth about something already made but in order to make something right – to construct something that works cognitively, that fits together and handles new cases, that may implement further inquiry and invention" (p. 163). If an educational criticism can do this, it has achieved a rightness-of-fit and is a credible piece of educational research.

In constructivist-interpretive research there are other procedures that are used to support the credibility of the research: member checking and peer debriefing. In the next two sections I will describe how I made use of these two strategies in this study.

**Member Checking**

Member checking is a "sociological term for soliciting feedback from respondents on the inquirer's findings" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 88). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking "is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Other researchers do not see member checking as being "some kind of simple corroboration or act of validation by respondents" (Schwandt, 1997, p. 89). Instead member checking can be "one more opportunity to gather data about the integrity of the inquirer's findings" (p. 89). By asking for feedback from those being researched, the research "becomes a more participative and dialogical undertaking and less the
monological activity of the lone fieldworker doing research on respondents" (p. 89).

In this study member checking was used continuously throughout the study. The member checking was both informal and formal. At the end of each scheduled interview, I would repeat key elements of what was said during the interview and/or would ask clarifying questions. As the research progressed, I would share with the teachers the things I thought I was seeing, hearing, and how I was interpreting them. The teachers' ideas, perceptions, and input were solicited. Often the teachers gave me additional verbal information or documents they felt would help me better understand what they were doing. One teacher gave me cassette tapes on which she had recorded her reactions to things we had discussed or additional things she felt I should know. The teachers were given the opportunity to clarify or add any additional information they felt would increase my understanding of their teaching and of their theories of action. Each teacher was given a copy of the educational criticism that I constructed about her. Again this was done as a way to see if my construction or reconstruction or rendering of their criticisms was not only vivid and insightful but also recognizable to them.

**Peer Debriefing**

As a way of establishing credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308), and as a way to facilitate my understanding and interpretation of the research process, the data, and the analysis, I shared my research experiences with a peer debriefer. A peer debriefer is a professional peer "with whom the
inquirer can have a no-holds-barred conversation at periodic intervals” (p. 283) and one who will be honest, forthright, and, at times, play the devil’s advocate (p. 308). The peer debriefer should also know “a great deal about both the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues” (p. 309). Communicating with a peer debriefer allows the researcher to think aloud, to discuss issues that emerge during the research process, and to vent feelings and frustrations (p. 308). Constructivist research can be “a lonely business [and] the debriefer who listens sympathetically” (p. 308) can assist the researcher in the social construction of knowledge about the research and the different processes involved.

My peer debriefer was an early childhood professional who was also a doctorate student. I was able to communicate with her on a regular basis either in person, by phone, or by e-mail. Peer debriefing sessions gave me opportunities to discuss my research with another person who could understand and who could ask critical and significant questions about both the process and the emerging findings.

One of the features of qualitative research is researcher-as-the-instrument (Eisner, 1991a, p. 33) and being the instrument can be a solitary and lonely endeavor. The peer debriefing process provided a very important element of social construction of knowledge, which I find a necessary part of my learning process. My peer debriefer’s willingness to listen, to ask thought provoking, open-ended questions, and to intellectually walk with me through my data collection and analysis has contributed to the quality of this study.
Ethical Considerations

The research community agrees that research should be ethical but how one defines and acts upon ethical concerns vary (Deyhle, Hess, Jr., & LeCompte, 1992). Qualitative research, in general, and educational criticism, in particular, can generate particular ethical concerns. The “major purpose of all qualitative research [is] to inform our deep understanding of educational institutions and processes through interpretation and narrative description” (Soltis, 1990, p. 249). The success of this type of research relies on dealing with individuals in “face-to-face situations” (p. 249) and the researcher and researched often develop special kinds of relationships.

Educational criticism involves the art of disclosure through description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. The processes of educational criticism involve observing for extended periods of time, in-depth interviewing, and careful document analysis. If the researcher/critic is to construct a vivid and insightful rendering of the teacher and her teaching, the teacher must be open and willing to have the researcher/critic in her teaching life-world. A sense of trust is a “necessary condition” (Eisner, 1979b, p. 17) for the open dialogue that needs to take place between the researcher/critic and the teacher. A teacher will make herself vulnerable to someone she believes is not intending to cause her harm (Eisner, 1979b, p. 17). During the time the researcher/critic is working with the teacher, information that might otherwise be private maybe brought to light. “Educational critics need to do their work with care and with a sensitivity to the possible negative
consequences of their actions. Indeed, the first maxim in the conduct of educational criticism is, ‘Above all, do no harm’ (Flinders & Eisner, 1994b, p. 384-385).

From a personal level I felt it was extremely important to treat the teachers with respect, honesty, fairness, openness, and to develop a relationship that was non-exploitative. Mutual trust, dignity, and empathy were and are an important part of the researcher-researched dyad. Rawls (1971) looked at mutual respect as a duty one has “to show a person the respect which is due to him as a moral being” (p. 337). According to Rawls (1971),

mutual respect is shown in several ways: in our willingness to see the situation of others from their point of view, from the perspective of their conception of their good; and in our being prepared to give reasons for our actions whenever the interests of others are affected. (p. 337)

At the beginning of this research project, I gave written and verbal information to the three teachers about the study and intended focus. Each teacher was asked to sign a participant consent form in which it was stated she was free to withdraw from the study at any time. I also explained that the focus of the study might change as the study progressed. When the focus did change, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie were comfortable with the new direction of the study.

Member checking is considered important for verifying one’s findings or as another way of obtaining data (Schwandt, 1997, pp., 88-89) and for helping to establish trustworthiness in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1989, p.
Member checking is also an ethical procedure (Schwandt, 1997, p. 89) and a display of mutual trust. By providing the opportunity for the teachers to read copies of the drafts of their own educational criticism as well as a chance to clarify information, I was letting them know their input was important. I was asking them to check to see if I was on target. Did I miss something? Was there information I needed that would help me gain more insight about what I saw or heard so that I could provide a vivid and insightful educational criticism? The final product was my construction or reconstruction of each teacher's story and it was not only important to obtain their feedback but also for each to feel like the educational criticism was an appropriate rendering of her story of her teaching and theories of action.

The issue of confidentiality was and is an important ethical consideration, but confidentiality in a qualitative study such as this one was and is hard to guarantee. According to Lincoln (1990), the issues of privacy and confidentiality are indeed a problem compounded by high interaction and typically not faced in the same manner by those who bury identities under numbers and aggregated sums, means, and distributions. We know that privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality are virtually impossible to guarantee in qualitative case studies that are of high fidelity. (p. 279)

I also believe that anonymity and complete confidentiality were difficult to guarantee for a number of reasons. First, I asked for names of early childhood teachers who were considered to be exemplary. I received suggestion from a number of individuals who knew what my research topic was. Second, permission to do the study had to be obtained not only from the
teachers but also from their supervisors and as well as their school board, agency, or administrators. The study was conducted during the 1997-1998 school year, a nine-month period, and I was in and out of each teacher’s classroom and school building numerous times. The other teachers and staff in each school were aware of who I was and what I was doing. Parents were informed of why I was there. The teachers told the children why I was there and the children called me by my name. The teachers talked to their families and friends about the study. Because of the number of people who knew about this research project, it was and is impossible to promise complete confidentiality and anonymity.

This issue of anonymity was a troublesome point for the teachers. It bothered them that their names had to be masked. I explained that the University’s human subjects program guidelines required that their privacy be protected and the data be kept confidential. At the beginning of the research, I asked if each teacher would like to select a pseudonym. It was only after I had completed all the observations and interviews and the school year was over before two of them finally gave me a pseudonym. The third teacher told me to select one. Much later she selected her own pseudonym. I thought this delay in selecting or not wanting to select a pseudonym revealed their feelings on this matter. The three teachers were always willing to answer questions and provide requested materials in a very timely manner, but yet selecting a pseudonym was delayed as long as possible.
The research process was a positive experience for me and, I believe, for the three teachers. They each would have liked their real names to be used. Their roles as teachers were part of who they were and what they were. Being a teacher was an important part of their lives. Their thoughts about their teaching did not turn off when they left their schools. Being a teacher defined an important part of each individual. The three teachers were confident and self-assured and were not afraid of people knowing who they were. After I again explained why I could not use their real names, one of the teachers commented “That is rather paternalistic, isn’t?” Another commented “If you use another name, what you write won’t be about me!” and “I don’t care if someone knows me, warts and all!” When I tried to explain that someday they might not want their names used, they felt it should be their decision.

Smith (1990) insists that maintaining confidentially, privacy and anonymity comes at a high cost both to the educational community and to those being researched (p. 154). The masking or coding of the teachers’ names prevents the community from being able to identify, applaud, or reward those individuals who are “doing a good job” (Smith, 1990, p. 154). The coding of names also tends to make the research “more context-free” (p. 154). There is a trade-off between allowing one’s own name to be used and being anonymous but the “trade-off may be in fact more important to respondents than privacy” (Lincoln, 1990, p. 279), which I think was the case with the three teachers I worked with for this research.
Lincoln (1990) reminds us

that laws and regulations regarding confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity for research respondents were framed under epistemologies and ontologies (i.e., logical positivism and post-positivism) that are now believed to be inadequate, and indeed, misleading, for human inquiry. . . . Privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity regulations were written under assumptions that are ill suited to qualitative and/or phenomenological, constructivist philosophies. (p. 279)

In the next section, I will describe my experiences in writing education criticisms as well as describe the format of the three educational criticisms.

Writing Educational Criticisms

As I discussed earlier in this chapter, I decided to use educational connoisseurship and educational criticism as the genre of qualitative research for this study because it seemed the best vehicle for developing an understanding of the theories of action of the three prekindergarten teachers. From the examples of educational criticisms I had read, I knew I would need to write in a style appropriate for educational criticism. Educational criticisms are difficult to write, and more is written about educational criticisms than there are examples of educational criticisms (Barone & Eisner, 1997). Each qualitative research genre "has its own taken-for-granted and problematic writing style" (Denzin, 1994, p. 502) and educational criticisms are no exception. Although there is no standard format for writing an educational criticism (Eisner, 1994, p. 347), the writing style is expected to combine scholarship with the "artful use of language" (Eisner, 1985a, p. 112). According to Eisner (1994), "there is but one ultimate criterion for an
educational criticism: does it shed light on the situation it describes, interprets, and evaluates?" (p. 348).

The writing of the educational criticisms would, I thought, be an exciting intellectual challenge, allowing me to construct or represent my data in artful ways. In retrospect, undertaking educational criticism as the genre for research and writing was a very ambitious undertaking. If I knew then what I know now, I might have made some different decisions along the way. In constructing the first case, I was able to compose my research data into a coherent case but my initial writing was more analytic and technical in style than it was creative or expressive. I found myself caught in what Eisner (1985) refers to as the "tension between artistic description and flat reporting" (p. 159).

Arts-based research falls along a continuum. On one end are those pieces that exhibit many artistic characteristics, while on the other end are those that exhibit some, but not all of the artistic elements (Barone & Eisner, 1997). My writing, after much effort and many rewrites, was on the end of the continuum that exhibits some artistic characteristics.

I had multiple problems with writing an educational criticism. First, I was overconfident in my writing skills and ability to express myself creatively. Second, during my doctoral studies, I was "schooled in academic writing" (Ely, Vinz, Downing, & Anzul, 1997, p. 337). In effect, I had become socialized to write in a certain way. The first three chapters of this dissertation were written in the form I learned during the course of my doctoral studies. When I
began writing the first educational criticism for this dissertation, I found it very difficult to switch writing styles and write in a more expressive, creative, artful style. To put it mildly, it was a struggle. At one point, I seriously considered abandoning educational criticism as the genre of research, not because of my scholarship or research skills or understanding of the process, but because of my struggle with the writing style expected of an educational criticism. However, I decided to continue to try until I could write a case that would fall within the boundaries of an educational criticism, because I felt this genre was the best vehicle to understand the theories of action of three prekindergarten teachers I studied.

What could I have done differently? First, I could have been more realistic about my ability to write creatively. Second, I could have taken one or more creative writing classes to work on developing a creative style of writing, specifically using expressive language. Third, I could have taken an art course on art criticisms. Fourth, I could have conducted at least one small pilot research project and written the results in the form of an educational criticism. At that point, I could have made a more realistic decision about whether I wanted to attempt to write a dissertation using educational criticism as the genre of research. I did not, however, do those four things. Instead, I decided I would use educational criticism as the genre of qualitative research without thoroughly considering the problems I might encounter. As in any style of writing, one learns only through doing. I used this dissertation to
learn how to write educational criticisms. Learning a style of writing while writing a dissertation is not the best time to learn by doing.

In the next section, I will describe some factors I did consider before I began writing the three educational criticisms.

Factors I Considered Before Writing the Three Educational Criticisms

I had to determine a number of things before constructing the educational criticisms of the prekindergarten teachers being studied. First, I had to consider who would be the readers or audience for these three educational criticisms. Eisner (1994) stresses the importance of considering one's audience when writing educational criticisms. Second, I had to decide how to best structure the educational criticism in order to help the reader to "see, understand, and appraise, the quality of educational practice and its consequences" (Eisner, 1985a, p. 182).

The intended audiences of my study include early childhood teacher educators, early childhood education majors, prekindergarten teachers, and others who are interested in understanding the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers. My goal was to write in a way that could shed light on the answers to the research questions in this study and increase the understanding of the readers regarding prekindergarten teachers and their theories of action.

In deciding on the structure of the criticisms, I searched for a way that I could offer the reader multiple perspectives of the teachers, their teaching, and their theories of action. First, I wanted the reader to be able to see the teachers...
and their teaching while engaging in and examining what was happening in their classrooms. Second, I sought to include the teachers' viewpoints, experiences, and theories of action in their own words. Third, I wanted to convey to the readers the various degrees of complexity and layers of meaning encountered in attempting to understand the three teachers' teaching and theories of action.

The structure of the educational criticisms did not emerge until I experimented with constructing the data into a coherent, understandable form. The structure and format of the educational criticisms were drawn from the fields of literature and phenomenology. I selected the literary device of a layered story because it had the potential to showcase the research findings in a way that "emphasize the complexity and individuality of [the] search for understanding" (Ely et al., 1997, p. 95). A layered story is interpretive and, depending on how it is constructed, can provide different levels of meaning, which in turn, help the reader see the case from multiple points. A layered story is influenced by the phenomenological search for the various layers of meaning, including layers of images, layers of texture, and layers of units of meaning (Orr, 1991), that one encounters when examining the lifeworld of others.

For each educational criticism in this study, I constructed a layered story composed of five layers. In the first layer, I introduced the teacher, her background, the childcare center where she was teaching, and the children and adults with whom she worked. In the second layer, I recreated a day in
the teacher's classroom early in the school year. With this recreated day, the
reader could begin to see the teacher in action and be introduced to the
teacher's teaching style. In the third layer, I described the teacher's theories of
action expressed primarily in her own words or voice. In the fourth layer, I
provided a glimpse or snapshot of the teacher's classroom late in the school
year so the reader could see both the growth of the children and how the
teacher's theories of actions were implemented as the year progressed. The
fifth and final layer was an epilogue of what happened to the teacher after the
research component of this study had been completed. Using this approach, I
hoped to engage the reader in understanding the teachers, their teaching, and
their theories of action. Throughout the five layers I strived to describe,
interpret, evaluate, and illuminate the themes in an artful way. How well I
accomplished this is in the eye and mind of the reader.

From a phenomenological viewpoint, writing itself is "reminiscent of
the artistic activity of creating an art object that has to be approached again
and again, now here and then there, going back and forth between parts and
the whole in order to arrive at a finely crafted piece." (van Manen, 1990, pp.
131-132). In the structure, format, and content I used in writing the
educational criticisms, I was attempting to create a well-crafted piece. A
writer's "style shows and reflects what the author is capable of seeing and
showing in the way that he or she is oriented to the world and the language"
(p. 132). My years as a practitioner and early childhood educator as well as
my pragmatic, practical approach to teaching comes through in my writing.
Do my initial efforts in writing educational criticism fall within the boundaries of educational criticism as both a genre of research and as artful writing? In *The Enlightened Eye*, Eisner (1991a) analyzed an example of an educational criticism written by James Kuntz, and concluded we have no difficulty understanding the text. Kuntz's writing is not offered as the most expressive, aesthetic, or artistic one might read in this genre, but it is felicitous, more than enough so to help the reader see and understand the situation about which he writes (Eisner, 1991a, p. 167).

Like Kuntz's efforts, my three educational criticisms are not the most expressive, aesthetic, or artistic one can find in this research genre. I hope, however, the reader can say my writing is felicitous, that is, my writing is appropriate for helping the reader to see and understand these three teachers and their theories of action. If my attempts at each educational criticism sheds "light on the situation it describes, interprets, and evaluates" (Eisner, 1994, p. 348), I have accomplished my goal.

**Summary**

In this chapter, I have described the research paradigm, the research approach, and research methods used in this study. I discussed the rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach for this study and then proceeded to discuss qualitative research, the constructivist-interpretive paradigm, arts-based research, and educational connoisseurship and criticism, the particular qualitative research genre used in this study. This was followed by methodology information regarding design of the study, conceptual frameworks, selection of participants, data collection, data analysis,
creditability of the study, and ethical considerations. Last, I included information on writing educational criticisms and the format of the educational criticisms of the three prekindergarten teachers.
CHAPTER 4

KATE SHORT

With a puzzled look on her face, a four-year-old girl gazes intently at Kate. Typical of a young child, the girl is trying to classify things and create some kind of order in her world. The girl asks Kate, "Are you a kid or a grown-up?" Kate replied, "What do you think?" The girl studies Kate for a minute and said, "Well, you talk like a kid. You play like a kid. But you are big like a grown-up. I don't know. Are you a kid or a grown-up?"

Kate-as-a-kid? Kate-as-a-grown-up? Who is Kate-the-teacher and how can she be both a kid and a grown-up? Looking at Kate, you would think she was a ballerina. Medium height, dark hair, model thin combined with the look and grace of a dancer, Kate displays an abundance of energy and is unusually enthusiastic and positive. Although she is in her late twenties, Kate's appearance and vitality make her appear much younger.

Kate comes from a close-knit family and credits them for her interest in teaching and her concern for others. Her mother had been a preschool and a kindergarten teacher. From her exposure to her mother's teaching of young children, Kate grew up wanting to be an early childhood teacher. "I have always wanted to be a teacher," Kate explains.
A seasoned traveler, Kate has visited at least 40 states and has traveled to Nicaragua, Salvador, Guatemala, South Africa, Canada, East Germany, West Germany, and to Unified Germany twice. Given Kate's inquisitive nature and interest in culture, the majority of Kate's trips to other countries involved studying about the political, economic, social, educational, and religious context of the different countries.

After earning her Bachelor's degree from a small liberal arts college, Kate combined her knowledge of different cultures with her in-grained concern for others and volunteered to work for an organization that helped Central America political refugees. Kate lived and worked with the refugees for six months and taught English as a second language to the refugee children.

Eight years ago, Kate began teaching at Gideon Head Start Center, a traditional Head Start Center where each group of children came for half a day, four days a week. In the half-day program, the morning group arrived at 8:30 and left at 11:30. The afternoon group came at 12:30 and left at 3:30. Friday was a day for planning, home visits, and in-service training. Kate was the lead teacher and administrator of this traditional Head Start center. Kate supervised a staff consisting of one other teacher, two assistant teachers, two support workers, and parent volunteers. Approximately 36 children attended the morning session, and another 36 attended the afternoon session.

While at Gideon Head Start center, Kate advocated for NAEYC accreditation and took the center through the NAEYC Center accreditation
process. Through Kate's efforts, Gideon became the first Head Start center in the area to receive the NAEYC accreditation. During the time she was at Gideon, Kate's co-workers and the parents of the children she taught nominated her for the state's Association for the Education of Young Children Teacher of the Year award. When I asked Kate about the award, she replied, "I know all my weaknesses. I can't believe they nominated me, much less that I received the award."

During the five years she taught in the half-day Head Start program, Kate attended many workshops. Kate also took some classes at a local college but did not feel she was learning anything. Kate wanted to learn more and as she explained:

I knew that I gave so much to teaching, I couldn't teach during the day and go to classes at night so I decided it was time for a hiatus. I took off two years and completed a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. While I was working on my masters, I also conducted some workshops for this Head Start agency as well as acted as a CDA trainer. I promised the agency I would come back full time when I completed my degree. When I came back, they begged me to take a supervisor position and I said, "Oh no! I want to be in the classroom" and here I am.

Kate's Current Teaching Position

Kate's current teaching assignment is in the Center of Hope, a full-day childcare Head Start program for children of low-income parents. Since this center offers full-day care, Kate's job responsibilities and time commitments are quite different than they were at Gideon. The children attend five days a week from 7:30 to 5:30. Kate's official hours are 7:30 to 4:30, but she arrives by 7:00 and usually does not leave until 5:30 or later. Kate is quick to remind me...
that she knows she is not supposed to work so many hours and she considers the extra hours as volunteer time, not official work time. The center does not have NAEYC accreditation.

The High/Scope approach to curriculum, a well-known early childhood education curriculum, based on the ideas of Jean Piaget, is the method the Head Start Agency actively advocates and supports. High/Scope is considered to be a developmentally appropriate approach to the education of young children, who are seen as active learners and who construct knowledge of their world through interactions with the things and people in the environment. High/Scope is an open framework of educational principles, allowing teachers a great deal of latitude in how they implement the curriculum.

**Neighborhood**

The Center of Hope Head Start is located in an inner city neighborhood of a large urban city. The city has approximately 200,000 residents and ranks sixth in the nation in terms of poverty rate for a city of its size. Nearly 27% of the city residents live in poverty. The average median wage in the city is $19,000, barely above the federal poverty level of $16,100 for a family of four. The city school system has an enrollment of 22,000 students, and 45% of the students are considered economically disadvantaged.

Driving from the interstate through the downtown business district to the neighborhood where the Center of Hope is located, I felt like I was going back in time to an area that had been forgotten and neglected. From well-kept
buildings to a neighborhood where the majority of houses are in dire need of repair, from wide, clean streets with carefully landscaped greenery to narrow, not-so-clean streets, and with few trees, the Hope neighborhood is a study in contrasts from the neighborhoods between it and the downtown area. Urban renewal or neighborhood rebirth has bypassed the area around the Center of Hope.

At one time, the neighborhood was a thriving community of middle-class and blue-collar workers. Built at the turn of the century or earlier, the majority of the houses are small to medium sized wooden houses on very narrow and long lots with alleys running behind them. At first, I saw the neighborhood as one of genteel poverty, but with a closer look, I noticed many houses were well past genteel poverty. The conditions of the houses range from fair to condemned, with most houses somewhere in between and all in varying degrees of decay. Few people, who reside in this neighborhood, can afford to own their houses. The majority of homeowners are absentee landlords who rent out their property but spend nothing on upkeep or repair. Given the number of times I saw household goods in the streets or alleys, evictions occur on a regular basis. Currently, the main street in the neighborhood consists of only a few businesses such as, a neighborhood grocery, a thrift shop, a carryout, and four bars.

The neighborhood’s poverty rate is well above the city average and the neighborhood residents are the least educated in the city. On more than one occasion I noticed people rummaging in the trashcans and bins in the alleys
behind the houses. When they should have been in school, I saw a number of young teenager boys carrying items out of the alleys. Many cars are parked on the street and most are ten to twenty years old or older. Some cars have windows broken out and doors held on to the body of the car with clothes hangers. The only newer cars, that is less than ten years old, are parked around the building where the Center of Hope Head Start is located and belong to the Head Start staff.

It appeared to be a quiet neighborhood during the times of the day I was there but violence was fairly common. A few weeks after I started observing, a man was killed only two blocks from the center. Two neighbors fought over a can of beer and one man beat the other man to death with a wooden table leg. Children's Services was called to remove children from the premises. The city condemned both rental houses because of the unlivable conditions of the houses. At about the same time, the city began putting in speed bumps in several of the streets near the Center, a measure the city has used in other neighborhoods to cut down on speed as well as drug traffic.

**Center of Hope Head Start Building**

The Center of Hope building backs up against the stores on the neighborhood's main street. The door to the Head Start center faces a narrow street that had once been an alley. The building looks like a newer, one-story brick, but in reality it was a remodeled building.

Given the reputation of the Hope neighborhood, security is a high priority for the Center of Hope Head Start, and as a result the entrances to the
building are kept locked at all times. The Head Start entrance is a glass entryway, composed of an outer door, a vestibule, and an inner door. A visitor must enter the first glass door, ring a doorbell, and wait. The doors and two walls in the entryway are glass so the Head Start staff and teachers can see who is at the door. If the visitor is recognized or known, the Head Start staff holds down a button that makes a buzzing sound as the door is unlocked. As soon as the visitor walks through the door, the door is automatically shut and locked. A Head Start staff member always checks everyone who comes into the building. If the visitor is not recognized, the Head Start staff member talks to the person through a very small window. The visitor states why he or she wants entrance into the center and shows a picture ID. Once the person is allowed to enter the building, he or she must sign in. For safety and security reasons, the Head Start staff is very careful about admitting someone they do not know.

Once in the center, the visitor is in a medium size common area. One corner for parents includes a couch and a rocking chair, parenting books, as well as a bulletin board. Off the common area are the offices of the administrators, the kitchen, the teachers' lounge, the adult restroom, and four classrooms. The children's cubbies, where they place their coats and belongings, are in the common area next to their classroom doors. Each of the four classrooms is assigned a teacher, an assistant teacher, and a support worker. A supervisor is assigned to oversee the four classrooms.
Kate's Classroom

When I enter Kate's room for the first time, I am overwhelmed with how tall, long, and narrow the room seems to be. Its physical characteristics remind me of a long, interior corridor of a hospital - tall, narrow, no windows, bright fluorescent light bulbs, and stark white paint on the walls and ceiling - a sterile environment, free from the contamination of color and outside light.

On closer inspection, I notice two very small, glass block windows near the ceiling on each side of the rear emergency door. Some light comes through the windows, but even someone as tall as Shaquille O'Neal would not be able to see through the opaque, blurred windows. The architect made sure no view of the outside world would intrude on the sterile, physical characteristics of the room. Some brave soul has tried to relieve the starkness of the white walls by placing a colorful wallpaper border around the top of the wall, but the color is lost in all the stark whiteness of the room and in the overpowering illumination of the fluorescent lights. Like any good medical facility, the center is clean and well maintained.

A restroom, built into one corner of the room, has one toilet and one very small sink. A half-swinging door gives a child some privacy when using the restroom, but also allows the teacher to tell if someone is in there. A larger sink is next to the restroom. With the exception of the large sink, every thing in the room is geared to the size of young children, making the room look even taller. No teacher's desk or adult size chair exists in this child-sized environment.
The classroom floor space is divided into interest areas typical of childcare facilities: a sand table; a painting easel; a book area; a computer area; a manipulative area; a block area; a housekeeping area; and two tables which are for small group activities, art activities, and eating. Unlike other childcare centers, the block area has no wooden blocks, only foam blocks, plastic blocks, and small plastic manipulatives. The Agency banned wooden blocks a number of years ago as a safety measure.

In one corner of the room is a stack of 15 cots needed for naptime. Although Kate carefully plans the use of her floor space, the ways she can arrange and alter the room are limited because of the architect's design of this long, narrow, hospital corridor type classroom. With 15 children, three adults, and the equipment and materials, the room seems crowded.

**Center of Hope Head Start Playground**

The Center's playground is a block from the center and is on a long, narrow, grass-covered lot, enclosed by a short, chain link fence. Several pieces of new, wooden playground equipment designed for young children are positioned in the middle of the lot. The Head Start staff routinely paints over the graffiti painted on the playground equipment. Every morning the center is open, a Head Start staff member inspects and cleans the playground. Each time a class uses the playground, the teacher makes another quick survey of the area. One morning a handgun was found on the playground. Usually beer cans or wine bottles or, occasionally, drug paraphernalia can be found.

188
The Head Start staff always wears latex gloves when picking up any item found on the playground.

**The Children**

The fifteen children assigned to Kate's room range in age from young threes to older fours. Of the 15 children, only one lives with both biological parents. One child lives with his father. Three live with grandparents, who have custody because of the mothers' drug problems. A few children live with their mothers and their mother's husband or boyfriend. The majority of the children live with single mothers, either alone or with other siblings or with extended family members. Three of the mothers are college students. Two mothers are working, but due to the number of children they have and the low income they earn qualify for Head Start childcare. A number of the mothers are teenagers and have dropped out of school. Most of the children have few, if any, male figures, in their lives. All the families are eligible for Head Start because the family income is below poverty level. One family lives well below the poverty level, has little food, and is in a house with no electricity.

Of the 15 children in Kate's room, seven are re-enrollees from the previous year. All seven have been identified as having some type of behavior problem or problems. Because of her education level and reputation for being an excellent teacher, Kate is given all the children in the center who have been identified as having some type of behavior problem.
Of the 15 children in Kate's class in September, four had left by February. One of the children was admitted into a program for preschool children with rage problems. One child was accepted into special mental health program for children with attachment disorders. Another child, because of extremely poor attendance, was disenrolled as required by Head Start policy. A fourth child just stopped coming and the agency was unable to determine why or what had happened to him or his family. As each child left, a new child was admitted to take his or her place. Eleven children, or 73% of the original 15 children, spent the entire year in Kate's classroom.

The Adults in Kate's Classroom

At the beginning of the year, Kate has two other adults assigned to her room: an assistant teacher and a support worker. The assistant teacher, who is required to have at least three college courses in ECE, is to be a co-teacher with Kate. The assistant teacher's responsibilities includes planning daily activities for a small group of seven children and for individual children, fostering the children's growth and development, conducting parent-teacher conferences, supervising play, eating with the children, helping with nap, and writing the numerous reports required by Head Start policies.

The educational requirement for the support worker is a high school diploma or GED. The support worker's main job is preparing breakfast, snacks, and lunch as well as helping to keep the room clean. In addition, the support worker provides assistance to the teacher and assistant teacher as needed.
A number of different people are also in and out of Kate's classroom with regularity. The Center of Hope Head Start supervisor is in Kate's classroom numerous times each day. Other frequent visitors are the social worker, educational coordinator, mental health consultant, other visitors from the agency's central office, and other Head Start teachers who come to observe Kate. A volunteer grandparent, "Grandpa Richard," visits one morning a week.

The Saga of the Adults in Kate's Classroom

In theory, Kate was suppose to have the two adults, the assistant teacher and support worker, in her classroom, but that is not what happened as the school year progressed. The story of what really happened is something else entirely. As required by the Head Start agency's hiring guidelines, Kate's assistant teacher did have some college course work in early childhood education. Based on evaluations of her past work experiences, the Head Start agency knew this assistant teacher's teaching skills needed to be improved. The agency assigned the assistant teacher to Kate's classroom with the idea that Kate (a) could act as a good role model for the assistant teacher and (b) could prevent or diffuse any problems the assistant teacher might cause. The assistant teacher left six weeks after the school year started. For the next three months, a series of different substitute assistant teachers were in Kate's classroom, at least on most days. However, the agency had difficulty finding substitutes, and many times Kate had to work without an assistant teacher. The Head Start agency finally hired a new assistant teacher, but she left at the
end of her first week. At this point, the Head Start agency told Kate that she
would have to make do with the support worker until another assistant
teacher could be found.

Dorothy, the support worker, undertook some of the assistant teacher's
tasks as well as continued to do her job. After months of unsuccessful
attempts to find an assistant teacher, the Head Start agency promoted Dorothy
to the assistant teacher position even though she did not have any early
childhood education or training. The Head Start agency, then, said it would
hire a new support worker. During the next two months, seven different
support workers were hired, most of who were involved in a Welfare-to-Work
program, but no one stayed more than a week. Finally, the agency told Kate it
would not hire a support worker since she and Dorothy were able to do the
job without one. Kate was informed she could borrow one of the support
workers from the other classrooms when it was absolutely necessary.

Many other people did come in and out of Kate's classroom during the
year. Rarely did the multitude of visitors come to help, instead they came to
observe, fulfill their own expectations or job requirements, or obtain some
information from Kate. One morning I counted 11 different people, not
including parents, who came into Kate's classroom.

What is it like in Kate's classroom? In the next section I will provide an
example of a day early in the school year.
A Day in Kate's Classroom Early in the School Year

"You are a brave soul to come in my room!" Kate tells me when I enter the room. Kate, who usually has a positive outlook, says "I don't feel like a good teacher this year. This is a particularly challenging year."

All is quiet as Kate begins her early morning routine at 7:00. She starts the day by putting on a clean, bibbed apron to cover the front of her blouse and slacks. In the apron pockets, she places the latex gloves she might need if it is necessary to deal with the bodily fluids of the children. Kate explains, "It is important to follow the universal precautions and it is a procedure all teachers of young children now must follow." Kate also places a small notebook and pencil into the apron pocket. If she has time during the day, she is prepared to write short observational notes on the children.

I noticed a rather large bruise on Kate's arm. She tells me, "Oh, that is where Lawrence bit me yesterday. You can see the teeth marks. He had an especially rough day yesterday." Lawrence, a three-year-old, displays a number of toddler-like behaviors.

As she gathers materials for the day's activities and straightens the room, she is eating a breakfast roll. Later she will eat breakfast with the children but that is still two hours away.

When the first child arrives at 7:30, Kate greets Owen and his mother. Kate smiles at Owen and does a quick health check. She carefully inspects his hair. Head lice are making the rounds in the center, and Kate has to check each child before he or she can enter the center. Owen, who is an older four
with curly, brown hair, waits patiently for Kate to finish looking through his
hair. When Kate finishes her inspection, Owen reaches for her and gives her a
hug. Kate hugs him back. Smiling, Kate talks briefly with the mother who is
appears to be in a hurry. The mother starts to leave without signing the sign-
in sheet. Gently, Kate reminds her to sign Owen in on the attendance sheet.
The adult is required to sign the child in when he or she arrives and sign the
child out when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

Since Owen is the first child to arrive, he gets to help feed the fish in the
aquarium. Owen tells Kate, "I am hungry." The two start talking about what
they had for supper the night before. Owen tells Kate, "I only had candy to
eat. I am really hungry," and Kate replies, "Dorothy will fix breakfast when
she arrives."

Owen looks at the chairs stacked on top of the tables and asks Kate, "Do
you need some help getting the chairs down?" "Yes, please," Kate replies. He
proceeds to carefully take the child-size chairs off the table and places each
chair under the table. The two half-circle tables have room for eight chairs
each. Kate's table needs nine chairs, one for each of the eight children and one
for Kate. For logistical reasons such as eating and small group activities, the
class is divided into two small groups and is assigned to a certain table. Eight
children are assigned to Kate and seven children are assigned to the assistant
teacher.

When Owen gets all the chairs down, Kate asks him to count the chairs
at each table. He makes sure that Kate's table has nine chairs. Owen reminds
Kate, "I have done this before." Smiling, Kate replies, "Yes, you have." While they are working, Owen and Kate talk as if they were peers, just a casual conversation as the workday begins.

At 7:45, two more children arrive. Kate smiles at the children and the adults who brought them to the center. She stoops down and gives each child a brief health check and looks for signs of head lice. Again, the children wait patiently for Kate to finish her inspection. It is evident by the children's demeanor that they have been through this routine before. Kate and each child carry on a conversation while Kate does the health inspection. After each child passes inspection, the adults sign the children in and then leave.

Anthony, who is almost five, comes swaggering in and tells Kate with great enthusiasm and in a loud voice, "I am living with my Mom!" He pauses and modifies his announcement in a much lower tone, "Well, at least for a few days anyway." Because of his mother's drug problem, Anthony's grandparents have custody. With Children Services' guidance, the mother is being allowed to have trial custody of Anthony. He has talked for days about being able to live with his mother.

At 8:00, Rachel and her mother arrive. Rachel has been in the hospital and is recovering from surgery. Although she wants to come back to school, Rachel is not physically well enough to return. Kate has made arrangements to provide Rachel's mother with Rachel's breakfast, lunch, and two snacks, the food Rachel would receive if she were in the center. Kate has the food ready in a brown paper bag. In addition to seeing that Rachel has her meals
every day, Kate plans activities Rachel can do at home and provides the materials for the activities. Rachel, who is pale and looks ill, tells Kate, "I want to come to school." Kate stoops down, makes direct eye contact with Rachel and, with a gentle voice, replies, "I know you do. You are getting better. Soon you will be able to come back. I have some activities for you to do at home."

Rachel throws her arms around Kate and gives her a hug and Kate returns Rachel's hug. As they leave, Rachel, carrying the materials for her at-home activities, waves at Kate and the other children, and Rachel's mother, carrying the bag of food, holds Rachel's hand.

So far, four children have arrived and are gathered around Kate's half-circle table that is now serving as an art table. The children can select from different color papers, pencils, and a hole puncher, which are on the table. Angel, a four-year-old girl with a perpetual chip on her shoulder, accidentally knocks all the paper onto the floor. Kate, with a gentle voice, asks Angel to pick up the paper. Angel, with a firm tone, "NO! I won't." Kate speaks quietly to her and gently touches Angel's back. Kate, then, begins to make picking up the paper a counting game. Angel decides she wants to play the game. Kate and Angel, together, pick up the paper and count as they do so.

Owen, standing at the table with scissors in his hand, carefully watches Kate and Angel. "Kate, Kate, I want to cut your hair," Owen yells at Kate. Kate replies, "I do need a haircut," as she strokes her hair. While Angel listens, Owen and Kate begin a conversation about cutting hair. Owen tells Kate, "I want to cut your hair all off. You will be bald." Kate replies, "OH! I bet I
would really look different if I were bald.” Owen smiles, "Yipe! You would look really different." At this point, Kate leaves Owen and goes to greet another child and parent. While she is conducting the health inspection, another child and parent arrive and Kate repeats the process.

By 8:15, seven children are in the center and all are at the art table with Kate, who talks with them as they use the paper, pencils, and scissors. The teacher from the classroom next door comes into the room. Owen jumps all and yells, "Don't take our stuff!!!!" The teacher replies, "I'm not taking your stuff. I am bringing you stuff.” Several of the other children greet her with, "Hello, Nancy."

Owen, who earlier was smiling and was so helpful to Kate, is now frowning. No longer does he appear to be happy. In fact, his facial expression indicates he is really upset. His voice tone has changed to the point that he sounds like a totally different child. Owen looks around and notices Anthony is using the hole puncher. Owen decides he wants the hole puncher so he yells at Anthony, "I want that NOW!" Owen tries to intimidate Anthony with his voice and by posturing his body in a threatening stance. Kate quickly goes to Owen, puts her arm around him and gently explains that Anthony is using it now. Owen yells, "I want it now!" Kate again explains that Anthony is using the hole punch and she reassures Owen that he can use it when Anthony is done. Kate looks at Anthony and asks, "How many more punches do you plan to make?” Anthony replies, "Five." Kate looks at Owen and tells him, "In five punches, Anthony will be finished. It will be your turn then."
Anthony slows down on making his five punches. When he has completed five punches, he looks at Kate. Kate comments, "You now have your five punches. It is Owen's turn." Anthony gives the hole puncher to Owen and Owen proceeds to punch holes in his paper. Owen, haphazardly, punches holes as he looks around the table and room to see what Kate and the other children are doing.

A few more children arrive and Kate greets them with a smile. After the health inspection is completed, Kate spends a few minutes talking to the adults who brought the children to the center. One of the new arrivals is Nadine, a four-year-old girl, who is big for her age and speaks in a loud, harsh, bossy voice.

At 8:25, the center supervisor comes into the room and looks around. "Only nine children. A slow start this morning." She tells Kate, "We couldn't find a substitute assistant teacher for you today. You will have to make do with your support worker." The supervisor leaves the room.

Dorothy, the support worker, arrives at 8:30. As she enters the room, all the children look at her and in unison shout, "I am hungry." Dorothy laughs and says, "I will have your breakfast ready real soon." Dorothy leaves the room and goes to the kitchen to prepare breakfast.

A young girl and her very young mother arrive. Kate greets them with a smile and then begins the health inspection. Kate finds nits, the eggs of head lice, in the girl's hair. Kate informs the mother and shows her the nits. The mother, who looks to be 15 or 16 years old, seems ready to cry. With a calm,
sympathetic voice, Kate begins to explain to the mother what needs to be done. The young mother stands there with a bewildered look on her face, and then starts to leave the room without her daughter. Kate reminds her the child cannot stay because head lice are contagious. Kate tries to be reassuring to the mother and daughter. As they are leaving, another young girl arrives accompanied by her uncle. Kate greets them and begins a health inspection.

Owen has been watching Kate as she is greeting the children and doing the health inspections. He decides he wants to go out into the common area where the cubbies are, but he knows he cannot go out of the room unless a teacher accompanies him. He makes a mad dash for the door but Kate stops him from leaving the room. Kate is alone in the room with the children and cannot leave the room. Owen gets really angry with her. Kate deals with him in a calm, easy manner, but Owen is still very upset and tries to hit her.

Thus begins Kate's day. She keeps an eye on the children who are in the center, acts as a referee when there are disputes, and models behaviors she wants the children to display. In between, she juggles the personal greetings and health inspections. As the number of children increase, more of Kate's time is spent as a referee. With patience, gentleness, and kindness, Kate helps children understand what needs to be done and how to act in a group setting.

In a beautiful, well-trained singing voice, Kate begins to sing a song that indicates it is circle time. As soon as she starts singing, the children look at her and join in the singing. With eagerness, all the children but Owen
quickly stop what they doing, put away what the things they are playing with, push in their chairs, and hurry to the circle time area. Owen refuses to go.

Circle time is a favorite time of the day for the children and all the children, except Owen, gather at the circle and anxiously wait for Kate to start. Minor confrontations occur over who gets to sit next to Kate. Kate arrives and begins singing, "Hello, how are you?" With great enthusiasm, the children join in the singing. Kate asks the children to stand up and hold hands. Kate begins singing a song about dancing in a circle, a favorite song of the children. Swinging their arms with great zest, the children sing as they dance and move in a circle. With joy, the children continue to smile, dance, sing, and laugh. When the children start tiring of the circle dance, Kate asks, "What other songs would you like to sing?"

From a distance, Owen watches and starts making his way to the circle. For safety reasons the children are not allowed to climb on the wooden shelves or wooden furniture, and Owen knows that climbing on the small wooden furniture is unsafe. Disregarding the rule, he begins climbing over the low shelves that hold the toys. He climbs over into the housekeeping area, and proceeds to climb onto the wooden stove and then onto the wooden sink. Owen tries to catch Kate's eye, but she is now involving the other children in a circle time discussion about favorite songs. Owen climbs over into the circle area and stands behind Kate, who is now sitting on the floor, and starts inspecting Kate's hair. Kate is trying to talk with the children. Owen starts patting her head and announces, "Kate, you have lice!" The children laugh

200
and Kate replies, "Oh, my. What should I do?" One child replied, "Use a
special shampoo." Kate asks Owen to sit down in the circle with the other
children and he complies.

Kate asks the children questions about what they did yesterday and
then she tells them some of the things they will be doing today. Kate asks the
children, "Who came this morning but couldn't stay?" The children replied in
unison, "Rachel." Anthony asks, "When can Rachel come back to school?"
Kate tells them, "Rachel's mother said Rachel might be back next week."

While singing and talking with the children, Kate keeps watch for
Dorothy, the support worker. When Dorothy comes back into the room with
the food cart, Kate sends the helpers of the day, Nadine and Owen, to help
Dorothy set the tables and put the food on the table. Kate, who has numerous
songs to help transition the children from one activity to another, reaches for a
hula-hoop behind her and begins singing, "Dancing the Hula Hoop," another
favorite of the children. Each child listens carefully for Kate to sing his name
as part of the song. When she does sing a child's name, the child jumps up
and dances in the hula-hoop. With joy and a variety of different movements,
each child performs his or her special dance in the hula-hoop. At the
conclusion of the very short verse, the child goes to the sink to wash his or her
hands and then proceeds to the table. The children sing and wait until it is
their turn to dance in the hula-hoop. The transition is relatively quick and
orderly. When all the children have had their turn in the hula-hoop, Kate goes
to wash her hands and proceeds to her table. By 9:00, everyone present is ready to eat breakfast.

With her small group of children, Kate sits at her table and Dorothy, the support worker, sits at the absent assistant teacher's table with the other small group of children. Nadine's job was to put the plates, cups, napkins, spoons, and forks on Kate's table. Just as Nadine is ready to sit down, Kate smiles at Nadine and says, "You know what, Nadine? You passed out the cups and you forgot to give someone a cup." Nadine looks around the table at the children setting down and looks at the cup by each child. Each child has a cup. Nadine has a perplexed look on her face and looks back at Kate as if to say, "Everybody has a cup." Kate, with smile in her voice asks, "Do you know who?" Nadine shakes her head no. Kate, smiling, points at Nadine and touches her and says, "You!" Nadine laughs and gets herself a cup and sits down at the vacant chair.

Being a helper is an important aspect of helping young children develop a number of different skills and values. Setting the table is a real life skill that also helps young children learn one-to-one correspondence, the foundation of counting. In her question to Nadine, Kate is helping Nadine realize she had not placed one cup at each chair. The cups were the last item Nadine placed on the table, and by the time she was putting down the cups a child was in every chair except for her own. Nadine, who, before, was doing one-to-one correspondence by chairs, was now doing one-to-one correspondence by children sitting in chairs. Since Nadine was not sitting
down, she missed giving herself a cup. In her friendly way, Kate helped Nadine recognize she had not given herself a cup. A less attuned teacher would have simply said, "You forgot to give yourself a cup." But Kate wanted Nadine to do a double check to see if everyone had a cup and by doing so, helped Nadine focus more on one-to-one correspondence. When Nadine didn't recognize who did not have a cup, Kate realized Nadine had switched the one-to-one correspondence from one cup to each chair to one cup for each child sitting in a chair.

Much talking and laughter occur at both tables, as the breakfast is served, family style. Everyone except Benjamin has peaches, and he is given an apple. The children, who are very aware of what food everyone has and how much, want to know why Benjamin has an apple. Kate explains to the children that Benjamin is allergic to peaches. A discussion ensues about allergies and Angel looks at Benjamin and asks, "Why do you have to eat an apple?" Benjamin tells her, "Peaches make me sick." The magic words of food and sick in the same sentence spark a plethora of stories of personal experiences from this young group of children. Not the most pleasant topic of conversation for eating a meal, but the children, with animated faces, enthusiastically begin telling stories of foods that made them throw up. The children direct their stories to Kate. Listening patiently and with interest, Kate, in turn, tries to move beyond a two-way conversation toward a conversation that includes the group, not an easy task with this topic or this group. During breakfast, five more children arrive. Kate gets up from the
Two of the late arrivals tug at my heartstrings. Everett, an older four-year-old, with a thin, tall body, looks like a child who has been raised in a Romania orphanage. Everett's facial expressions and body posture project an aura of extreme sadness, and his whole demeanor declares that the world is not a good place to be. Yet, at the same time, his expression is telling everyone, "Don't mess with me."

Priscilla, a tiny, three-year-old girl, with thin, stringy, light brown hair and clothes that are much, much too big for her, comes into the room very quietly, with her head hanging down. Priscilla seldom makes eye contact, rarely talks, and then only in whispers. Priscilla's demeanor is one of invisibility and the message she sends is one of "please, don't look at me or notice me."

Lawrence, the young three-year-old who had bitten Kate yesterday, arrives. One look at him and I know he is young. I am amazed that he is three. With his dark, curly hair, and cute baby face, he looks like a little cherub. At the breakfast table, he demands to sit on Kate's lap. Kate places him in a chair next to her. For the next ten minutes, Lawrence demands all of Kate's attention. He spills his food repeatedly and demands a new spoon each time he takes a bite. When he doesn't get a new spoon, he throws mini temper tantrums. Most of the other children at the table occasionally glance at Lawrence, but for the most part they try to ignore him, but they also want
Kate's attention. Except for Priscilla. Priscilla keeps her eyes down as she eats her breakfast. Kate tries to deal with Lawrence while speaking to the other children at her table.

Owen just watches, listens, and becomes increasingly more upset. His facial features show that he is about to lose it as he starts to act aggressively to anyone or anything in his way. While trying to deal with Lawrence, Kate swiftly moves to Owen, gently begins stroking his back, tells him, "It is okay." This Owen, who earlier had been so friendly and helpful to Kate, begins hitting and kicking her, and he gets in several hard blows. The other children at the table become very quiet as they try to ignore what is happening. Kate positions herself so she can try to comfort Owen while minimizing the danger to herself and the other children, which is not an easy task to do. Owen finally calms down but he is still extremely upset and angry. He sits back down in his chair, but he is still not the same child he was earlier in the morning. The children, no longer talking, finish eating breakfast

Following a routine they have learned, the children throw away their paper plates, plastic spoons, napkins, and paper cups. Next, they brush their teeth, go to the bathroom, and then put on their jackets. While the children are getting ready to go outside, Kate and Dorothy speedily remove the serving bowls from the tables and sanitize the tables so the classroom will be ready for activities when the children return from the playground. The adults hurry so the fourteen children won't have to wait long. When everyone is ready, the children line up with a partner. Kate, with a backpack of first-aid supplies, the
children's emergency information cards, and other items they might need, heads the line and Dorothy brings up the rear pulling a red wagon of toys.

The group of 13 children and 2 adults leaves the center and stops at the street. Kate, who has a song for everything, begins singing, "Left, right. Left, right." The children sing and look both ways for cars. The children and adults cross the street and begin walking toward the playground. Broken glass from a car window is scattered across the sidewalk and the children carefully walk around the glass. Noticing an old car with a broken window, the children decide someone threw a rock through the car window and it broke it into "a zillion pieces." The group also dodges low hanging tree branches as they continue to walk on the sidewalk towards the playground. When the group arrives at the street corner, they start singing, "Left, right." They all pause, look carefully, and then cross the street.

When Kate opens the gate to the playground, the children walk into the playground, line up against the fence, and wait for Kate to check the playground. Kate takes a pair of latex gloves and a trash bag out of the backpack and walks quickly around the entire playground looking for things that should not be there. Wearing the latex gloves, she picks up some items and puts them in the trash bag. She finishes her inspection and tells the children, "All clear!"

With great glee, the children start running and yelling as only children can when wide open spaces beckon them to celebrate their freedom. Some of the children just run the length of the playground, back and forth, numerous
times, just for the sheer joy of running. Others run to the climbing equipment. A few start going through the wagonload of toys to find something they want to do.

One girl, pulling the empty wagon comes up to Kate, and invites her to get into the wagon. "I want to pull you in the wagon," the girl tells Kate. "Oh, I think I am too big for the wagon," Kate replies. The girl, with firm conviction, says, "No, you are not too big. You get in and I will pull you." Kate replies, "Well, I can try to see if I will fit into the wagon." Kate scrunches herself into the wagon. The girl, with great effort, starts pulling Kate in the playground. The girl looks at Kate and says, "See! I can pull you." The girl pulls Kate halfway down the playground. Kate asks, "Can I pull you?" The girl replies, "No. I will pull you." The girl turns the wagon around and goes toward the gate. At the point where they started, the girl stops and tells Kate, "You can get out now. See. I told you I could pull you." Kate replies "Yes, you did it." The girl smiles and runs off laughing.

Kate moves around the playground checking on different playgroups. One group of children wants Kate to play with them. Kate-the-kid takes over and Kate becomes a play partner and engages in the children's play. She follows the children's lead while at the same time extends and expands the children's play themes. In one play episode, a child gathers up some wood chips, which surround the climbing equipment. The child looks at Kate and tells her, "I am cooking dinner. We are going to have potatoes." Kate asks, "Are you frying the potatoes or baking them or mashing them?" A detailed
discussion ensues about potatoes, cooking, and eating. Kate goes with the ebb and flow of the play.

    Later another cooking episode occurs. Another girl is "baking" chocolate chip cookies. When the cookies were done, the girl gives each child in the group and Kate a pretend chocolate chip cookie. Kate looks around at the group and asks, "Is there any one else who needs a cookie?" The girl carefully looks around and then sees me. The girl looks at me and brings me a "cookie." The girl looks at Kate and Kate gives her a smile.

    The children play for nearly 50 minutes. With the exuberance of the very young, they run, jump, hop, dance, yell, sing, climb, play with toys, and engage in dramatic play. Unlike in the classroom, there are no conflicts or excessive demands for attention. The children are cooperative with each other and with Kate. When Kate announces it is time to go back to the center, the children run to the playground gate, chattering away. When everyone is together, the children, Kate, and Dorothy walk back to the center, singing as they go. At this moment in time, for this particular group, the world is a safe, secure, comfortable, fun place to be.

    By 10:30 the children are back in the center. They hang up their coats, wash their hands, and get ready for small group activity time. The children in Kate's small group go to her table and the other children go to the assistant teacher's table, which Dorothy is going to supervise today. Each table has a different activity based on what was planned by the teacher and assistant teacher for the children in her small group. Kate, who is finely tuned into her
small group of children, bases her activity plans on the children's interests and developmental needs.

On this day Kate introduces the children to clay. The children play with play dough on a regular basis, but they have never had the opportunity to experiment with clay. As Kate places a box of Crayola red clay on the table, the children start holding up their hands, standing up, and bouncing about on their chairs. Kate passes the clay box to a child to her right. The child holds the box and carefully examines it. The other children continue to stand and raise their hands. The child passes the box to the next child. The child who is holding the box explains, "This is really it heavy."

After every child holds the box, Kate opens the box and pulls out the large block of red clay. She pulls apart the clay at its precut divisions. All the children jump up and down and wave their hands and calling, "Me, me, me." Kate reassures them, "Everyone will receive a piece of clay," as she quickly gives each child a piece of clay.

The children start trying to work the clay like play dough, but they soon discover the clay is hard and stiff. The eagerness to have a piece of clay quickly wanes as the children discover the clay does not feel or work up like play dough. With puzzled expressions on their faces, the children direct comments to Kate. "This is hard." "It's cold." "Play dough is soft, but this is hard." Kate agrees the clay is hard but she encourages them to keep playing with the clay and she tells them, "The clay will get softer the more you play
with it." Lawrence emphatically tells Kate, "I can't do this!" With his arms folded, Lawrence pushes his chair back from the table and glares at Kate.

With great concentration, all the children but Lawrence continue to manipulate the clay. As the clay softens and becomes easier to work, a few children started shaping small bowls. After watching the other children, Lawrence starts working his piece of clay. Owen to Kate, "Look, I made a snake!" Kate asks, "How did you do that?" Owen both demonstrates and uses words to tell how he made a snake. Kate repeats what Owen had said so the other children could hear. Pounding the clay with their fists and the palms of their hands, the children begin exploring different ways to work the clay.

From pounding the children move to patting, rolling, squeezing, and squashing the clay. As they work, the children direct many comments to Kate. Kate, in turn, tries to include other children in each comment or question directed at her. Wanting the children to talk to each other and develop a feeling of belonging to a group, Kate acts as a conductor to facilitate conversations between children.

As the clay becomes softer and easier to manipulate, the energy level, creativity, and conversation of the children increases proportionately. The children's conversation turns to food, a topic they all can relate to, and making pancakes and hot dogs becomes the main focus of the play. A child shows Kate the hot dog he had made. With a look of great interest on her face, Kate comments, "Wow, that is a big hot dog! Are you going to make a bun for your hot dog?" With great conviction, he tells her, "No, I don't like buns. I'll just eat
it plain." Another child joins in the conversation and tells Kate, "I like buns." As a way to extend and expand on the child's comments, Kate asks, "What do you put on your hot dog and bun?" The child replies, "Mustard and ketchup." As Kate and the children carry on conversations about what the children are making, Kate injects words like smooth, hard, soft, thin, and thick. Soon the children start using these descriptive words as they talk about the clay. "Look at my thin pancake." "Look at how thick my pancake is." "The clay is not hard anymore. It is soft now." "Feel how smooth this is."

With a sustained and concentrated effort, all the children, with the exception of Lawrence, keep making different things with the clay and chattering as they work. While working with the clay, Elizabeth, a three-year-old, coughs but does not catch her cough. Without missing a beat of the conversation she is having with the other children, Kate reminds Elizabeth to cough into her sleeve or shoulder. Tired of playing with the clay, Lawrence crawls under the table and slithers toward the door. Kate notices him inching his way to the door. She waits a few seconds to see what he will do. When Lawrence tries to open the door to leave the room, Kate quickly and quietly goes to intercept his escape. Kate tries to coach him back to the table, but Lawrence insists he needs to go out now and pulls toward the door. After a few minutes of talking, Kate persuades him to come back to the table. Lawrence immediately starts taking off his clothes, but Kate convinces him to leave his clothes on. The other children at the table ignore Lawrence's antics and continue to play with the clay.
Owen rolls his clay into a long skinny piece, holds it up to Kate's head and pretends to spray her hair. Loudly, he proclaims, "I am washing your hair." Joining in his play, Kate becomes a play partner and sits still while he pretends to wash her hair. Elizabeth, who is still at the table, coughs again but this time she catches the cough in her shoulder. Noticing Elizabeth's behavior, Kate smiles and tells her, "You got it. Good job." Another child has rolled his piece of clay into a very long, narrow rope. Kate comments, "Look at how long that is getting." The child, looking at his clay rope, replies, "It is real, real, real long," and proceeds to try to make it even longer.

The children have been engaged with the clay for more than 25 minutes. Kate notices a few of her children are getting restless, and she frequently looks to Dorothy's table to see if that group is about finished with their small group activity. Normally, Kate and the assistant teacher try to spend approximately the same amount of time at small group so the children have opportunities to explore or experiment with the activity and not be distracted by other children roaming around the room.

Two of the younger children at Kate's table finish playing with the clay and start vying for even more of Kate's attention. One child comes up and gives Kate a hug. Another child gets up and starts touching and hugging Kate. Owen tries to climb up on her back while she is in the chair. The other four children keep working the clay and talking.

For some reason only known to her, Nadine gets upset with Anthony who is sitting next to her. She grabs his hand and squeezes it hard. Anthony
yells, "Kate. She hurt me." Kate looks at Anthony and reminds him, "Tell Nadine it hurts. Tell her you don't want her to do that." Anthony looks at Nadine and repeats what Kate has said. Kate, then, looks at Nadine and gently tells her, "Nadine, that hurt Anthony. Are you mad? Tell him why you are mad. Use words to tell him why you are mad." Nadine jumps up and stomps off. Dorothy signals Kate that the children at her table are finished. Kate informs her group that small group time is over. Kate collects the clay and informs the children, "We will play with the clay again tomorrow."

Kate and the children at small group are very like a mother bird with a nest full of demanding, baby birds. Pushing, shoving, and screeching, most of baby birds want their mother's exclusive attention, the sustenance or food they need and desire the most. Jockeying for the best positions, the baby birds search for ways to be fed right now, all that is, except for Priscilla, who just quietly sits back, watches, and waits. Lawrence, the smallest bird, demands and requires the most attention from mother bird. Owen, if he could, would simply kick all the other birds out of the nest, and have mother bird all to himself. Priscilla, if left to her own devices, would simply starve and wither away. Never missing a beat, the mother bird, always calm and patient, keeps things going smoothly regardless of the nature of the baby birds' behaviors or conversations. Like any good mother bird, she tries to pay attention to all the baby birds and give them the sustenance they need while at the same time never losing sight of her ultimate goal of helping them become independent and self-sufficient.
After small group time, the pace of the interactions, and the demands of the children change as the group makes a major transition to work time. Following the High Scope model, the hour which follows small group time is referred to as work time, where children have free choice, within parameters, of where they will work or play. The first step to work time is the plan component of High/Scope's Plan, Do, Review, the terms used to describe (a) developing a plan, (b) following through with the plan, and (c) recalling or reviewing the plans after their completion (Hohmann & Weikart, 1995). All the children in this Head Start must plan what they are going to do before work time begins.

At her table, Kate holds up a large piece of orange construction paper with photographs of the different interest areas. Each child points to the interest area he or she will go work and then proceeds directly to that area. In just a few minutes, all 13 children are at various interest areas throughout the room. Two children wait at the easel as Kate removes the cover on the easel. As soon as Kate indicates the computer area is ready, two children start using the computer. Kate goes around the room to see what is going on and how to help the children focus on their plans. In the dramatic play area, Elizabeth has put on a yellow rain coat. She tells Kate, "It is raining." Kate looks at her own clothes and in a concerned voice asks, "What am I going to do? I don't have a rain coat." Elizabeth replies, "I guess you will get wet" as she pretends to dance in the rain.
Dressed in an expensive looking suit, wearing costly jewelry, and sporting a professional haircut, the mental health consultant enters the room. He moves about the room and observes Owen for a few minutes, he then observes Everett, next he watches Priscilla, and finally he watches Lawrence. All the children are focused on what they are doing and are playing quietly. After a total of 10 minutes of observation, he prepares to leave the room but he stops to tell Kate, "I am going to do an assessment on Priscilla this morning." Kate walks to the door with him and very quietly tells him, "Priscilla is very shy, but is doing okay. She is adjusting and adapting to being here." She asks, "Can you wait a few more weeks to do the assessment?" The mental health consultant shakes his head, "No, I want to do her assessment today. I will come back in 30 minutes to get her."

While the mental health consultant had been observing Priscilla, she had been playing by herself in the housekeeping area. She had surrounded herself with all the dolls and was involved in an elaborate solitary, pretend play. After the mental health consultant left the room, Angel enters the play scene and asks Priscilla, "Can I fix your hair?" Priscilla nods her head yes. Angel gets a chair and tells Priscilla to sit in it. Priscilla complies and Angel begins to "fix" her hair. At times it seems like Angel handles Priscilla's hair rather roughly, but Priscilla sits there playing with a doll and makes no indication it hurts. When Angel finishes, Priscilla's hair is sticking up all over the place. Angel carefully studies Priscilla's new hairdo and tells her, "You are all done!" Priscilla gets up from the chair, turns, and smiles at Angel.
tells her, "It looks good" and then leaves the area. Priscilla continues to play
with the dolls by feeding them, changing their diapers, rocking them,
humming to them, and then putting them down to sleep.

Kate watches Priscilla as she plays. When Priscilla puts all the dolls to
bed, Kate goes to Priscilla and asks her to come to the table with her. Priscilla
takes Kate's hand and then gives Kate a very brief fleeting glance and a little
smile. Sitting down at the table, Kate smiles at Priscilla and tells her, "I am
going to ask you some questions, okay?" Priscilla shakes her head yes. Kate
asks, "Where is your stomach?" At first, Priscilla looks away. Kate gently
coaches her into responding. Priscilla correctly points to every body part Kate
names. Next, Kate shows her a picture and then asks her to point to a certain
object in the picture. Priscilla points correctly to each object Kate names.
Next, Kate asks Priscilla to repeat a word. Priscilla does not repeat the word.
Angel, Anthony, and Nadine have been watching and now they try to help
Priscilla by repeating what she should say. Priscilla can talk but only when
she wants to and then only in whispers. Kate continues to ask Priscilla
questions. Sometimes Priscilla would mouth the answer or whisper it in
Kate's ear. After about five minutes, Kate thanks Priscilla and tells her she can
go play. Priscilla smiles at Kate and goes back to playing with the dolls.

Kate continues to monitor the children's activities. She talks to the two
children who are at the computer. One child is "mousing" and the other child
is watching. Kate asks the child with the mouse, "How are you and Darlene
sharing the mouse? Are you taking a turn and then giving it to Darlene?
How are you doing it?" The child tells her, "I use it for 3 minutes and then it will be Darlene's turn." Kate smiles at the two children.

Manly, a four-year-old boy wants Kate to read a book to him. Kate sits down so she can see the rest of the room. While she reads to Manly, Kate keeps her eye on the room. The mental health consultant comes back and tells Kate, "I will take Priscilla now." Kate looks at Manly and tells him, "I will be back in a few minutes."

Kate walks to Priscilla and talks quietly to her. Kate takes Priscilla's hand and walks with her to where the mental health consultant is standing. Kate introduces Priscilla to the mental health consultant, but Priscilla hangs her head and looks at her feet. Kate stoops down so she can look at Priscilla's face and tells her very gently, "You will be going into the common area just outside the classroom door. I will be right here in the room." Priscilla grabs hold of Kate with both hands. Very hesitantly, Priscilla walks with Kate to the classroom door. Kate knows it would be best if she could go with Priscilla, but she cannot leave Dorothy in the room by herself. Again, Kate explains to Priscilla that she needs to go with the mental health consultant. Very reluctantly, Priscilla leaves the room and as she is leaving, looks back with tears in her eyes. Kate smiles at her and tells her, "It will be okay." When Priscilla is out of the room, Kate's expression changes to a concerned look. She takes a deep sigh, hunches her shoulders, tries to shake the emotional tug of concern for Priscilla before she returns to Manly who is waiting patiently in the book area.

217
In the housekeeping area, Nadine and Anthony are involved in an elaborate play scenario. Nadine takes a suitcase and fills it full of items from the area. She closes the suitcase and then throws it at Anthony. In a loud, harsh, intimidating voice, Nadine yells at Anthony, "Take your things and get out of here. Don't ever come back. If you show your face here, I will call the police and they will throw you in jail. Get out!!! Get out!!!" With a look of extreme anger on her face, Nadine puts her hands on her hips and glares at Anthony. Grabbing the suitcase, Anthony looks at her and informs her with a deep voice, "I won't be back. I will never come back to this place." He stomps out of the area carrying the suitcase.

Ray, a four-year old boy, picks up a child-sized mop from the housekeeping area and holds it up to his chest like it was a gun. He starts pointing the gun at other children and going, "Bang, bang, your dead." Kate goes over and tells him, "That is a mop for mopping the floor." She makes hand motions of how the mop is to be used. Ray starts mopping the floor with the mop. When Kate leaves the area, Ray resumes using the mop as a gun. When he sees Kate watching him, he starts mopping the floor with the mop.

The social worker comes into the room, but forgets to close the door. She goes to Kate and asks her a question. Noticing the classroom door is open, Lawrence makes a break for freedom and runs out of the classroom door as fast as his little legs will carry him. With a sixth sense that someone is missing, Kate quickly notices Lawrence is gone. As she is running for the
door, Kate tells the social worker, "Stay in the classroom!" In a few minutes, Kate returns carrying Lawrence, who is kicking and screaming and trying to bite her. The social worker, with an embarrassed look on her face, quickly leaves the room and carefully shuts the door on her way out. Kate is left with a kicking, screaming Lawrence who is trying desperately to attach his teeth to some part of her body. Finally, Kate is able to calm him down.

Sad, alone, Everett is playing in the block area. Without warning or provocation, something sets him off and he becomes extremely angry. He starts throwing the plastic blocks as hard as he can at the other children in the center. Dodging the flying plastic missiles, Kate quickly sprints to his side. As soon as Kate reaches him, he turns his anger on her and starts kicking her. Adept at protecting herself and the child, Kate, with a gentle, reassuring tone of voice, calms him down. Everett's anger dissipates and he starts crying as if his heart was broken.

Owen, in a different part of the room, notices Everett and Kate. Turning to the boy he had been playing with, Owen begins yelling, screaming, and threatening him. Dorothy, the support worker, quickly intervenes and tries to prevent the two boys from getting hurt, but she is having a difficult time.

During these two outbreaks, the rest of the children become very quiet, move away from the disruptions, and try to become invisible. Being use to these sudden outbursts, the children are not surprised as they move into a
learned survival mode: becoming very quiet, moving to a different part of the room, and finding something else to do.

The mental health consultant returns to the room with Priscilla, who has tears on her face. If anything, Priscilla looks smaller, more fragile, and more invisible. The mental health consultant takes Priscilla to Kate, who is holding a crying Everett, and tells her, "Priscilla would not cooperate." As the mental health consultant leaves the room, Priscilla leans up against Kate for comfortable. Kate puts an arm around Priscilla and tries to comfort both these hurting children.

A kind of calmness settles over the room. The storm has passed. For a few more minutes things are quiet. As the children sense things are okay, their activity and noise level resume. Everett has stopped crying but his face is so sad. After a few minutes of comfort from Kate, Priscilla moves back to the dolls. Kate tells Everett, "It is clean up time." He moves off her lap. Kate and Everett go to the light switch and turn the lights off and back on, the signal that work time is over and it is time to clean up.

Kate starts singing, "Clean up, clean up, everybody clean up. Everybody, everywhere clean up. Everybody do your share." Some of the children start picking things up. Others don't. Kate keeps singing and most of the children sing with her as they pick up the toys and put them away. Kate goes to the manipulative area where a large number of small building toys are scattered on the table and on the floor. Kate pauses and tells the three boys in the area, "Oh, let's see about picking these up." The boys just stand
and look at her. Kate, in a gentle, no-nonsense voice, tells the boys, "We are all going to work together to get this area clean. Come on." She smiles at them. Two boys start picking up the small building blocks. Manly stands and watches. Kate, smiling at him, "Manly, come on. We need to all work together to clean this up. Which color are you going to get? I will pick a different color." All three boys and Kate are picking up these small toys. A conversation ensues about the different colors and about the toys. After a few minutes of work, Kate tells them, "We are almost done. Keep going." When all the toys are picked up and put away, Kate tells them, "Good job." The four of them give each other "high fives," open-hand to open-hand contact, and all are smiling.

The review part of the High Scope’s Plan, Do, Review follows work time. The children and the teacher talk about or review what the children did during work time. Normally Kate would do the recall or review with her small group of eight children and the assistant teacher would conduct recall with her small group. Today there is no assistant teacher and Kate conducts the review with all 13 children while Dorothy goes to the kitchen to get the lunch ready.

Hearing the signal to come to the circle area, the children eagerly cluster around Kate. Calling each child by name, Kate asks, "What did you plan to do and what did you do?" Each child quickly responds based on his or her plan. "I planned to paint and I did." "I wanted to play with the blocks so I played with the blocks." One child replied, "I wanted to work with the
computer, but I didn't." Kate asks, "Why didn't you work on the computer?"
The child replies, "Well, two kids were there already so I went to the housekeeping." After each child reviews his or her plans, Kate draws a smiling face on the child's thumb. Kate tries to be fast so the children don't have to wait long for a turn.

Again, the mother bird is tending to a nest of baby birds. Now instead of eight baby birds, the mother bird is attending to 13, all clustered around her, eagerly wanting her attention and acknowledgment of their individual plans and actions. After all the little birds complete the review part of Plan, Do, Review, a little one chirps, "Let's sing!" Mother bird replies, "Okay, what would you like to sing?" For 15 minutes, a joyful, happy flock sings and dances to favorite songs.

Meanwhile, Kate keeps watching for Dorothy to return with the lunch cart. When Dorothy comes into the room, Kate sends two helpers, Everett and Priscilla, to assist Dorothy. Kate tells the remaining children, "Let's go play a record. Do you known how to slide dance? Here is how." Kate plays the record and demonstrates and tells them, "We can walk or march." The children decide to march and slide. Laughing, the children continue marching and sliding until the record stops. "Let's do it again," they shout in unison and they do it all again with as much enthusiasm and joy as the first time.

Dorothy signals Kate that lunch is ready. Kate asks Nadine to get the block that has a hole in the middle. Running to the block area, Nadine quickly finds the block, and brings it to Kate. Kate smiles as she says, "Thank you."
When the children see the block, they cluster around Kate as she holds up the block and looks through the hole and sings, "Who do I see?" Looking at one child at a time, Kate calls his or her name, and the child jumps up and goes to wash his or her hands, and proceeds to one of the lunch table. The transition to lunch is done quickly. By noon everyone is ready to eat.

Like breakfast, lunch is served family style with different foods in serving size bowls and plates, which are passed around and each child helps himself to a serving. The lunch today is lasagna, salad, bread, milk, and an apple. The children quickly and with ease pass the food around and then start eating. After such a busy morning, most of the children are ravenous, eating two or three helpings of lasagna.

All the children are eating but Lawrence, who is sitting next to Kate and demanding her undivided attention. He dumps his bowl of salad on the floor. Kate asks, "Lawrence, please pick up the bowl and the lettuce. Then throw them in the garbage can." He throws away the bowl but does not pick up the lettuce. Lawrence goes to the food cart and gets a new bowl and brings it back to Kate. He tells her, "I want more lettuce." Kate tells, "First, you need to pick the lettuce up off the floor and throw it away. Then I will give you new lettuce." Lawrence refuses to pick up the lettuce. He sits, with his arms crossed, frowning at Kate.

The other children at the table vie for Kate's attention. Very consciously, Kate makes the effort to talk to each child and tries to engage the children in a three or four way conversation. After watching Kate for several
minutes, Lawrence, with great fanfare, picks the lettuce up off the floor and throws it away. Kate, then, puts some lettuce in his new bowl. Again, Lawrence tries to monopolize Kate's attention. Trying to include Lawrence in the conversation, Kate talks to other children at the table. Lawrence, purposefully, dumps his second bowl of lettuce on the floor. Kate, still calm and patient asks, "Please pick up your bowl and lettuce." Frowning, he replies, "I can't." After a few minutes of pouting, Lawrence picks up the bowl, throws it away, and gets another new bowl, but does not pick up the lettuce. He brings the third bowl back to the table and demands, "I want more lettuce."

Kate notices how tired and sleepy Lawrence looks and tells him, "Let's go wash your hands." Together they walk to the sink where Lawrence begins to play in the water as he is washing his hands. Once his hands are clean, Kate picks him up and takes him to the cot area. Holding Lawrence on her hip, she moves the cots until she finds his cot. After arranging his cot in its assigned space, Kate lays him down on his stomach, and Lawrence quickly settles into the cot. Kate sits down on the floor next to his cot and starts rubbing his back. Within two minutes, he is fast asleep.

Dorothy begins placing the other cots in designated spaces around the room. Once the cots are in place there is little space to move around in the room. Kate returns to her table where the other children are still eating. Owen starts climbing on Kate's back and demanding her attention. Kate talks to him and encourages him to finish eating.
As the children finish eating, they throw away their plates, cups, forks, spoons, and napkins. Knowing the routine, the children use the restroom, brush their teeth, wash their hands, and go to their cots. The children take off their shoes and settle into their cots. Kate turns off the harsh, overhead lights and turns on the tape recorder. The feel of the room changes as a little light from the small glass block windows offers a soft, natural subdued illumination. Soft, relaxing music filters through the room blocking out the sounds from the other parts of the building. A few children quietly talk to their neighbors as they settle down to sleep. Within ten minutes all but Everett fall asleep. Everett is restless and is having a difficult time settling down. Kate sits down on the floor next to his cot, whispers to him, and starts rubbing his back. In a few minutes he drifts off to sleep. For the first time in five hours, the room is quiet and, if all goes well, will probably be quiet for the next two hours while the children sleep.

Kate's official lunch break is supposed to start at 12:30, but it is 12:40 before Kate leaves her classroom and goes to the teacher's lounge, a small room off the common area. This is the first break she has had since she arrived at 7:00 this morning. Once in the room, Kate settles onto the sofa, closes her eyes, and rests her head on the back of the sofa. All is quiet and peaceful in the room. Kate relaxes a few minutes, takes some deep breaths, changes gears, and then starts doing paper work. Being a federally and state funded program, the Head Start agency requires the teacher to do a great deal of paper work. Kate freely admits that she cannot complete all the paperwork
done during her workday and finishes it at home either in the evenings or on
the weekends.

At 1:30, Kate returns to the room so Dorothy can take her lunch hour.
A feeling of quiet, gentle peace permeates the room as the children continue to
sleep. Kate works on the classroom computer and records observations she
has made on different children into a High/Scope Child Observation Record,
a software assessment/observational program for developmentally
appropriate programs. Any data entries into the computer must be done
before the children arrive, at naptime, or after the children leave. Kate makes
use of her computer time while the children sleep.

When Dorothy returns to the room at 2:30, several of the children start
to wake up. The few who are awake stand and stretch and ask either Dorothy
or Kate to help them with their shoes. Quietly, the children go to the
bathroom, wash their hands, and go to the table to eat the snack Dorothy has
ready. During the next thirty minutes children continue to wake up. The
children are quiet and still sleepy. The room is peaceful and quiet with a
much slower pace than before nap. Still half asleep, the children say very little
as they eat their snack.

At 3:00, Kate calls the children who have finished snack to a carpeted
area of the center. Pulling teacher-made "yarn spiders" out of her apron
pocket and giving one to each child, Kate starts singing, "There is a spider on
my arm, on my arm," as she places the yarn spider on her arm. Giggling, the
children follow her example. "Angel, where should we place the spider next?"
Kate asks. Angel replies, "On our heads!" Kate and the children sing, "There is a spider on my head, on my head," and place the spiders on their heads. Each child has an opportunity to select a place to put the spider. A great deal of laughter and giggling occur as the children find different places on their bodies to position the spiders.

Next, Kate shows the children a book and tells them, "We have a book to read. Do you remember this boy?" as she points to a picture on the back of the book. The children, in unison, say the boy's name. She asks, "What is the name of the book?" The children, again in unison, say, "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie." The children gather around Kate and become involved with the pictures and actions in the story as she reads the book with expression. As Kate reads, she asks questions about what is going to happen next. The children respond to her questions and help her tell the story.

At the conclusion of the book, a discussion begins. Somehow the topic gets on bowling, and Kate asks Owen about his trip to the bowling alley. Owen tells what it was like at the bowling alley. Kate tells the children she will bring some bowling items from home and they can set up a bowling activity in the center. "But," Owen tells Kate, "We have a problem. There was a TV on the ceiling at the bowling alley. We don't have a TV on the ceiling here." Kate asks the children, "A TV on the ceiling? I wonder what we can do so we have something on the ceiling like at the bowling alley?" A discussion starts and the children talk about how to put a TV on the ceiling. When the discussion winds down, Kate begins singing, "Open, shut them, open, shut
them, give a little clap." The children join in and end up with their hands in their laps.

When Kate began singing, "Open, shut them," Dorothy brings the children's jackets in from their cubbies. The children put on their jackets and sit down on the chairs. Kate begins to sing, "Stand up, push your chair in, and go to the door." The children go to the door and find a partner. The class is going to the playground again. As Kate and the children leave the room, they are singing, "Tippy Toe, Tippy Toe."

At 3:30, Kate, Dorothy, and the children go to the playground. The children run, jump, chase each other, climb, pull the wagon, and engage in dramatic play. There are no blow-ups or major conflicts. During the hour they are on the playground, a number of mothers or grandparents come and pick the children up.

An older car with at least five children in it pulls up and parks by the fence. Owen's mother gets out of the car and walks toward the fence. Kate calls for Owen and he comes running. He sees his mother, looks to Kate, and holds his arms up for Kate to pick him up. Kate picks him up and he wraps his legs around her waist and his arms around her neck. Kate gently rocks him as she talks with Owen's mother, who remains on the other side of the fence. After a few minutes of conversation, Kate tries to hand Owen over the fence to this mother. He holds on tighter because he doesn't want to go. Kate tells him that he can come back to school tomorrow. Reluctantly, Owen lets go and Kate hands him over the fence to his mother.
By 4:30 only Everett, Priscilla, Manly, and Lawrence have not been picked up. Kate, Dorothy, and the children gather up the toys and leave the playground. The group leisurely starts walking back to the center. On the way back, Kate points out a pine tree that has pinecones on it. The group starts collecting pinecones, which are on the ground. Kate and the children talk about the pinecones and the pine tree.

Kate's official workday is over but she feels compelled to stay because she does not want to leave Dorothy alone with these four children. She sees these extra hours as volunteer time. When they return to the center, the children hang up their coats, wash hands, and wander around the room. The room is quiet and the children seem to be at a loss without the other children. They know they are the last ones to be picked up.

Owen and Manly want Kate to read to them, Kate asks, "Which book would you like me to read?" "If You Give a Mouse a Cookie," they reply in unison. As she is reading, the other two children come to listen. "Read some more!" the group tells Kate. "Select another book," Kate replies. The children select a book Kate had made. The book contains photographs of the room, the children, and the adults in the center. The children cluster around Kate as they look at the book and talk about the pictures.

One by one the children leave as a parent or grandparent or uncle come to pick them up. Each child hugs Kate and tells her, "See you tomorrow." By 5:30, all the children have left. Kate and Dorothy review the day's events as
they straighten up the room. They talk about what they need for the next day and gather the materials they will need for the activities they have planned.

At 6:00, Kate turns out the lights and closes the classroom door. As we are leaving the building, Kate says, "Today was much better than usual."

Kate-as-a-kid and Kate-as-a grown-up are two parts of Kate-the-teacher. Kate is able to be a skilled play partner with the children as she follows the children's lead, and extends and expands play without taking over the children's play. As a play partner, she acts as a role model for the children in their play. At the same time, however, Kate never leaves her adult responsibilities. She switches back and forth between her adult roles as a Head Start teacher, a manager of the learning environment, communicator to parents, and as a supervisor of other adults. Kate juggles all these roles while keeping the children, their interests, and their developmental needs in the foreground and at the same time skillfully exhibiting this special ability to relate to children at their own level. Kate's theories of action influence many different aspects of her teaching.

Kate's Theories of Action

During the year I was in and out of Kate's classroom, I realized Kate's theories of action manifested themselves in her teaching practices. Consistency was strong between what Kate said and what she did, and what she said and did was aligned with NAEYC's philosophy, values, and assumptions about teaching and learning. In fact Kate's teaching could be a poster child for NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practices.
Kate's Concepts and Beliefs

When asked what was her philosophy, Kate, laughingly, replies "Eclectic! A little of this and a little bit of that, like the NAEYC stuff." Kate goes on to describe her philosophy, "It is play-based. I would like to say it is social constructivist. I would love to be able to say it is some of Reggio, but I can't. It is High/Scope, which is eclectic." Kate views the children as active learners who are capable of doing a great deal. "My philosophy is that the kids can do. I help them do by being a good role model and everything, but my philosophy is not that I do it for them." A key component of her philosophy is "getting to know the children and their families and building on where they are in helping them to develop in a way that is a shared cultural thing."

At the foundation of Kate's beliefs about young children and learning is the essentiality of meeting children's physical, social, and emotional needs before focusing on other skills. In her own words, Kate describes the most important task is trying to meet the children's needs on the lower part of Maslow's hierarchy. Meeting those needs so the children can develop skills to survive in this world. If those needs are not being met, you can't even work with them in the other areas of development.

Because Kate works with children who live in poverty, she is very aware of basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Next come safety needs. "I am a safety net. The children know I am there to keep them safe." Kate follows
this with helping children develop a sense of belonging and a sense of community.

Kate sees herself as "a nurturer. A role model. A friend yet someone who sets the limits to keep everybody safe. A protector. I feel like I am doing that a lot. An advocate for them with their families and parents. I try to be an empowerer and creator of community."

**Safety, caring, and a sense of community.** In her teaching, Kate tries to create "a culture of caring. Safety, caring, and learning or exploring." Kate strives to provide the children with a feeling of "consistency, caring, and safety. And I hope, fun." Fun is a key element in Kate's ideas about teaching. "Fun is important so they like coming. It is essential to developing relationships and a sense of community."

When Kate talks about fun, she is referring to enjoyment and pleasure. Enjoyment and pleasure are important intrinsic motivators. Head Start is the first encounter these children have had with "school." If they enjoy coming and find pleasure in the things they do and learn at "school," they are more likely to develop positive attitudes about schooling in general. Many of the Head Starts parents do not have positive attitudes toward schooling, and Kate, in her efforts to help children enjoy school, can help parents see that school can be enjoyable, pleasurable, fun, and educational.

A sense of community is important to Kate and she works on "building up relationships between children and teacher, between children and children, and with the community that is created." Kate treats every child and adult in
her class with respect and dignity. A major area of satisfaction for Kate is when she "sees the kids getting along and helping each other and supporting each other." She further explains, "I guess it comes back to that caring. Helping them learn to be caring." Children learn through the social interactions they have with the adults and children in the classroom. The most important things Kate wants the children to learn in her classroom are "social skills and a positive self-esteem. Those are the only two things I can say across the board."

Inherent in support for the children's sense of self, Kate places importance on the children acquiring self-help skills and developing good health habits. It is important for children to learn "how to take care of themselves. Self-help skills. Including protecting yourself from somebody who is throwing a fit as well as washing your hands and all that kind of stuff." Feeling competent and capable are also key elements of fostering children's view of themselves. By "encouraging children to make choices and be responsible for themselves," Kate is fostering the children's feelings of competence. Another important factor is for children "to be able to work by themselves and with others." There are other things Kate wants the children to learn, but these are, for Kate, the foundations which children need if they are to grow, develop, and learn in all other areas.

**Learning, exploring, and curriculum.** Kate's ideas about how children learn are centered on play. Her philosophy is play based and her classroom toys, materials, equipment, and activities provide children with many
opportunities for play. The children have choices of where they want to play. The children tend to seek those things that are of interest to them, that are enjoyable, and which meet their current developmental needs. While playing, children are actively engaged in exploring, making sense of their environment, and learning. Children, through their play, construct knowledge about their world. Kate trusts that children are learners. As a skilled play partner, Kate is able to extend and expand the children's play and thereby increase their learning opportunities.

In Kate's classroom, children have large blocks of time when they play. Since the Head Start Agency where Kate works follows a High/Scope curriculum, the term "work time" is used instead of "playtime." To Kate, however, the children are playing. Kate explains, "We learn a lot through our play. We learn about each other through play and through having fun with each other."

While observing the children's play, Kate learns a great deal about the children. "It is in those moment that you best see where a kid is." She carefully determines what each child is interested in, at what development level the child is functioning, what the child's needs are, and bases her curriculum planning on the children's interests and what arises from those interests. In effect, she is conducting an on-going assessment through her observations and from this develops her curriculum. Kate explains, "I am doing more emergent curriculum based on children interests."

234
As part of the High/Scope curriculum, Kate develops goals for the children based on their developmental needs and their interests. The goals are planned around Key Experiences, a High/Scope concept, which Kate describes as "what young children do, how they perceive the world, and the kinds of experiences that are important for their development." Kate knows the categories in Key Experiences well and can recite them with ease.

There is initiative and social relations, creative representation, language and literacy, movement, music, math and logic, which includes classification, seriation, number, space, and time. Under each of those, there are sub-categories. For example, creative representation is making and building, drawing and painting, and pretending. Logic and math is sorting, using comparison words, graduating order, counting objects, sequence, and time.

Kate uses the Key Experiences as a loosely connected framework which help structure the goals she sets for each child. "I plan experiences based on each child's monthly goals, which I base on emergent skills they have been building. Their interest is number one. I just try to see what they are interested in." This is turn informs Kate of what they are ready to learn.

Kate's emphasis on curriculum planning based on young children's interests follows NAEYC developmentally appropriate practice guidelines. Children's interests and need to know are strong intrinsic motivators for learning. From this perspective, children's learning occurs in a cycle that begins first with awareness or interest and then moves on to exploration and inquiry, and finally knowledge acquisition. For the skilled teacher of young children, the children's actions, behaviors, interests, and questions open a window of understanding for planning what children want, need, and are...
ready to learn. Inherent in Kate's beliefs is the acceptance of the fact that young children are good indicators of what they need to know and are developmentally ready to learn. Kate views children as active learners who construct knowledge and she tries "to do more constructivist things." For Kate, this is the child-centered approach to curriculum development: planning based on children's interests, and implementing activities that give children multiple opportunities to construct and expand their knowledge and skills.

For example, one of the goals for November for Rachel, who will be going to kindergarten next year, is to provide opportunities for her to write. A goal for Anthony involves classification. Kate explains

Rachel really has been into writing recently. So my goal for her next month will be that she will be able to write. I take the goal right off the Key Experiences chart. Right now under Writing, she is doing the right squiggles and lines. Her next step up would be to write some letters. I plan strategies for her writing development. I plan two things I can definitely do that can help Rachel to try to meet her goal. One thing I will do is put out glue cards — the glue letters.

Right now, Anthony is interested in sorting and classifying different items. Anthony's goal has to do with sorting. So at small group his table did a sorting activity. I made sure that there was enough to do - the tools and stuff. I put in screws. I put in some new things like paper clips. Most of the children haven't worked with paper clips. So again I was trying to balance the familiar with the unfamiliar. So I try as much as possible to build off their interest and their interests are reflected in the goals I set.

Kate follows a form of "up-side down pyramid" curriculum planning as described by Hill, Yinger, and Robins (1983). In this type of planning, the
teacher integrates the plans for individual children into group plans. Rather than single one child out to do a particular activity, the activity is offered to all the children. The materials and activities developed for an individual child are then made available for any of the children to participate in or use. The plan or activity for an individual child, in effect, becomes a plan for the group. Kate comments, "small group has gone extremely well almost every day and that has been a kind of fun time. Some days, we have stayed 50 minutes because they have just been so involved in the activities."

In addition to planning activities based on the children's interests, Kate carefully structures her classroom routines as a way to foster children's skill development. Simple things like washing their hands, brushing their teeth, and coughing into a shoulder assist children in developing a number of skills. The most obvious one is the development of good health habits, but these tasks also help children develop self-help skills and can increase their feelings of competence. When the children fulfill the role of meal helpers, they are learning a number of things. By helping the adults set the table and carrying the food from the food cart to the table, the children are participating in an adult task, which they may not have the opportunity to do at home. The children acquire a feeling "I can do a big person's job. This is important." In addition, the children are developing a sense of helping the other students by getting their food ready for them to eat. Setting the table also provides the helpers with the opportunity to practice one-to-one correspondence, a necessary concept for learning to count. At the end of work time or play time,
everyone helps pick up the toys. Kate is teaching the children to be responsible for not only what they have played with but also to be responsible for their community space. The children are also acquiring sorting and classification skills when they place toys and materials back in their designated areas. For every routine Kate uses in the classroom, she has definite skills she wants children to accomplish. Together, these routines help children develop self-help skills, social skills, and a feeling of competence as well as learn things like one-to-one correspondence and classification.

Outdoor play is another key ingredient in Kate's plans for the children. Weather permitting, Kate takes the children outside for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon. Outdoor play is Kate's favorite time of the day "because the children all have so much fun together. I see a lot of good helping behaviors outside. They run and play. They don't have to worry about inside voices." If the playground grass is wet, Kate takes the children on a walk around the neighborhood. Within walking distance of the center is a street on a large hill. The children like to walk up the hilly sidewalk and run back down. During the year, the children became very observant of things in the neighborhood. To Kate, the outside is another learning environment.

Whether inside or out, Kate uses conversation as a way to (a) foster social skills, (b) support children's sense of self, and (c) increase children's language and learning. Kate explains, "The way in which I relate and talk to the children, I hope, is encouraging them, helping them to probe." Kate
considers herself a "co-learner. I try to engage them in meaningful conversation. Trying to get out what they are thinking and why they are thinking that." Through (a) casual conversation at mealtimes and throughout the day, (b) discussions at small group and at circle time, and (c) extending and expanding children's play, Kate uses language to further support children's development.

Another key component of Kate's teaching is her use of music. Kate, who has a beautiful singing voice and knows a great deal about music, uses music in a variety of ways. Kate possesses a song for everything: greeting visitors, greeting children, taking attendance, dancing and movement, transitioning from one activity to another, cleaning up after work time, getting ready to go outside, crossing the street, and songs just for the sure enjoyment of singing. As the year progresses, the children learn the songs and when Kate would start singing, the children would join in the singing. The music not only helps the children with routines but also gives them a sense of togetherness and a sense of community. Sometimes a child would begin singing and others would join in. Music is an integral part of the classroom environment.

Factors Influencing and Guiding Kate's Theories of Action

When asked what things did she think influenced her ideas about teaching and learning, and working with young children, Kate, without hesitation and in a bullet form emphasis, states:
- My mom.
- My professors in undergrad.
- Grad school as a whole.
- The Reggio stuff, the readings, and talking to people who are doing it.
- Visiting the kindergartens in Germany.
- All the reading I have done.
- Co-workers.
- The children themselves.
- Student teachers.
- The High/Scope stuff and my work with High/Scope staff, especially their technology project.

Kate mentions her mother frequently and credits her for many of the views she holds about teaching and learning. Kate's mother had been a preschool and kindergarten teacher, and Kate states,

"I have always kind of grown up in early childhood education. My ideas are largely due to my Mom's influence. Education is cyclic. When she was teaching that cycle was more developmentally appropriate, as it is today. Music was another thing I learned from my Mom. My Mom still goes around the house singing all those songs."

Kate believes her undergraduate professors helped her learn a great deal. As Kate explains, they

"laid the foundation and the groundwork. During the last couple of years I have gone back and found some of my undergraduate notes. It is like, "Oh, look!" I really had learned this as an undergrad. If nothing else, even if I don't remember learning it there and when I go back and look, I go, "Oh, I did." At least the foundation was laid so that when I heard it the next time I got more out of it because I had already heard it once."

Kate had been a full-time graduate student at a large research university for the two years before she became involved in my dissertation study. In fact, Kate had completed her master's degree three months before my first observation. Because her graduate work was so recent, Kate could
elaborate on a number of topics that had influenced her thinking about teaching young children. Given Kate's background of extensive travel and study abroad, it is not surprising that the current emphasis on multiculturalism was first on Kate's list. According to Kate, the graduate school has influenced her current thinking about a lot of the multicultural issues or just cultural issues whether it be school culture, peer culture, multi-cultural, cultural issues. I guess it is stuff that you heard, and you say [to yourself] it just instinctively... fits. It makes sense and that is right. It goes with what I believe about teaching young children. Yet it gets me to think about stuff in new ways.

When Kate lists the "Reggio stuff," she is talking about a type of early childhood education that is currently of popular interest. Reggio is the term given to a constructivist approach to teaching young children which was developed in Reggio, Italy. The Reggio philosophy is eclectic but primarily based on the work of Dewey and Piaget. A key part of the Reggio curriculum is developing long-term children-teacher projects based on the children's interests. While working on her master's degree, Kate took classes where she studied the Reggio approach and visited schools that used it.

Three major ideas from the Reggio approach influence Kate's thinking. One idea is "how children are viewed," that is, they are capable learners who construct knowledge, and often in more elaborate ways that the adults could imagine. The second idea is the use of projects as vehicles for learning. The teacher supports and helps to sustain long-term projects based on the children's choices. The third idea, Kate explains, focuses on
how the environment is arranged. Everything... is so aesthetically pleasing. There is so much detail paid to everything looking so beautiful and nice. I have tried at least to be neater. I have thought about that more. I don't feel like I have made much progress in putting things out beautifully. Part of it is coming up with materials to put out. Yet the whole aesthetics. Paying much more attention to the aesthetics and I am trying to do a lot more.

Kate had visited kindergartens in Germany in 1994 and in 1997 and was very impressed.

You walk in and it is like "Oh, wow!" Their outdoor space was just incredible. They could do much with the outdoor space. Oh, it was beautiful and huge. It was just wonderful. It was like "I'll stay." Inside, they use cloth or fabric for so much [that is, for improving the aesthetics and usability of the environment]. Like Reggio, they pay so much attention to the environment. I picked up the most from the German about [use of] the outside.

Kate made friends with a German girl who was "going through the training process to be a kindergarten teacher." For one of her graduate courses, Kate "did a big unit on kindergartens in Germany." Kate used her German friend as a resource for the unit. Kate said, "She e-mailed me and I was able to ask her all these questions about what they had been learning. She sent back a ton of pictures." Laughingly, Kate continues, "Actually, they called last year and offered me a teaching position in Germany. But, I can't understand adults speaking German let alone little kids."

Kate lists "all the readings" she has done as influencing her ideas about teaching and learning. Of particular interest to Kate are readings on emergent literacy, which she had been interested in before going to graduate school. In selecting her graduate course work, she specifically took courses that dealt with emergent literacy. Kate also mentions reading Young Children, NAEYC's
professional journal, and the NAEYC books she receives for having a life-
membership in NAEYC.

Kate gives credit to her co-workers for influencing how she interacts
with the children and how she relates to Head Start parents. Kate states,
especially my co-workers of different races. To see how they interact
with children. . . . The staff I had the first year were really just
wonderful. There are things I still say to this day that I can tell you that
is from Cassie or Alexi. A part of it is just learning how they interact
with children and meeting some of that in interacting with kids of
different cultures. Also looking at the staff I have worked with and
their personal problems. Some of them have been just a step ahead of
the families we are working with and looking at how much the stress in
their lives affects them. I also imagine how the stress affects the
children in these families.

The children influence Kate's beliefs about teaching and learning. Kate
pays careful attention to what the children say and how they act. Kate
believes children influence her by

all the things they say. How they look at what I am doing and how
they are reacting. Informing me [whether] what I am doing is helpful
or not helpful [to them]. Trying to be responsive to them. To see what
I am doing. If there is a problem, is it me causing it or what? Watching
them helps me be more flexible, and trying to be a lot more
spontaneous and go off on their own ideas.

To illustrate a point about how children, co-workers, and parents influence
her teaching, Kate tells a story about taking the children to the airport.

Remember last week I mentioned we were going to the airport?
Dorothy and four parents went. Dorothy and 3 of the 4 parents had
never stepped foot in an airport before. It sounds really incredible. I
knew they might not have been on an airplane but that they had never
even stepped foot in an airport! I was helping both the children and the
parents. The parents were scared to step on the airplane, and it was a
broken airplane. We actually got to get on the plane. The kids were
mad because we didn’t get to leave the ground [laughter] and the
parents were saying, “It isn’t going to go anywhere, is it?”
Kate routinely acts as a cooperating teacher and has worked with a number of different student teachers over the years. Kate, in talking about the student teachers, mentions that she learns from them. "I pick up a lot from them." The student teachers bring new ideas and try different activities, and Kate observes how the children react to the different curriculum plans.

Kate has attended numerous workshops conducted by High/Scope trainers, who are hired by the Head Start Agency. Kate credits High/Scope with many of her ideas about teaching young children.

Before the emergent curriculum stuff came out, High/Scope was talking about doing daily lesson planning based on children's interests. I did the High/Scope technology project and a High/Scope trainer came and worked with me one-on-one in my room. Everything they say and that is in their books is really everything that is the current theory stuff. So I agree with how they go about it.

**How the Context Impacts Kate, her Teaching, and her Theories of Action**

The context influences how Kate's theories of action are manifested in her teaching. As in a developmentally appropriate classroom, Kate tries to maximize the use of her classroom space by arranging the different interest areas to best suit the needs and activity levels of the children in her room. Hampered by the size and shape of the room, Kate continually tries to make the best use of her space. Kate considers the equipment, toys, and materials she has available in arranging the room. Kate explains,

I hope that there are a variety of experiences, which build on their interests. I hope that the room and the environment set a soft tone. That there is space for group and for individuals. I want them to be able to work by themselves and with others.
In selecting the materials to use with the children, Kate considers a number of factors. "Safety. Safety and health. Availability. Cost. Whether I can do it developmentally appropriately. Whether they actually can use it. What they can actually do with it. Their interests. Those are the kinds of things I have to consider."

Kate goes on to explain, "The children's behavior really influences what I can do in the room. I try, as much as possible, to build off the children's interests." Kate carefully considers the materials and activities for the small group. Even though she plans, she makes frequent changes in her plans when she is teaching. Smiling, Kate explains, "I make tons of changes while I am teaching. I change by trying to follow the kids' lead . . . and whether they are getting it or not." Kate explains, "I do not line it [the lesson plan] out step by step because then I would not really be free to follow the kids' interests." In describing circle time plans, Kate explains that she has a general plan, but circle time

is very much going with the mood of the children. What are they asking me to do? I want to try to make circle time theirs. If there is a song they really want to do, I try to honor that and do that.

Kate feels this group of children, more than others she has taught, needs a very predictable environment. "I try very hard not to change the daily routine at all." Trying to maintain a daily routine is difficult in this center because of the many visitors and volunteers who come into Kate's classroom. Kate had to stand her ground in order to maintain a daily routine. "I finally told them [the agency] I am not changing the classroom routines [for visitors
or volunteers]. If they send somebody in, they have to do what we do. The routine is just too important for this class."

This year, more than the other years she has taught, Kate's teaching and what she could or could not do has been influenced by the lack of consistent, educated or trained, classroom help. Kate was often discouraged by the lack of help and the agency's failure to find an educated, skilled assistant teacher. Dorothy has been the only consistent help, yet she did not have the education, training or experience to fulfill the role of assistant teacher, but she was promoted to that position. Kate explains, "Dorothy and I have no time to talk." When planning children's goals and small group activities, Kate could teach from the children's interests and the materials she had selected, but Dorothy "needed so much more than that." Time was a precious element in the center and there was no time for Kate to teach Dorothy what or how to teach. Kate, ultimately, did her work and much of the work of the assistant teacher. For example, when it came time to do parent-teacher conferences, rather than conducting eight conferences, Kate was told she had to do all 15 conferences. Kate had to observe and record observations on all the children, provide the documentation for the conferences, and write the report to share with parents. In addition, Kate had to develop individual home activities for each child and share these with the parents or guardians.

Many of the children in Kate's classroom had challenging behaviors. The Agency's mental health consultant was to provide Kate with plans of action to help the children who had been so identified. Kate and the mental
health consultant were from different philosophical paradigms. The mental health consultant, who did not have an early childhood education background, came from a strong behavioral viewpoint and his recommendations were counter to what Kate believed the children needed. Kate had to deal with the conflicting recommendations for almost all the children the consultant observed. Kate explained, "There was this struggle between punishment and helping them to learn. I was told I needed to do more of the time out chair stuff, which to me is much more of a punishment mode." For some of the children, the mental health consultant saw their behavior as a power struggle with Kate, but Kate did not see the children's behavior in that light. The mental health consultant told Kate she had to show the children she was the one who had the control and power.

Kate had told me about the observations of a pediatrician who had visited the center in the fall. After visiting all four classrooms in Kate's building, the pediatrician remarked to Kate, "You have a group of needy children." Kate also believed this group of children was more "needy" than any previous group she had taught. Kate felt the children needed a safe, consistent environment, and caring, warm, patient adults. In Kate's mind, the children needed to have their emotional and social needs met before other learning could take place. To Kate, the children did not need to be punished or have privileges taken away or to be controlled by her.

Even though the mental health consultant's recommendations were in writing and Kate had to report how she followed through with them, she did
not use the methods advocated by the consultant. Kate continued to work with the children in a way that was compatible with her beliefs. She also worked to have two of the children receive the special kind of help she felt they needed. The stand Kate took was not a comfortable one, but she had confidence in herself, her theories of action, and what was best for the children she had come to know and care about.

Kate wrestles with the various aspects of the context that tend to impede her teaching. She is creative in trying to work around those aspects that prevent her from doing what she thinks is best for the children. For Kate the children are not the problem nor is her teaching. When she teaches, she is tuned into the children and she mentally steps back and asks herself, "Kate, if you were observing yourself what would you be telling yourself?" She continuously monitors and evaluates her teaching and interactions with the children.

Kate has many wonderful ideas but becomes frustrated because it is so difficult to "get them all out and implemented." The biggest drawback to implementing the things she wants to do is "TIME!" Kate explains, "Part of what is so frustrating for me is that I kind of had this ideal of where I would like to be. I feel like I am so bogged down in the everyday stuff that I can never get there."
Kate's View of an Effective Prekindergarten Teacher

To Kate teaching in a prekindergarten setting is trying to be an empowerer and creator of community. It is being a room arranger. It is being an enabler. An engager with the children. An observer. A listener. A caretaker. It is encouraging them. Helping them to probe. A co-learner. A co-player. It is trying to share or merge the peer culture and school culture. Encouraging children to make choices and be responsible for themselves. Being flexible. Being able to think about more than a dozen things at one time. Being patient. Being willing to share control. Viewing children as competent people. Good interpersonals [relationships] not only with the children but also with the families.

Kate believes an effective teacher needs to be organized, intelligent, and patient. The teacher needs to care for the children. Kate explains, "I care very much about what is happening with their family lives, with their health, and with their friendships."

Kate believes it is important "to always be learning. To be able to take time, reflection time. The biggest thing is trying to stay current on what is current in research and current thought."

Kate's view of her role as a professional can be summarized in her statement: "I am constantly changing. Trying to find whatever is going to work best for that group of kids." When asked what advice would she give a new prekindergarten teacher, Kate replied, "Analyze what your expectations are. Listen to the kids. Have fun with the kids and help them have fun with each other."

The interviews were conducted in the fall and during those interviews Kate's comments expressed her theories of action. What was Kate able to
accomplish in her classroom with this group of children? In the next section, let’s take a look at Kate’s classroom near the end of the school year.

A Glimpse of a Day in May

The school year will be over in a few days. The children, their behaviors, and the look of the room are different than they were in the fall. Everett, Owen, Manly, and Nadine are no longer enrolled in Kate’s classroom. Four new children have taken their places. One of the new children is a special needs child and requires constant one on one attention. The other three new children have blended into the class. The remaining original 11 children have grown and have learned how to be part of a group.

Kate’s efforts to soften the room are evident. One wall is decorated with pictures of the children, their families, and of children doing classroom activities. Numerous art projects the children have completed are on display throughout the room. A large, teacher made poster with numerous drawings, photographs, and descriptions of a Reggio type project on cars is prominently displayed. Accompanying the poster is a two-page description of the project and the children’s comments about the project (See Appendix D). Long strips of paper with collages of one color, with the color word attached, hang from the ceiling like mobiles. Over the book area, a light blue bed sheet, which the children had painted with white paint, is hanging from the ceiling like a canopy. A sheet hangs down from the ceiling and blocks off part of the room where the cots are stacked. Through Kate’s efforts, the Center of Hope is now accredited by NAEYC.
At 10:00, eight children are at Kate's table for a small group activity. Kate tells the children, "Sing the ABC song while we get ready for our activity." The children start singing. Some of the children use sign language as they sing the song. "Tomorrow, where are we going?" Kate asks the children and in unison they reply, "The ice cream store." Kate tells them, "Today, we are going to make ice cream. You will need a partner for this activity." The children quickly find a partner. The partners talk to each other and wait patiently for Kate to start.

Kate has the ice cream recipe chart with pictures on it. Kate gives each pair of children a large ziplock plastic bag and a small ziplock bag. The children wait patiently while Kate hands out the plastic bags. Holding up a bag of ice, Kate asks, "What is this?" The children shout, "ICE." Each child feels the ice and looks at it up close. Kate explains, "I will give you and your partner ice. It goes in the bigger plastic bag." Kate gives every pair ice. As she distributes the ice, Kate comments to the children, "My hands are getting cold." The children begin talking about how cold the ice is.

Kate looks around and asks the children, "Does everyone have ice in their big bag?" The children, in unison reply, "YES!" Kate explains, "Next we have to put salt in the bag with the ice. Each bag needs six tablespoons of salt." Kate, in order to keeps things moving quickly, measures out the salt for each bag. She counts "One, two, three, four, five, six tablespoons of salt." The children count with Kate as she quickly measures the salt into each bag.
Kate tells them, "Now, we need milk in the little plastic bag. Let's check the recipe. It says we need two of these cups (1/4 cup measuring cup)." Each pair of children gets to measure their own milk. One partner measures two of the 1/4 cups of milk and the other partner holds the small plastic bag while the milk is being poured into the bag. Kate reads from the recipe, "Now, we have to add sugar." Kate quickly adds sugar to each of the small bags. Pointing to the recipe, Kate tells the children, "Now, we need vanilla." Kate quickly adds vanilla to each bag. "Now, close the small plastic bag". The children work together, to close the ziplock closing.

One child spills the milk as he tries to close the bag. Kate reassures him it is okay. She lets him put more milk in the bag. After looking at the pictures on the recipe chart, the other children start putting the smaller bag, which has milk, sugar, and vanilla, into the bigger plastic bag, which has ice and salt in it. Each pair of children work together to seal the larger plastic bag. Kate watches them as they work together in pairs.

When everyone gets the bags sealed, Kate explains, "We have to shake the bags." Some children want to pound the bag on the table. Kate reminds them to stand back from the table and shake the bag. Each child, in a pair, takes turns shaking the bag. Kate does not have to tell them to take turns. The children decide when it is each one's turn. The children focus on what they are doing.

Some of the bags start leaking melted ice. Kate quickly helps the children place both their plastic bags in another large plastic bag. Kate tells
them, "Keep shaking." The children keep shaking. They keep looking at their bags. After about five minutes, Lawrence explains, "Mine is ice cream!!!" Kate checks, "Yes, you made ice cream!" All the children start looking more intently at their bags as they shake. They continue to take turns shaking the bag. "We have ice cream," one pair exclaims. Very excitedly, the children talk about what they are doing and how the milk became ice cream. Kate sits back, listens to the children, and watches their expressions.

When the ice cream is ready to eat, Kate hands out bowls and spoons. Without any words from Kate, each pair shares the ice cream by dividing it up in the bowls. The children talk about the ice cream. "It is good." "It is cold." "Mine is really, really cold." "I shook and shook." "It tastes like pudding." "Mine is melting." During the conversation, Kate talks about partners helping each other.

Lawrence finishes his ice cream and announces, "My ice cream is all gone. There is no more!" He looks at the other children and tells them, "Hey, you guys, there is no more!"

As the children finish eating, they tell Kate, without any prompting from her, what interest areas they plan to go to during work time, which follows this small group activity. While the children are engaged in moving into the various interest areas, Kate cleans up the table. Dorothy, the former support worker and now the official assistant teacher, stays with the special needs child, and Kate watches the other fourteen children.
Two children paint together at the easel with red and white paints. During the painting process, the children discover red and white paint when mixed together make pink paint. In unison, they holler, "Kate, Kate, we made pink!!" Kate replies, "Yes, you did. How did you do that?" With a sense of a great discovery, one of the children eagerly explains, "We used red paint and white paint and together it made pink paint." The two children continue to experiment with the paint and carry on a lively conversation about paints and colors. Other children play in the book area, the block area, the housekeeping area, the manipulative area, and at the computer. A few children engage in solitary play, but most of the children engage in cooperative play in groups of two or three.

Kate is sitting back observing the children and taking observational notes. Occasionally a child makes a comment to Kate or asks for her assistance, but for the most part the children focus on their play without need of adult guidance or intervention. The noise level of the room is much quieter than it was in the fall, and the atmosphere of the room is one of calm productivity.

Rachel, who is now five-years-old, and Lawrence, who is almost four, play together at the computer. The two start to argue. Lawrence yells, "Kate! Kate. I need you." Kate goes over, stoops down, places a hand on each child's back. Kate says something quietly to them and then she leaves. Rachel and Lawrence talk a little and handle the problem. Kate completes her part
very quietly, gently, and without drawing undue attention to the situation. The children resolve the conflict with minimal assistance from Kate.

Anthony, who is now five-years-old, and Priscilla, who is almost four, are in the housekeeping area, but are not interacting. Priscilla is pretending to cook and Anthony is just sitting, looking very sad and forlorn. Big tears start running down Anthony's cheeks as he begins to quietly cry. Noticing Anthony's tears, Priscilla walks over to Anthony and asks, "What is the matter?" Anthony sobs increase in intensity. Priscilla begins rubbing his back and tells him, "It will be all right." Anthony tells her, "I want my mommy" and he begins to cry as if his heart is broken. Priscilla continues to rub his back as he cries. When her back rubbing does not seem to help him, Priscilla gets a doll, gives it to Anthony, and rubs his back some more. Priscilla is trying to comfort him, but she is unable to get him to stop crying. With a concerned look on her face, Priscilla runs to Kate and explains, "Kate, Anthony is crying. He wants his mommy. Can you help him?" Kate goes and sits down next to Anthony and he crawls into her lap. Kate rocks him back and forth and tries to comfort him. Priscilla stands close by watching how Kate comforts Anthony. He starts to calm down, but he is still sad.

[Anthony's mother has failed in another trial attempt to maintain custody of Anthony. She tried but had been unable to care for him so Children's Services returned him to his grandparents.]

Back in the computer area, Rachel and Lawrence are having problems with the computer, not with each other, but with the software program they
are trying to use. They talk about what they should do and they solve the problem. Rachel tries typing "r", "a", and "c," and she carefully looks at the letters displayed on the monitor. Pausing, Rachel looks through the name cards in a box next to the computer, finds her name card, and places it on the keyboard. She compares the letters on the monitor with the letters on her name card. Rachel looks for Kate and tells her, "Kate, I need you. Please." Kate tells Anthony she will be right back. When Kate arrives at the computer, she comments to Rachel, "I heard the word, please." Rachel asks Kate, "How do I get a big R?" Kate tells her, "To get a big R, hold down the shift key and then type the letter R. If you want a little r, don't hold down the shift key." Kate returns to Anthony. Rachel, with great concentration, types out her name and it appears on the screen. She gets all the letters correct. She claps and states loudly, "That is my name! Rachel!" Rachel is so proud of her accomplishment and she is happy with what she is able to do. Rachel looks at Lawrence and tells him, "It is your turn, now."

Lawrence has been waiting patiently. He announces to Rachel, "I am going to do my name." He looks toward Kate and yells, "Kate, I need you, please." Kate returns to the computer, smiles at him, and whispers, "I heard the word 'please.'" Lawrence grins and tells her, "I want to do my name." "Let's find your name card," Kate replies. Kate pauses at each card in the name card box and lets Lawrence look at it. She pays attention to Lawrence as he looks at each card. When they get to Lawrence's card, without prompting from Kate, he picks out his name card and places it on the keyboard the way
Rachel did. Kate goes back to check on Anthony. Lawrence types out a small "l," "w," and "r." He looks at it and declares, "This is hard. I can't do it." He shakes his head, but he is not upset or angry. He gets up and pushes his chair under the computer table. He walks to the manipulative area and begins playing with small blocks, which he can easily do.

The children stay busy and focused for the entire work time hour. What a difference eight months have made. Some of the changes have occurred because the children have grown developmentally and the group dynamics have changed, but a great deal of the growth has occurred because of Kate and her consistent, quiet, gentle caring, and teaching.

Epilogue

When the school year was over, Kate submitted her resignation and left Head Start. She did not have another job lined up but she felt it was time to leave. In the fall, she took a teaching position in a rural elementary school working with primary age children. Her salary nearly doubled, her benefit package increased significantly, and her workday was shorter.

Kate had moved from an educational setting that focused on developmentally appropriate practices to one that was more behavioral. Kate commented the elementary teachers really care about the kids, but they only know the behavioral approach. They are not aware of developmentally appropriate practices. The school focuses on giving kids rewards. Every teacher has a treasure chest on her desk. When a kid is well behaved or makes a good grade, the teacher will open her treasure chest and will give the kid an award from the treasure chest. I can't bring myself to use a treasure chest and give out individual awards. I
had a kid ask me, "Where is your treasure chest?" I told him I didn't have one. He looked at me and asked, "How are you going to get the kids to do what you want them to?"

Several months later, Kate told me she had solved the treasure chest dilemma. "I use music. When the class has accomplished something, we sing and we sing a lot!"

After working at the elementary school for half a year, Kate made the comment, "Teaching in the elementary school is so much easier than teaching in Head Start."
You know what I’d like to be? ... You know that song ‘If a body catch a body coming through the rye’? ... I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody’s around - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I’m standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they’re running and they don’t look where they’re going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That’s all I’d do all day. I’d just be the catcher in the rye and all.


A catcher-in-the-rye? In a chapter about a nursery school teacher? How do the two go together or do they go together? For Audrey, a nursery school teacher, the two make perfect sense. Just like Holden Caulfield, Audrey views herself as a catcher-in-the-rye, the metaphor she uses to illustrate what it means to be a teacher of young children. Audrey explains, the best metaphor that I can think of is being like the protagonist in Catcher in the Rye. He is talking about the poem by Robert Burns from which the title of the book comes from. [He] describes the song and how he imagines standing at the edge of the cliff and catching children as they come running through the rye. That is the best I can come up with. His vision is that he sends them back and they are playing in the rye again. I thought if you use that figuratively that is just a great metaphor for seeing when a child is going off track and getting them back on track and sending them off to do the business of childhood, which is play. Even literally you can use that as a metaphor for safety, sending them back from the cliff because that is what four-year-olds do.
[laugher]. They walk right to the edge and see if you are watching and kind of look over their shoulders.

Who is Audrey and how did she arrive at such a unique metaphor for her teaching? In her forties, medium height and weight, with short dark hair, Audrey brings an unusual background to her role as a teacher of young children. When she first attended college as an 18-year-old, Audrey majored in biology with emphasis on ethology, the scientific study of animal behavior. An astute observer of the world, Audrey brought a keen interest in the growth and development of non-human primates to her college studies. As part of her college education, Audrey participated in various co-op type learning experiences that centered on the study of non-human mammals. During these co-op work experiences, she struggled with ethical issues about the treatment of the animals. Realizing she would have to treat animals in ways that were incompatible with her own beliefs about how they should be treated, Audrey changed her college major to education.

After graduating with an education degree, Audrey undertook a two-year study of semi-feral cats at a large dairy farm. Focusing on the social organization of the cat colony, Audrey was particularly interested in how the young kittens were raised, cared for, fed, and weaned. Contrary to popular belief that male cats play no part in the caring of the kittens, Audrey discovered that male cats do help care for the kittens. In fact, two male cats in this particular cat-colony helped dry nurse the kittens. Audrey found the study fascinating.
When she finished the study of the cat colony, Audrey did substitute teaching in the local public school. After observing her teaching, the school hired her to be a tutor. During the next eight years, Audrey did various kinds of tutoring: home-based tutoring, intervention tutoring, and LD tutoring. During this time Audrey's daughter began attending the nursery school, where Audrey would later teach. While her daughter was attending the nursery school, Audrey volunteered in the classroom and began what she referred to as a long-term, informal apprenticeship with a master nursery school teacher. Even after her daughter had moved on to the elementary grades, Audrey continued this special nursery school apprenticeship. In effect, the nursery school children became her study group. Audrey focused her observation skills and interest in the growth and development of the young on the nursery school children.

Audrey's Current Teaching Position.

Ten years ago, the nursery school teacher retired and Audrey was hired to be the new nursery school teacher. The Shiloh School nursery program admits 12 children, ages 3 1/2 to 5 years of age. The children attend five mornings a week from 8:30 to 11:30. Audrey is the only adult with the nursery school group.

The nursery school is located in Shiloh School, a private school that calls itself one of the oldest alternative schools in the Midwest. When Audrey was an undergraduate, the small liberal arts college she was attending owned the Shiloh School. A laboratory school for the education majors, the teachers
in the school were also on the faculty of the college. In fact, Audrey did her student teaching at Shiloh School.

After supporting the Shiloh School for more than 50 years, the college, like so many other colleges across the country in the 1970s, wanted to close its laboratory school. The local community, Shiloh alumni, and Shiloh parents convinced the college to allow a group of parents to purchase the school. In 1979, Shiloh school became a parent-owned and supported educational facility with no financial connections to the college. For the last 20 years, Shiloh has run like a parent co-op with support from the local community. The tuition is one of the lowest in the state for a private school. In order to keep the tuition low, all parents volunteer a specific number of hours each year. The parents are also involved in a variety of fund raising activities. A scholarship fund is maintained and is available to parents who cannot afford the tuition.

Shiloh school is run on democratic principles and is governed by a board of directors composed of parents and all the teachers. Together the board shapes the direction and policies of the school. Teachers are given a great deal of autonomy in terms of curriculum and others aspects of their teaching. All in the school are equal and no principal or director is needed to oversee the school, the children, or the teachers. An office manager takes care of the necessary paperwork and assists the teachers, parents, and board as needed.
Shiloh School offers a child-centered, open classroom learning environment. In its brochure, Shiloh school describes its philosophy and approach to education as

believing that children learn and grow by pursuing their innate curiosity. Through example and direct experience the children learn self-discipline, value setting and the relationship between choice and consequence. Children are empowered to take responsibility for themselves as learners and community members. Each child is respected for his or her own learning style and abilities, and is encouraged to develop those unique gifts to the fullest.

Further, the brochure explains that children in the nursery school learn through play and exploration with the materials, the equipment, the nursery school group, and older children in the other classrooms in the school.

The school has approximately 80 students in four classrooms: the nursery, the kindergarten, the younger group (1st to 3rd grades), and the older group (4th to 6th grades). The nursery school is the first point of contact most of the children have with Shiloh School and many stay through the sixth grade. A number of the children who attend the school are children and grandchildren of Shiloh alumni. When children finish the sixth grade, most enter the local public school. Approximately 15% of the local public high school students have attended Shiloh School. During the last five years, three out of the five valedictorians and two out of the five salutatorians of the local public high school were former Shiloh School students.

**Neighborhood**

Shiloh School is located in a small town with less than 5,000 inhabitants. The average median income per household is $30,000. The local
public school district is small with an enrollment of 650 students. Approximately six percent of the public school students are classified as economically disadvantaged. One of the town's major employers is the liberal arts college, which has greatly influenced the character and make-up of the town.

Walking through the downtown area, one might think she was in a northern California town with a variety of up-scale eating places, quaint shops, artists' galleries, and numerous public benches to sit and watch the people go by. Being a friendly town, the residents value contact with each other. The houses in the town vary from small, older homes to newer, upscale homes. Most houses are different and the town prides itself in avoiding cookie-cutter, look-alike houses. One public housing project does exist in town and most of the children who are classified as economically disadvantaged come from this subsidized housing area.

Most residents are nature lovers and frequently use the nature preserve that borders the town. In addition, there are several town parks, one of which is for toddlers, a town sponsored public swimming pool, several tennis courts, and a skate-boarding park. The town maintains bike paths along major streets to and from the high school. Nearby is a county supported bike trail. Trees are everywhere and the town has a tree volunteer committee that takes care of downtown trees and plants new trees throughout the community.

Like so many college towns, the arts flourish in this small community. The college, the schools, the community, and the churches hold various
musical events throughout the year. Visual artwork is routinely seen in the
town hall, in local restaurants, in the local bank, and in the stores. The
community actively supports theater. Between the college theater
department, the community theater group, the middle school and high school
drama clubs, and the Shiloh School's drama presentations, town residents can
find some type of theater presentation to attend every few weeks. Recently
the local public elementary school won a national award for excellence in art
education.

**Shiloh School Building and Grounds**

Driving along a small road with a nature preserve on one side and
large open fields and patches of woods on the other, I feel as if I am in the
country. Shiloh School is invisible from the road and unless one knows the
school is there, it is very easy to miss the long driveway that goes back to the
school building. Turning off the road, it is necessary to drive along 300 yards
of a graveled road, dodging the potholes, until reaching a patch of trees.
Nestled amongst the trees is a small school building typical of the hundreds,
probably thousands, of schools built in the 1950s and 1960s: a one-story
cinderblock building with walls on the two long sides that are mostly
windows. Alone amongst the trees and at least a quarter of a mile from other
habitable buildings, Shiloh School is surrounded by wide-open spaces.

The playground circles three sides of the building. The playgrounds
beckon children to run, play, and pretend. On the east playground, paved
bike paths encourage the children to ride the tricycles or skate. On the west
playground, several parent-made two-story structures encourage children to climb and create make-believe or fantasy play. A three-foot high retaining wall runs along the west side of the playground and children use it as a walkway from one end of the building to the other end. The retaining wall walkway is an inviting and challenging opportunity for the children to practice their balancing skills. A huge sandbox with multiple toys encourages children to dig and build. Tire swings, regular swings, teeter-totters dot the playground which runs the length of the building. Low storage sheds are built along the building wall next to the nursery room and the children freely select outdoor toys and equipment to use on the playground from the items stored there.

Entering the building for the first time is an experience that boggles the imagination, especially if one is expecting to see a narrow hallway, neat, sterile, and free of clutter. Opening the door into the building, I encounter an environment that belongs to children, a place to explore, discover, and learn. Along one side of the hallway are floor to ceiling windows and on the other the entrances into four classrooms. It is difficult to see where the hallway ends and classrooms begin. Couches, child-sized tables and chairs, and various kinds of books and toys occupy most of the usable hallway space. Small clusters of older children are gathered in various areas of the hallway. Walking down the hall, I am very aware the children are studiously occupied in various learning situations. In the classrooms are other children and the teachers. In addition to the four classrooms, a separate room, which is used
for both art and science, is full of material that would be the envy of any artist or science teacher.

**Audrey's Classroom**

The nursery room is located in the last room at the end of the hall. One of the first things I notice about the room is the wall of windows directly across from the classroom entrance. Starting about two-feet from the floor and going nearly to the ceiling and extending almost the entire length of the wall, the windows allow the outside playground area to feel like an extension of the classroom. From the windows one can see the section of the playground with the retaining wall and the green fields beyond the school grounds. The nursery classroom seems large, much larger than what one normally encounters in an elementary school.

Immediately, upon entering the room, I encounter a feeling of warmth, energy, and a lived-in-space that is well used, comfortable, and homey. A quick scan around the room, the various interest areas typically found in preschools are easily identified: cubbies, a book corner, a block area, small manipulative toys, accessible art supplies and easels, a music area, a water table, housekeeping/dramatic play, and tables for activities. Everything in the room, except for several tall shelves and a cupboard, is child-sized. All the wooden shelves and the water table have been painted either blue or yellow. The easels are covered with paint, years of paint drops built up like a 3-D mosaic. Each interest area of the room is furnished with well-used, older toys and equipment. The tables and chairs are old and mismatched. It is obvious
the furniture, toys, and equipment are not new and that the nursery school has a very limited budget for new equipment. In fact much of the furniture, toys, and equipment have been around for decades, but in no way does the age and wear of the classroom materials take away from the feeling that this is a place that encourages exploration, discovery, play, and learning.

Sitting in the middle of the room is a large, child-sized two-story structure, which is called the loft. On the first floor of the loft is a puppet stage and on the second floor is a quiet, comfortable, carpeted area for children to sit, talk, play, and observe what is happening from a perspective of height. One wall of the loft is a giant chalkboard where the children can write and draw. The children climb from the first floor to the second floor of the loft by a ladder built into one wall of the loft. The loft, like most of the wood furniture in the room, has been painted, and has been painted more than once.

Next to the loft, the most prominent area in the room is the block area, a very large area devoted to wooden blocks, both unit blocks and hollow block. The unit blocks are stacked in a shelve perpendicular to the window. The large hollow blocks are stacked directly under the window. Extending almost 1/2 the length of the window and at least three feet high, the stack of hollow blocks dominate the block area. A very large, braided oval rug covers the tiled floor next to the stack and shelves of wooden blocks. Providing a medium that helps to lowered the noise, the carpet acts as soft base for the block play. Usually unit and hollow blocks are blonde in color, but not these blocks. The blocks at Shiloh are most unusual in that they have turned a rich,
brown patina from being played with by hundreds of children over the
decades. Obviously, the blocks are a main part of the children's play and have
been for many generations of Shiloh nursery schoolers.

Four doors are strategically spaced around the room. Of course, there
is the door from the hallway and another door providing direct access to the
west playground. A third door opens into the kindergarten room, which is
adjacent to the nursery room. The fourth door opens into a multiple-purpose
area, containing a large sink, refrigerator, storage cabinets, and also providing
access to the restroom the nursery school children use.

Audrey's nursery classroom belongs to the children and it beckons and
invites the children to play and learn.

The Children

Twelve children are enrolled in the nursery, the maximum number
Shiloh School accepts. The group consists of nine boys and three girls,
ranging in age from a child who is not yet three-and-a-half to older fours.
Two of the children are foreign born and for one of these, English is a second
language and his English is very limited. All the children live with two
parents and many have grandparents who live nearby. The parents’
occupations range from business, science, engineering, education, law
enforcement, agriculture, to stay-at-home parent. Five of the 12 children were
in the nursery school last year.

Already developing a sense of independence and personal style, the
children wear a variety of clothes to school. It is obvious that many of the
children select the clothes they wear as well as groom and dress themselves for school. Boots are popular with the boys and girls. Hiking boots and cowboy boots are favorite footwear. For the most part, children wear clothes that allow them to run, play, climb, and get dirty. Shorts, jeans, t-shirts, and flannel shirts are popular with most of the boys. The three girls wear whatever seems to take their fancy for any particular day. The children are always clean, but because they select their clothes and get themselves ready for school, I never know what to expect in terms of clothes combinations they would wear or how they would comb or fix their hair. Obviously, parents allow children a great deal autonomy in terms of dressing themselves for school.

Audrey explains that each child is an individual and that each year the groups are different based on the children in the group. This year's group of children are confident, self-assured, verbal, and very social. Audrey refers to this group as her "gift group," because they are interesting to observe, and are creative and self-directed in their play, which to Audrey, is the business of childhood. Audrey explains, "They are a very imaginative, creative group. Their play is often elaborate." For Audrey, this group of children are just a special gift teachers have every once in a while.

What is it like in Audrey's classroom with this gift group? In the next section I will provide an example of a day early in the school year.
A Day in Audrey's Classroom Early in the School Year

"Welcome. Welcome to the nursery schoolers' room," Audrey greets me as I arrive to begin my study. "I am really intrigued with your study topic," Audrey continues, "To understand the internal dialogue that goes on as you are there in the thick of things is the foundation of teaching."

It is a little after 8:00 in the morning and Audrey has just arrived, carrying a bag of groceries for today's snack. With efficiency of movement, Audrey begins the preliminary preparation for snack, which will be served later in the morning.

Next to the CD player is a stack of CDs representing a very eclectic variety of music: classical, jazz, blues, folk, international music, and children's music. Audrey selects a CD of Renaissance type music and puts it in the CD player. Soft, early European dance music filters through the room. Audrey tells me, "The children like this type of music and they like to dance to it. It just seems to invite them to move with the music. In fact the children love all kinds of music."

Shortly before 8:30 the first children and parents arrive. Audrey positions herself in the vicinity of the door and cubbies. With a smile and a soft, friendly, pleasant voice, Audrey greets each child and parent, making some personal comment to each. Most parents stand back and let the children put their things in the cubbies, while talking to Audrey. Before the children leave the cubbie area, they hug their mother or father or grandparent and proceed into the room. The children confidently move into the room and
greet the other children. Being very social and having already established a bond with their classmates, the children take time to talk to many of the other children before finding something to do or play. At a slow, easy pace, the children get around to selecting an area or friends to play with. For some children, the playground beckons. The door to the west playground is open and some children go outside and play in an area that is visible from the open classroom door and the classroom wall of windows.

Close to 9:00 a father and his son, Jordan, arrive. Jordan, an older three year old with dark hair, runs to Audrey, who drops quickly to her knees. Jordan gives her a big hug and Audrey hugs him back. Audrey asks him, "How is your mom?" Jordan replies, "She is better." Two other children come quickly over and start talking to Jordan. "Glad you are back," Damon, the oldest boy in the class and an aspiring actor, tells him. Leah, the youngest girl in the class, adds, "We missed you." While the children are talking to Jordan, Audrey talks with the father and tells him, "I am glad everything is okay. We have missed Jordan and we are happy he is back."

The separation from parent and transition to classroom is smooth, gentle, low-key, affectionate, and easy for all the children. Obviously, the children feel very much at home in their nursery classroom. They act as if the room is theirs and are comfortable with the environment. During the next hour, the children involve themselves in self-selected activities, mostly with other children. Audrey moves about the room, doing what early childhood teachers do - multi-tasking. She keeps an eye on the children, responds to
questions and comments from the children, intervenes if necessary, and does other things like disinfecting the tables, pouring fresh glue into bowls, laying out more paint brushes, and replenishing the paint and paper.

All but two of the children are playing in groups of two and three. Isabella, a young four, is not an early morning person and is a slow to acclimate herself to the activity level of the other children. Dressing in a style that would impress Madonna, Isabella’s outfit for the day includes a long sleeve, maroon velvet dress that comes to her knees. Underneath the dress she is wearing long, flannel pajama bottoms decorated with 101 Dalmatian puppies. A pair of sparkling gold shoes sets off her lacy, frilly socks. In her long brown hair, which she has obviously groomed, are several combs strategically placed for maximum benefit. Today’s jewelry is limited to only a few necklaces draped around her neck. Already, Isabella knows how to manage her need for a slow start before joining the activity level of the rest of her classmates. Today she gets a blanket and goes to the book area. After laying the blanket on the child-size couch, she takes off her shoes. Next she selects a book, sits on the couch, and carefully arranges the blanket over herself. Quietly she looks at the book and nods her head to the music playing in the background. Occasionally she observes what is going on in other areas of the room, but for the most part she is concentrating on her book and the music.

Vince, the youngest child in the class, plays by himself with a puzzle. Although his walk, body posture, and large motor skills are on target for a
young three, his fine motor skills are well advanced and belie his chronological age. He is particularly fascinated with puzzles, and with great dexterity for a three-year old can work almost any puzzle in the room. As he bends over the puzzle and contemplates the many puzzle pieces, his thick, dark, Dutch-boy style hair falls around his face, and every few minutes he pushes the hair away from his face. With intense focus and careful, deliberate precision, he works the puzzle he had selected.

Nick, the boy who speaks very little English, and Jacob, who loves to talk, are in the top of the loft watching what is going on in the rest of the room. Jacob leans through the railings of the loft and retrieves four red, rhythm sticks from the top of the piano. He hands two to Nick and keeps two for himself. Talking all the while to Nick as if he can understand, Jacob explains they are going to play the drum. He positions the drum between the two of them and begins hitting the drum in time to the music that is playing in the background. Soon Nick follows his Jacob’s actions. Drum music now accompanies the Renaissance dance music.

Three other children are clustered in front of the shelves that house myriad plastic toy animals: dinosaurs, farm animals, zoo animals, and reptiles. As they select animals to play with, the two boys and one girl talk about the animals and how they can play together.

Two separate groups are on the oval rug and both groups are building with blocks. A mild disagreement occurs in the block area when one of the groups wants to use more of the oval rug for their building. Noticing the
disagreement, Audrey moves to the block building enterprise and tells the two groups, "There is room for all of you to work. All of the oval rug can be used for building." The two boys, Nolan and Lynton, who tend to be bosom buddies and often dress alike in jeans or camouflage outfits, want more space. Lynton informs Audrey, "We need all the space." Anticipating that Audrey might say something about working together, Nolan, empathetically tells her, "We don't need any help with our building." Audrey looks at the two boys and then at the group of three, which include Damon, Leah, and Jordan, and asks, "What do you think you can do?"

A discussion ensues among the five children. Moving herself out of the circle of the interaction, Audrey steps back a few feet and just listens as the five negotiate what to do. After several minutes of discussion, the five children decide to regroup. Nolan, Lynton, and Leah will build a large house and use all the oval rug. Damon and Jordan will go outside, but will come back to check the house out when it is all built. The five children look for Audrey who is several feet away. "Audrey, we have a plan," the children tell her. Stepping back into the circle of communication, Audrey asks, "What is your plan?" Nolan speaks up, "Lynton, Leah, and me will build a house, and Damon and Jordan will come back and check it out when it is finished." Audrey nods her head and replies, "That sounds like a good plan. Are you all okay with this?" Damon looks at Audrey, and tells her, "Jordan and I plan to go out to the playground." Audrey replies, "Thank you for sharing your plans with me, and . . ." Before Audrey can say more, Jordan pipes up, "And we will
stay on the playground outside the nursery window so you can see us.”
Audrey smiles at the group and tells them, "Okay, it seems like you have everything planned out."

Nolan, Lynton, and Leah pull all the large hollow blocks onto the oval rug and proceed to build a house that covers the entire oval rug. They stack the blocks on top of each other until the structure is chest high. They build four walls, but no doors for gaining entrance into their building. The three start talking about how to put the roof on their house. Lynton picks up a block and tries to position it on top of the structure. Nolan looks at it and says, "I don't think that will work." The three builders begin a discussion on how to build a roof. Audrey, who is nearby, hears the discussion and walks over and comments, "I think Nolan has the idea. We want the roof to be safe. How can you make the roof and house safe?" As the builders start talking, Audrey moves away so the children can take charge of the problem and the solution.

Looking over the block supplies, Leah remarks, "I have an idea. Let's use the planks." She looks for the long wooden planks stacked next to the window. The three children pick up one plank and attempt to place it on their structure, but their building is too wide for the plank. Nolan looks at the structure and tells Leah and Jordan, "We have to move the blocks in closer to each other so the plank can rest on them." The three start scooting one wall of block and then try the plank again. They keep pushing the walls in until the planks will sit safely on the walls of their house. After all the roof is on, they
decide to get in the house, but there are no doors on the house. Nolan and Jordan move the corner of one wall and enter the building, repositioning the walls after they enter. Leah wants in, but doesn't want to move the walls. Audrey, who has been in another area of the room but has kept tabs on what was happening with the builders, moves over to Leah. "How do you think you can get in?" Audrey asks Leah. "Well, we need doors, but we didn't build any doors. I think there is a crack over there I can crawl through," Leah answers Audrey as she points to a place where the blocks don't quite meet. Audrey watches as Leah crawls through a very small space. The three children play inside their house for an extended period of time.

All 12 children are occupied and involved in self-selected activities. The children move freely around the room. Only Damon and Jordan are on the playground. Audrey positions herself near the playground door, which is right next to the door that goes into the kindergarten room. The door to the kindergarten room is open and some of the kindergarten children wander over to visit the nursery schoolers and some of the nursery schoolers go visit the kindergarten room. A few of the nursery schoolers decide to go out into the hall to play. Before going to the hall play area, they skip over to Audrey and tell her, "We plan to play with the toys in the hall." Audrey smiles at them, and comments, "Thanks for telling me your plans." From her strategic location at the playground door, Audrey watches the children inside the classroom, in the hallway, and on the playground.
The 12 nursery school children are independent, responsible, and are confident in their choices. Plans are a big part of their mode of operation, due to Audrey’s emphasis on plans. During the morning, I hear Audrey ask children questions like, "What is your plan? or what have you planned?" Audrey responds to the children’s comments about their plans with, "That sounds like a good plan or that is an interesting plan or thank you for sharing your plans with me."

Damon and Jordan come in from the playground, go to the oval rug, and start to inspect the house. Nolan, Lynton, and Leah try to get out of the house but there are no doors and the walls start to wobble when they try to move them. Audrey notices the wobbling walls, and comments, "I wonder? When people want to get out, do you think you might move just a few blocks so you might have a door?" The three inside the structure push on some of the blocks and the house starts to really shake. Audrey, "Maybe we need to find another way to get in and out? How might you fix a door?" Nolan, Lynton, and Leah, who are inside the structure, and Damon and Jordan, on the outside of the structure, attempt to move a few blocks. The three inside the structure climb out, but the walls are still wobbling and a few blocks start to fall. Audrey to the builders, "What might you do so the blocks don’t fall down when people go in and out?" The five builders begin a discussion on how to fix the problem. The children try something, but the walls are still wobbling and a few more blocks fall. Audrey, who watches but does not take over the building project, asks the children, "What other way might you make a door
way? How might you make your building more stable?" After much
discussion amongst themselves, the five builders remove the roof planks,
rebuild one wall with a doorway, and reposition the roof planks. All five go
into their building, sit down, and talk.

At 9:30, Audrey announces, "Nursery schoolers, it is time to go outside.
It is cold this morning. You will need your coats." The children stop what
they are doing, leave the toys, and start preparing to go outside. Audrey
positions herself at the playground door as the children start to go outside.
Jordan chants, "Cold and coats. Cold and coats. Cold and coats." As he gets
next to Audrey, he comments, "Cold and coats. What do they start with?"
Audrey repeats, "Cold and coats," as she draws out the c sound. "They start
with the letter c," Audrey replies, and tells him the sound that c makes.
Jordan runs out the door to the playground singing, "C, C, C, C."

On her way out the door Leah asks Audrey, "We have long sleeves.
Why do we need coats?" Audrey replies, "It is cold outside right now." Leah
gets her coat. Isabella, who has spend most of the last hour in the book area,
puts a bright colored jacket over today's unique outfit and meanders out on to
the playground. Damon saunters over to Audrey and tells her, "I don't need a
coat." Audrey replies, "It is still cold outside. I think you will need a coat."
Damon informs her, "No, I won't." Audrey in a very matter of fact way
responds, "We have the thermometer to tell us the temperature. It is still cold
outside even though the sun is shining." Damon looks at Audrey and
replies, "Well, if the thermometer says it is cold, then it is cold." Putting on his jacket, Damon runs out on the playground.

Waiting until everyone is out on the playground, Audrey closes the door behind her. Knowing they can play anywhere on the west playground, the nursery schoolers run the length of the building, stopping at favorite play spots. A few children climb up on the retaining wall and walk along its entire length using their arms for balance. Two children are at the tire swing, which is suspended by three chains into the side of the tire. The children are waiting to take their turn on this very special swing that not only swings back and forth, but also can be spun around and around. Two other children are on the teeter-totter. Three children climb into the second story of one of the wooden playhouses, sit down, and begin talking. A few more are playing in the giant sandbox. Nick, the boy who speaks very limited English, goes to the storage shed and digs through some toys until he finds a trowel. With a wide grin on his face, he exits the storage shed and goes to the sandbox proudly displaying the trowel. Noticing his actions, Audrey comments to him, "Nick, I see you have a plan. You needed a trowel so you could dig in the sand. You went and looked for the trowel." Watching her intently as she is talking, Nick smiles at Audrey and shakes his head yes.

For the next 30 minutes the children play at self-selected activities. Running, climbing, swinging, pretending, and talking are favorite activities. Groups mingle, and sometimes regroup into different configurations as the children change focus or direction in their play. Carefully observing the
children and their play, Audrey walks the playground answering questions or making comments to children when they speak to her. Audrey is keenly aware of the children's socialization, friendships, and play, and is very careful not to disrupt or disturb what they children are doing. At the same time, she is there to help keep the children safe and on track, if needed.

Only one problem occurs on the playground. Lynton and Nolan, who had played so cooperatively together when building with the blocks inside the classroom, encounter a problem on the playground. Nolan, angrily, accuses Lynton of taking his Pong, a toy he had brought from home. With great indignation, Lynton shouts, "I did not take your Pong. This is mine." "No, it is MINE!" Nolan shouts back. Lynton, who is very frustrated, attempts to kick Nolan. Audrey quickly intervenes and holds on to Lynton. In a quiet, calm, patient tone of voice, Audrey tells them, "We need to talk about this Pong and who it belongs to." Both boys insist the Pong in question is theirs.

After reaching an impasse, Audrey tells the boys, "I think we need to go inside and talk about this." The three went inside. Audrey to the boys, "We have a problem. Both of you believe this is your Pong. How do you think we can solve this problem?" Following Audrey's unruffled, sensible lead, the boys start to calm down and think about this dilemma. After looking at each other and thinking for a few minutes, Lynton looks at Nolan and says, "We have to figure out whose Pong this really is." Audrey nods her head yes and looks at Nolan. "Well," Nolan hesitantly, "I guess I could look in my cubbie to see if my Pongs are still there." Audrey, "That is a good idea. Why
don't you go look?" Nolan walks to his cubbie and goes through his box of Pongs. Very sheepishly, he looks over to where Audrey and Lynton are standing, and tells them, "My Pongs are all in my box." Lynton to Audrey, "I told you this Pong is mine," as he holds the Pong up for her to see. Audrey replies, "Yes, you did say it was yours and it is yours." Nolan walks over to Audrey and shows her his Pong that is the twin of Lynton's. Audrey to both boys, "It looks like you both brought the exact, same Pong to school today." The boys nod their heads yes.

Gently, Audrey asks the boys, "What could you do if something like this happens again?" Lynton, "Well, we need to listen to each other." "Yes," Audrey replies. "And," Nolan continues, "you need to look in your box and count your Pongs." Crisis solved. The boys and Audrey return to the playground. Continuing her observation of the children, Audrey moves quietly around the playground.

At 10:00, Audrey announces it is time to go inside. Laughing and talking, the children enter the classroom and hang-up their coats. The children start chanting, "Clean-up time, clean-up time." In a community effort, the children start picking up the toys and putting them away. The five who had been using the blocks and start to dissemble their house. Several other children come to help. Vince, not only the youngest in the class but also the smallest, tries to pick up a large hollow block and move it to the stack next to the window. The hollow block is too large for him to manage by himself and he valiantly struggles to lift the block up to the top of the stack, but he
can't. Seeing Vince struggle with the block, Damon explains, "Here, let me hold this end and you hold that end. We can lift it together." They succeed in picking up the block up. Vince grins at Damon and goes to get another block. Soon most of the toys are picked up.

Audrey takes a quick scan around the room and sees the housekeeping area still has a number of toys scattered around that need to be put away. Audrey, to the three boys who are cleaning up the housekeeping area, "If we each pick up three things, I think we will have all the toys picked up." The boys each pick up three toys, but there is still more left. Looking around, Audrey tells the boys, "I guessed wrong. We need to pick up more than three toys apiece." Nathan looks around and tells the others, "I think we need to pick up two more then we will be done." The boys quickly pick up two more toys each. The area is now picked up.

Generally from 10:15 to 10:45, the children select what Audrey calls a quiet toy and play on the oval rug area. During this time, Audrey helps two children prepare snack while the other ten children play. Since Audrey is the only adult for the 12 children, she has to structure the children's choices, so she can juggle helping two children prepare snack while, at the same time, keeping an eye on the other ten children. After cleanup, the children start to select a quiet toy.

Audrey announces, "Nursery schoolers, we are going to do something different right now. Would you please come to the oval rug so I can explain what we are going to do?" The children quickly cluster around Audrey, who
explains, "Nursery schoolers, the kindergartners have invited us to come and
watch their play. We will be their audience." Damon, who is an aspiring
actor, yells, "Goody!" Audrey smiles at him and proceeds to ask the children,
"What do you do at a play?" Different children answer, "Be quiet. Listen."
With a very serious tone, Damon explains, "We need to clap at the end of the
play." Nolan pipes up, "No! You don't have to clap if you don't like it."
Trying hard not to laugh, Audrey looks at Nolan and carefully replies, "No,
you don't have to clap. But, you know, most people do clap." Very seriously,
Nolan explains, "But if it is not any good, you aren't suppose to clap." Audrey
tells him, "That is your choice. But people can clap to recognize the effort of
the actors and the hard work it took to put on the play." Damon chimes in,
"Putting on a play is hard work." Still not convinced, Nolan announces, "I am
not going to clap if I don't like it." Audrey assures him, "You don't have to
clap if you don't want to. That is your choice."

While Audrey and the children are talking, a kindergartner comes into
the room and stands quietly at the edge of the circle of children clustered
around Audrey. When the discussion ends, the kindergartner announces,
"We are ready to put on our play." The nursery schoolers stand up and
quietly walk into the kindergarten room. The kindergartners have two rows
of small chairs lined up for their audience. The nursery schoolers file down
the rows and take a seat, sitting on the edge of the chairs, waiting anxiously
and very quietly for the play to begin. The children are so quiet you can hear
a pin drop. Being an audience is serious business for this group of three and four year olds.

Katie, the kindergarten teacher, welcomes the nursery schoolers to the play. The lights are turned off and back on. Katie begins narrating the play the kindergartners had written, "Once upon a time in a castle..." As she narrates the play, the kindergartners act out their parts. The play does have a beginning, a middle, and an end and reflects both the kindergartners interests and story telling ability. When the play comes to an end, Katie announces, "The end!" All the nursery schoolers, including Nolan, start clapping. All the actors in the play line up for a bow. With a little prompting from Katie, each actor tells what part he or she played. The nursery schoolers clap for each actor. Katie informs the nursery schoolers that there were other people who helped with the play. She asks the stage helpers, other kindergartners who did not have an acting part, to come out for a bow. Katie asks each to tell how they helped in the play. The nursery schoolers clap for each one. All the kindergartners line up, holding hands, and take a big bow. The nursery schoolers clap louder and harder. Katie and the kindergartners thank the nursery schoolers for being their audience. Audrey replies, "Thank you for inviting us." The nursery schoolers start saying, "Thank you, thank you," as they go back to their room.

Back in their room, the nursery schoolers select quiet toys, such as books, puzzles, plastic animals, legos, and take their choices to the oval rug. Clustering in a large, semi-circle, facing each other, the ten children begin to
talk about the play as they work with their selected toys. In just a few minutes the children are in groups of two and three, talking and playing. Victoria and Vince are the two snack helpers for the day, and they go to the large table, where snack will be served.

Snack time is a major event and production for the nursery schoolers. The food served at snack usually follows the theme of the day or week. Early in the school year, Audrey focuses on color. Audrey is quick to explain, "I usually do colors first because I am trying to provide tools the children can use to observe and describe their world." While keeping an eye on the children on the oval rug, Audrey spends time with the snack helpers offering indirect help and if needed, more direct assistance. Under Audrey's gentle guidance, Victoria and Vince begin by cleaning the table with sponges and a bucket of water. Vince to Audrey, "What are we having for snack today?" Audrey answers with, "What is the color of the day?" Victoria and Vince, together, announce, "Gold." Audrey, replies, "Yes, so today, we are going to have foods that look like they are gold in color." After the two finish cleaning the table, Audrey asks, "What is next?" Victoria answers, "We need cups, plates, and napkins," and she goes to the cupboard with Audrey who hands the children a box of cups, packages of gold napkins, and plates.

One to one correspondence and counting are easy for Victoria. She pulls a stack of cups out of the box, and with them still stacked quickly counts off 12 cups, because she knows there are 12 children. She proceeds to the table and, with ease and speed, puts one cup at each chair. Vince, on the other
hand, does not have the one-to-one correspondence down or an understanding of how napkins are folded. He looks at the gold napkins and tries to count, but he is counting the sides where he can see all fours pieces of one napkin. Noticing his struggle, Audrey suggests, "Why don't you take the stack of napkins to the table. Put one napkin right next to each cup." He walks to the table with a stack of napkins, but when he picks a napkin from the stack it unfolds. With a perplexed expression on his face, he looks at the unfolded napkin. Audrey watches but doesn't say anything. Vince puts the entire stack of napkin on the table while holding on to the unfolded napkin. He looks carefully at the unfolded napkin, probably seeing a different kind of puzzle, and manages to fold it back. Putting the refolded napkin on the stack, he turns the stack around and notices the napkin sides look different depending on which side he is looking at. As if a light clicks on in his understanding, he picks one napkin up at the point where it is folded and puts that one napkin by a cup. Very carefully, he picks up another napkin and places it by another cup. In a slow and time-consuming process, he meticulously continues until there is a napkin at each cup. When he finishes, he takes a deep breath as if he had been running a long race. "Audrey, Audrey," Vince exclaims, "I put one napkin by each cup." "Yes, you did," Audrey replies with a smile. She asks, "Would you like to put one plate by each napkin?" Vince looks at her and speaks with confidence, "I can do that," as he picks up the stack of plates and takes them to the table where he meticulously puts a plate by each napkin.
Victoria has been pouring golden grape juice into smaller pitchers, while Audrey slices golden pears. The other gold foods for today's snack are golden raisins and Ritz crackers. Victoria and Vince place two crackers, two pear slices, and some golden raisins on each plate. When everything is ready, Audrey asks, "Victoria and Vince, will you tell the nursery schoolers snack is ready?" Together, the two children go to the oval rug. Vince looks at Victoria and she tells him, "We will count to three and then, together, say snack time." Victoria begins and Vince follows her lead, "1, 2, 3. Snack time!" The children on the oval rug yell, "Yeah!" The children jump up, quickly put their toys away, go to the restroom located in the storage room, and wash their hands.

Talking and laughing, the children quickly come to the snack table and sit down. The food is on the table and the children are eager to eat. Audrey reminds them, "We wait until everyone is here before we start to eat." In just a few minutes everyone is at the table. Nolan announces, "We are all here. Can we eat?" Audrey nods her head yes. The children begin pouring their own juice, eating raisins, pears, and Ritz crackers. Vince announces, "It is gold day. All the food is gold." A discussion ensues about the color gold, the food they are eating, and other things that are gold. Isabella tells the group, "I have on gold shoes," as she raises her foot up so others can see her gold shoes.

Jordan asks Audrey, "What letter does gold begin with?" Audrey tells him the name of the letter and the sound it makes. Having gained another nugget of information about words, letters, and their sounds, Jordan nods his head as if to say okay.
Damon asks, "What color will we have tomorrow?" Audrey replies, "Silver." "Silver!" explains Damon. "Can you find food that is silver?" The children start speculating on what foods might be silver. Damon tells the group, "I can bring a silver crown to school tomorrow." Other children talk about what they can bring that is silver in color.

When the children have finished the food on their plates, Audrey places baskets with extra food on the table. The children talk about having seconds. Nathan asks Audrey, "How many crackers can we take from the basket?" Audrey replies, "Three, we need to make sure everybody can have seconds if they want to."

Snack time is both a social time and learning time for the children. Through Audrey's indirect teaching and questioning approach and her facilitation of the children's conversations, snack time offers children the opportunity to learn counting, one-to-one correspondence, pouring juice, following suggestions, carrying on conversations, talking about what has happened, talking about tomorrow and future plans, asking someone's opinion, and considering others.

While the children eat, and they eat a lot, they talk, talk, and talk. When most of the children finish eating and things start to wind down, the children take a look around the table. At Audrey's signal, the children who are finished eating, stand up, and throw away the cups, napkins, and plates. A few children are still eating and talking and they remain at the table until
they are ready to get up. Audrey tells them, "When you are finished, come on over to the oval rug."

As the children leave the snack table, they go to the book area, select a book, move to the oval rug, congregate in groups of two and three, talk, and look at their books. Waiting patiently for Audrey, the children socialize and share books. Smiling, Isabella climbs on the adult size wooden rocker, sits down, and announces "I am the teacher." Coming in to the area, Audrey smiles at Isabella and comments, "You are being the teacher today?" Isabella replies as she gets up from the rocker, "Only until you are ready for your chair." Audrey sits down in the vacant chair and very quietly, almost in a whisper, tell the children, "Can you close your book up." Nolan makes a finger gun and points it at Lynton. Seeing Nolan actions, Audrey asks, "Where do you play finger gun?" Nolan quickly replies, "Outside." Audrey nods her head yes and continues, "Yes, if the other children say it is okay. Everyone has to be comfortable with that." While Audrey and Nolan were talking, Jacob takes his book and moves from the oval rug area to the round table near the loft. If the children don't want to participate in circle time, they can move out of the circle. On this day Jacob prefers to look at his book.

The other children are listening. Audrey asks the children, "What would you like to sing?" The children shout "Que De La So!" With great robust joy the children sing a song I have never heard before. Later I find out it is just a song of nonsense words. After singing it one time, Audrey asks the nursery schoolers, "Sing it softer." Complying, the children sing the song
again rather loudly, but not as loud as before. "Nursery schoolers, let's sing the song very, very softly," Audrey asks softly. Very quietly the children sing the song a third time. Speaking almost in a whisper, Audrey tells the children, "Let's do something a little different. See if you can sing the song in your head without making a sound." Intently looking at Audrey, the children follow her lead. Without making a sound, Audrey moves her head to the music she is silently singing. Following Audrey's actions, the children move their bodies to the silent music. From the children's expressions, it is evident they are really trying to figure out how to sing only in their heads. At the conclusion of the silent song, several children excitedly announce, "I did it! I did it! I sang the whole song in my head!" One child announces, "I only got half way through and then I lost it. It is hard to sing in your head!"

After singing, Audrey reads a book to the children. Of all the things they have done during the morning, the sitting still and listening to a book seems to require the most effort on the children's part. The sun is shining outside and the children keep looking out the window. Very aware that the children are having difficulty sitting and listening on such a sunny morning, Audrey reads the short book with expression trying to engage their attention. When she finishes reading the book, the children make comments about the story, which indicates they did listen.

Audrey announces, "It is time to go outside. The sun is shining!" The children quickly go to their cubbies, get their coats, and hurry out to the east playground where they ride tricycles on paved pathways, climb on climbing
apparatus, play in a small log house, use chalk on the sidewalk, or just run. For the next twenty minutes, the children play and Audrey observes, making sure the children stay within bounds and are safe. Around 11:30, parents start trickling in. As each parent arrives, Audrey speaks to the parent and carries on a short conversation. Before a child leaves, he or she says good-bye to everyone including Audrey. One by one the children leave nursery school, skipping, laughing, and talking to their parents about their day.

One parent stops to talk to me. Explaining she has three children in Shiloh School, the mother comments, "Until I found Shiloh School, I didn't know there was a school like this. The teachers are so gentle, calm, yet in control. The children learn so much and they love school."

Standing on the playground in the sunshine as the last child leaves, Audrey comments to me, "The nursery school concept is a dinosaur. It is becoming extinct. We used to have long waiting lists, but now we don't. In fact, we have a hard time finding 12 students. More and more mothers are working, and we have calls wanting all day school for young children. There are very few nursery schools left." With real concern showing in her face and in her voice, Audrey explains, "Three hours a day is enough for young children to be in a group setting. The nursery school time frame is the best play and learning situation for young children." As we prepare to leave, Audrey shakes her head and comments, "I don't know what is going to happen to the nursery school."
Audrey’s Theories of Action

During the school year I was in and out of Audrey’s classroom many times. I soon realized that Audrey, just like Kate, possessed a consistent, coherent set of beliefs and practices. Audrey’s theories of action were strongly aligned with NAEYC’s philosophy and with the philosophy of Shiloh School. Audrey’s teaching and classroom could be another example of developmentally appropriate practices in action. Audrey’s concepts and beliefs were not only expressed in her teaching and the interviews, but also in her writing. During the course of my study, Audrey provided me with many papers, handouts, and newsletters she had written for parents that explained her philosophy, curriculum approaches, and goals. Audrey’s writing enriched the following information.

Audrey's Concepts and Beliefs

With ease, Audrey can articulate and write about the philosophy of Shiloh School, how it applies to the nursery school, and her own personal philosophy. A coherent, connected flow among the three can only come because Audrey has developed such a harmonious match between her personal philosophy and the philosophy of the school. This harmonious match is nurtured and supported by Audrey, her family, her fellow teachers, and the nursery schoolers and their parents.

Shiloh School and the nursery school philosophy. The school philosophy is based on the premise "that children learn and grow by pursuing their innate curiosity." From the school’s philosophy, Audrey delineates its
meaning for the nursery school. Play is the vehicle through which children
learn in the nursery school. In a handout for parents, Audrey writes

the Shiloh Nursery School is a place where play is seen to be the finest
natural way of learning. Play is the center from which young children
learn how to get along with others, to know themselves, and learn
about the world around them. Learning thorough play is seen as an
essential part of being human. It is an ability to be nurtured for its own
sake, and as the foundation upon which a child's continued learning
will be built.

Listing key elements of the nursery school philosophy, Audrey adds

- Children are encouraged to learn through exploration and play as
  they make the equipment, the group and the rooms their own.
- It's necessary to recognize and respect how very hard young
  children do work as they play.
- To a child, nursery school should feel comfortable and challenging.
- Children need to feel safe.

Audrey goes on to say

In conjunction with these fundamental beliefs, four basic areas of
growth are fostered:
- PHYSICAL: Children are given the opportunity to develop the
  inner confidence that comes from adequate gross motor control.
- INTELLECTUAL: Children are encouraged to discover their world
  first hand through their five senses in an atmosphere that fosters
  inquiry and a sense of wonder.
- SOCIAL: Because the world needs caring, decent, compassionate
  citizens, cooperation and socialization are emphasized.
- EMOTIONAL: Every child needs to feel s/he is great. An accepting
  adult, outside the immediate family group, helps to encourage a
  positive self-image.

Audrey concludes her description of the nursery school philosophy with,

"Humor, joy, play, and hard work are shared as children and teachers live and
learn together. The Shiloh School Nursery School is a place where children
are enjoyed and childhood is respected."
Audrey's personal philosophy. Describing her personal philosophy, Audrey writes with a depth of understanding of herself and her beliefs.

Many of my own beliefs about young children and education come out of who I am as a person. I'm basically an observer, by nature and training. Because personal autonomy is very important to me, my own and that of others, I'm also basically non directive.

Audrey is aware there is a potential contradiction in terms of being non-directive and establishing and arranging the classroom, the equipment, the toys, and the parameters under which the children are allowed to operate. Audrey explains, "I believe a primary role of a teacher is to find and feed each individual child's innate direction rather than creating that direction in an invasive way." In a discussion about this Audrey further clarifies her belief by saying,

if you put on the outside before the inside is ready, there is no foundation. There is no structure there. There is no integration. It seems like learning may not really be there because it is not connected from the inside out. It's an overlay that is false and can interfere with the learning that would occur if that brain were allowed to develop on its own.

Audrey believes that "individuals learn different things in different ways, on different time scales, and that it is very wrong indeed to value one pattern of learning over another."

The concept of trust is very important to Audrey and is at the foundation of her beliefs.

In some very basic way, I trust in others' abilities to find their own direction, to be self-directed. I also trust in myself: in my own powers of observation and intuition, and in my ability to sense or feel what is good for a child and to step in, to direct if it's appropriate. I also trust in myself to sense when it is appropriate.
Aware of the conflict inherent in trusting others but sometimes needing to step in, Audrey writes, "Of course this is quite paradoxical and helps illustrate another strong belief of mine: that teaching is a subtle art and difficult to put down on paper."

Drawing on her background in ethology, Audrey believes "children belong to an innately curious species and that if you provide a rich environment, in an atmosphere that supports self direction and encourages a sense of wonder, that children will want to do the rest." Childhood and play go together as Audrey explains, "I believe that childhood belongs to children, that young children learn how to get along with one another, to know themselves and learn about the world around them through play and playfulness."

Beliefs about the social and emotional aspects of development further define a picture of Audrey's theories of action. Audrey expounds upon this by saying,

I also believe that as they learn to know themselves as capable social beings, young children need a great deal of support, patience, and repetition. They need the security of knowing they are with a trusted adult who they feel sure will step in to set clear and simple limits and help them make positive sense of the social worlds around them when they haven't the energy or strength or know how to do it for themselves.

Like most early childhood professionals Audrey takes a practical view of what she can or cannot do. Audrey writes

I believe that to be effective, what you are as a teacher has to come out of who you are as a person. I have a strong sense of who I am and what
I believe in. And at the same time, I'm pragmatic. By this I mean that any educational philosophy is in constant interaction with practical reality. Teachers consciously and unconsciously apply the elements of their philosophies to the day-to-day reality of their teaching. These elements are weighed and measured against each situation, coming out each time in slightly different balance. I believe that this sort of flexibility is necessary to good teaching.

Keen observation and an understanding of child development complements Audrey's beliefs. Explaining her position, Audrey writes

I believe that good teaching comes out of good observing, knowledge of child development, intuition, an ability to read the individual, and from a good sense of timing. A good teacher knows when to step in and when not to step in. I believe that teaching is much more art than science. I believe that teaching is also learning.

**Nursery school curriculum: Approaches and goals.** Through the way she organizes and uses her room, hallway, and playground, the materials, toys, and activities she places in the center, the way she conducts snack time and circle time, all contribute to the curriculum Audrey wants to offer the nursery school children. Focusing on social and emotional development, language, science, and math and how they all interrelate, Audrey offers children opportunities to explore, discover, experiment, and learn. Regardless of what is offered, the children have the choice to participate in self-selected activities. "As with anything else they do, the intrinsic motivation, the playfulness of [their exploration] needs always to be respected."

In the area of social and emotional, Audrey wants the children to "see themselves as capable and feel themselves as capable." A key element of this development is for the children to feel that the school is "a safe place from which to explore and learn." Audrey explains, "If you feel capable, you feel
safe. If you feel safe, you are free to learn." Outside playtime not only helps children develop gross motor skills, but also helps children to develop a "I-can-do-attitude about themselves."

Audrey offers the children "lots and lots of practice and comfort with problem solving." Helping children learn to use language as a problem-solving tool is important in Audrey's teaching. Audrey provides the children with myriad opportunities to learn how to state things in positive terms, because "thinking positively shapes" children's thinking and problem solving abilities. In her day to day teaching, Audrey helps the children practice analyzing, and verbalizing directly to their classmates. Through her actions and ways of assisting children, Audrey helps children realize they are capable of solving problems and don't always need to go through her. Part of the negotiating with classmates depends on the children's ability to listen. Through her mediator role, Audrey encourages children to listen to each other.

Another key component of Audrey's curriculum is for children to make a plan, that is to be self-directed. By making a plan and following through, the children are taking responsibility for their actions, following their own interests, seeking a level of activity that feel they can accomplish, and learn the natural consequences of their plans as they carry them out or don't carry them out.
In the area of language arts, Audrey wants the nursery to be a place where language is ENJOYED with children, where children get enjoyment from language. A place where there is a love of language, of books, of literature, of WORDS: spoken words, written words.

The nursery room is rich in opportunities to learn and use language. In her daily plans, Audrey provides time for individual book time, group story time, group conversation time at snack and at circle time, as well as many opportunities for fantasy play. Circle time provides opportunities for group participation in fingerplays, songs, and poetry. Audrey wants children to "anticipate with PLEASURE getting their hands on the tools (letters, reading, writing)" of our culture. Emphatically explaining her approach to this, Audrey writes, "I FOLLOW THEIR LEAD IN THIS, ABSOLUTELY." If a child or children show interest in letters, their sounds, their shapes, reading, and writing, Audrey says, "I will do whatever I can to support them."

Following her belief that development comes from the inside first, Audrey follows the children's leads and interests.

Through the routines, rituals, and activities in the nursery school, Audrey provides a deep foundation for the children to develop mathematical understanding. Applying her understanding of the development of young children, Audrey believes three-year-olds have an "organic sort of awareness of the world as an extension of their own internal rhythms, as extensions of themselves." Continuing, Audrey writes,

with 4s this understanding is changing, expanding to include more and more of the patterns and rhythms and progressions that are outside
themselves. This is part of the math for 4s in the Nursery, maybe even the foundation in some basic way of their mathematical understanding and awareness.

Incorporated in her room are various routines and activities to assist children in developing this awareness of patterns and rhythms. Music, however, is the mainstay of increasing children's awareness of patterns. With a great depth of understanding of music's role in helping in the development of mathematical understanding, Audrey writes

math is also music and feeling music's patterns and rhythms and changing frequencies. You could say that in some ways music helps give a child a body awareness of math. Music can help reinforce in a very fundamental way a mathematical understanding as children feel, hear, and become aware of music's vibration and patterns and changes — become aware of sound moving through time in a linear fashion.

Snack time plays a major role in helping children develop a linear understanding of mathematics. The children practice counting as well as build an awareness of first, second, third. Explaining all the various aspects of math that children practice during snack time, Audrey elaborates

practice with counting cups for snack, matching cups to chairs around the table in a linear progression, how many crackers for 1st, 2nd, 3rd . . . ; remembering a pattern of progression of tasks for making snack: 1st get a bucket with sponges, then wash table, then dry table, then wash hands, then pick juice, then open juice & pour juice, then count children, count cups and napkins, then . . . This is to say that math understanding is a lot more (and comes from a lot more) than learning the shape of a 7 or simply counting to 10, to 30.

The development of linear understanding of mathematics for the nursery schoolers is, according to Audrey, "practice with and comfort with a way of shaping an understanding of their world, of the order of things, the
correspondence of things, what follows what, [and] the progression of events in their lives."

The unit blocks, hollow blocks, and small manipulatives offer children more opportunities to explore mathematical concepts. In describing what children are learning, Audrey writes

It's engineering: experience with different materials . . . and their properties -- and geometric shapes, how to use them for building and construction. It's practice with analysis . . . recognizing what makes a construction stable/unstable. It's practice with seeing a problem in a group setting and verbalizing clearly enough to be understood (which means being clear or clarifying it in one's own mind). They learn so much from each other in this. The big blocks invite this kind of group construction and therefore group learning. Different eyes see and point out different things and different understandings.

The multitude of experiences Audrey plans and offers for the nursery schoolers helps children develop an understanding of mathematics which seems to be a natural, logical "organic sort of sense of quantity and mathematics." Again Audrey is careful to reiterate that she follows the children's lead and interests. Audrey cautions against trying to shape children's thinking into the adult's need for correct answers because, "you could interfere with the very real mathematical understanding they do have."

Based on her interest and education in science, Audrey brings an expanded view of science to her work with young children. Audrey believes, "Science comes out of the human need to understand, to find meaning, to 'know.' It comes from the push of curiosity and a sense of awe and wonder." Going further, Audrey explains, "Children are driven to be curious about their
surroundings to explore and wonder and to understand. *They all start out as scientists.*

As natural scientists, children bring many skills and dispositions to the exploration of their world. Audrey writes, "They are intensely curious, are excellent observers, and are driven to understand." Elaborating, Audrey explains that "our science is based on induction: first observation and then generalization into a testable hypothesis...with the understanding that lead to new testing and that 'truth' often changes and evolves." Using induction, Audrey assists children's curiosity by taking advantage of teachable moments and asking children questions like, "Where do the ants go after they crawl down the crack? Why does Jell-O start out watery and then turn jiggly? What makes the car go after you scoot its wheels across the floor?"

"But," Audrey is quick to explain, "most of their science is more informal – an internal dialog or even nonverbal thought as they go about their day. They are cataloging their observations, comparing, thinking, predicting, testing. This happens with words; it happens without words." Believing teachers need to support children's natural curiosity about their world, Audrey explains,

the important part for a child in all of this is the experience of a sense of wonder and practice with observation, with asking oneself a question and coming up with an answer or the way to test a theory. The answer and how it compares to what we as adults hold true doesn't matter. What does matter is their practice with using inquiry and logic to make their sense of the world.
Just like in mathematics, teachers have to be careful not to impose their answers on the children's scientific explanations and discoveries. Feeling very strongly about this point, Audrey writes:

*it's very easy to get in the way of a child's science by stepping in and offering adult 'facts' as a substitute for their own process of inquiry.*

There is often a real urge to respond to a child's curiosity simply with bits and pieces of information instead of helping to engage them in thought and wonder. Too much of this kind of adult response can shut down a child's inquiry and encourage them to assume that science is bits and pieces of information instead of process of getting those bits and pieces.

In her room, Audrey offers children "TIME and encouragement to observe, to putter, to investigate, to experiment informally." The children need a lot of "messing around TIME with a lot of different materials and tools: water, sand, dirt, flour, cornstarch." The children just need to experience "a lot of different materials with different properties." One way Audrey does this is through the cooking activities she plans each week. When the children cook, they have different utensils to measure with and mix with. The children experience using different ingredients to make something that looks entirely different than its components. Audrey firmly believes children need "a lot of time for repetition of investigations. . . . Practice with theory making, with verbalizing their own stories of explanation. . . . They need a setting that encourages practice with a logical form of if/then sequences."

In explaining her role, Audrey writes that it is important for her to offer "an acknowledgement of their wonderment and observation, sprinkled through with a few 'I wonder's [and] to encourage the observing, wonder and
thinking." Above all else children "need RESPECT for their observations and theories."

**Factors Influencing and Guiding Audrey's Theories of Action**

What factors have influenced and guided Audrey's theories of action? Audrey carefully articulates a number of major factors that have influenced and guided her, but cautions, "These are not necessarily prioritized." First, Audrey mentions her parents, and explains, "My parents always treated me with respect and trusted me. Autonomy was important in my family growing up. I was cared for. I think that is certainly a big chunk of it. It's at the foundation."

Second, Audrey groups a variety of learning experiences she has had as a major factor influencing her theories of action. These include (a) the knowledge she acquired while in college, (b) her student teaching experience, (c) an informal apprenticeship she had at Shiloh School, and (d) readings in education. When Audrey was in college, Shiloh School was the laboratory school for the education department, and the instructors for the education courses were teachers in the lab school. "That is just the way it was set up," Audrey explains. One faculty member with whom Audrey did student teaching was "a master teacher," both with the children and with the college students. Audrey goes on to explain, "I did a lot of my course work with Beatrice. The way she set it up was just talk. I mean we examined what was going on and we talked about it. She talked philosophy of ed., so on and so forth."
Later, when her daughter was in the nursery at Shiloh School, Audrey did volunteer work in her daughter's classroom and she fondly calls this learning experience "an apprenticeship," which she considers part of her education in becoming a teacher. Portia, the nursery school teacher, was an outstanding teacher from whom Audrey learned a great deal. When she talks about Beatrice and Portia, Audrey describes the two as her mentors in teaching and these learning experiences as a chance to watch master teachers and then talk with them and talk with them and talk with them. That was really important in terms of my education. Those experiences helped reinforce who I already was. But being able to see them in a practical day to day setting and then talk with them just in terms of educational philosophy, those were big, important factors.

Being an avid reader, Audrey is constantly studying and reading information that pertains to education. In the course of my study, Audrey mentioned reading things from a wide variety of sources: books by Jane Healey about brain development; a New Yorker article about children who were searching for a place to belong; Starting Small, a book she received as part of her NAEYC comprehensive membership; and Young Children, the professional journal.

With a wide array of eclectic interests, Audrey reads and studies a variety of subjects other than education. Counting these varied interests as the third major factor influencing her teaching, Audrey elaborates,

I would say interest and education in my other fields of interest: animal behavior and ethnology, and naturalistic study. That's part of the foundation of who I am in the nursery school. Just the awareness of the importance of play to non-human animals in terms of their
Generally speaking the more intelligent the animal the greater the flexibility of the brain, the more important play is to the young. Interest in brain research, psychology, [and] anthropology. I think those are big. I mean those are just a big part of my teaching.

Her experience as a parent is the fourth factor Audrey believes has influenced her theories of action. Audrey feels that having been the parent of a young child was influential, very influential. Just watching my daughter's development and my own development in response to her development, that parental thing that happens as well. Just the time I took to explore that experience I think was very useful and helped influence my thinking a lot. Just watching her as a learner . . . in terms of [her] taking charge of her own education and seeing how that works. How beautifully that can work.

Audrey's has a low-key, non-invasive, non-directing kind of interaction style. Crediting this approach as the fifth influencing factor, Audrey explains, "My own temperament and personality is big one in terms of influencing my teaching and the way I think about my teaching. I am a low-key kind of person." Her descriptions of herself as an observer, a student of human nature, and a catcher-in-the-rye for the children mesh comfortably with her personality and temperament.

Being able to vividly remember what it was like to be a child is the sixth influencing factor. Audrey tells me, "I still have very, very clear memories of being a child." Remembering what is was like to be a child allows Audrey to be able to "empathize with the children and their experiences."
Another influencing factor is the children. Audrey feels the years of experience working with young children have impacted her theories of action. Audrey elaborates,

learning a vast array of different personalities that children bring [contributes] to knowing what I need to do.... From knowing the children, I feel more comfortable allowing them more individual freedom. I have learned how capable children are, being able to see that and being able to trust that... come with experience.

How the Context Impacts Audrey, her Teaching, and her Theories of Action

The context influences how Audrey's theories of action are manifested in her teaching. With a coherent, cohesive, well thought out school philosophy that is compatible with her own philosophy, Audrey has the philosophical support to provide a developmentally appropriate program for the nursery schoolers.

Since the school is a board run school and all the teachers serve on the board, Audrey has input into the school and its policies. Being given a great deal of autonomy and self-determination as a teacher, Audrey is able to use her theories of action in the school and in her classroom. Her teaching practices exemplify those theories in action.

Although she is the only adult in the nursery school room, Audrey does not have to fly solo in her teaching. A rarity in this field, Audrey's fellow teachers provide a unique support system as well as a sounding board for her ideas. If a teacher needs input into a problem she or he is having or just wants to talk about something she wants to try, her fellow teachers gladly take the
time to listen, provide feedback, and support her in the thing she undertakes to do or try.

The teachers meet weekly and discuss what they are doing and why. If the group is interested in a new topic or philosophy or idea, they become a study group and undertake to read, discuss, and learn about the topic. Any teacher can bring up a topic and the others will agree to study it. They majority of teachers have been at Shiloh School for years and there is a precedence for intellectually pursuing topics, broadening their interests, and staying current with many different disciplines that could inform their teaching. The teachers model for the children and parents what learning is all about and they exemplify the joy of learning for learning's sake. Given the smallness of the school, the teachers' study group, the teacher deliberations and consensus regarding the school, its mission, its philosophy, and its curriculum, and on-going interactions between teachers and parents, Shiloh School and its teachers present a coherent, cohesive, intellectually and philosophically based approach to education.

The parents select Shiloh School for its rich history in providing children with an education based on a constructivist philosophy. From its inception, Shiloh School has offered an education program influenced by the philosophy of John Dewey. Over the years, the school has adapted and incorporated other philosophical views, but at the same time retained its strong Deweyian base. Many of the parents, themselves, attended Shiloh School, and are aware of its mission. Parents, new to the school, know Shiloh
School by its reputation in the community, but need more information about how the nursery school program is run. Audrey spends significant amounts of time when children arrive and when children leave talking with parents. These short, friendly conversations set the tone for parents to learn about the nursery school and the philosophy Audrey uses in her teaching. Audrey also provides parents with written information not only about the philosophy but also about the curriculum. She routinely sends home notes, newsletters, and invites the parents to come, observe, or assist in the classroom or on field trips. In effect, Audrey is a one-woman public relations department for the nursery school. Through her efforts, the parents’ first introduction to Shiloh School is a positive, informative, and welcoming one that sets the stage for the parents to become supporters and advocates for Shiloh School’s mission and philosophy.

The children who attend the nursery school readily fit into the nursery school environment and easily accept and adjust to the parameters Audrey sets. Audrey’s gift group of children came to the nursery school being very verbal, social, and confident in themselves. Their families’ child-rearing approaches are compatible with the nursery school philosophy, approaches, and goals. The children are used to being independent and responsible. They possess a view of the world as a wonderful, exciting place, and they are eager to explore it. And in Audrey’s classroom, explore it they do.

Shiloh School is a parent-co-op type program and the only income is from tuition and what the board can generate through fund raising efforts. In
many ways the school is run with limited financial funds. All the furnishings, materials, and toys in Audrey’s classroom show their age. The furniture is well worn and has been painted more than once. In no way does the oldness of the materials and furniture distract from what Audrey has, so far, been able to accomplish. In fact the lack of newer, more modern furniture and toys, may in some way contribute to the children being more creative and imaginative in their play. The block area is the most used area in the nursery classroom, probably because there are so many of them and a large space is allocated to them. Although the blocks have turned a patina brown with age, the blocks are ageless in design and the children are drawn to them. The least used interest area is the housekeeping area, where the furniture and materials are the most dated. Or it could be that this particular group of children is not interested in playing in the housekeeping area.

Being the only adult in the nursery room has both advantages and disadvantages for Audrey. As the only nursery teacher, Audrey can implement her theories of action and express her philosophy without having to negotiate what is to be done in the classroom with another nursery teacher. Being the only teacher also allows Audrey to provide consistency for the children. The children come to know Audrey as a person and as a teacher and learn how she teaches. For the children, this means having to establish a relationship with only one adult in the classroom, and figure out how to work with the one adult. A sense of trust, safety, security, and knowing what to expect is easier for the children since they are able to come to know Audrey.
In return, Audrey comes to know each child. An extra benefit for the children of having only Audrey in the room is the growth and development of a strong peer group and a sense of independence.

At the same time, being the only adult in the classroom puts an extra burden on Audrey. Trying to allow children the freedom to move about the nursery classroom, hallway, and kindergarten room, stretches Audrey's capacity to carefully observe all the children at once. Helping children learn to develop plans and tell her about the plans makes it easier for Audrey to keep tabs on all the children. During snack preparation, Audrey is needed at the snack area to assist the two snack helpers in preparing snack. In order to supervise the children, Audrey has the other ten children sit on the oval rug doing quiet toys. In effect, she has to round them up into one area so she can keep tabs on them while she is assisting in another corner of the room. For nearly four hours, Audrey is on her feet, moving around the room or playground, the sole adult responsible for 12 children. Never getting a break, for any reason, Audrey is constantly on alert. Accomplishing all that she does with ease, Audrey makes it seem effortless, but in reality it takes a great deal of mental and physical energy to do well.

Despite the facts that Audrey is the only adult for the 12 children, the furniture and equipment is well-worn and old, and the budget is limited, the context of the Shiloh School actively supports and encourages Audrey's teaching approach. The philosophical coherence as well as the support evident between the school, the board, the teachers, and the parents makes
teaching at Shiloh School a warmly embraced and deeply committed professional life for Audrey. The children, also, support Audrey's approach to teaching by how quickly and readily they embrace the way she teaches and the many educational opportunities she offers them. For Audrey the social, emotional, and intellectual contexts of being at Shiloh School far outweigh those aspects of the context influenced by the financial constraints of being at a school with tight financing.

**Audrey's View of an Effective Prekindergarten Teacher**

From Audrey's perspective, being a teacher of young children encompasses a number of critical roles. First, Audrey sees the teacher as an environment arranger, a crucial and essential role of an effective prekindergarten teacher. According to Audrey, the first thing a teacher should do is set up an environment that fosters developmentally appropriate education. Just in terms of the concrete: blocks, open-ended art materials, music, fantasy play, places and materials that foster fantasy and imaginative play, books, music instruments, tools so they [the children] can build and make things. All of that STUFF that allows them to do what they need to do, to develop.

The second, and equally critical role, is being a skilled, knowledgeable observer of young children. Audrey describes this role as "just being able to see. See when things are chugging along and when they are not." Being a good observer allows a good teacher, like Audrey, to be the catcher-in-the-rye, both figuratively and literally.
A third role is being a facilitator of children’s autonomy and self-worth. Audrey believes there are two key components to being effective as a facilitator. First, the teacher should make room for the children to develop a feeling of ownership and responsibility. According to Audrey, the teacher should assist children in developing "that feeling of ownership and responsibility or feeling that they are a part, an important part, of making things run so that the room is theirs and they know that they are essential."

Second, the teacher should provide children with the opportunities to learn to verbalize and carry out their own plans. Audrey believes it is important and essential for the teacher to provide young children "experiences with verbalizing their plans to [the teacher] and with peers to make things happen so they see the articulation of their plans have an effect. That is a very powerful feeling and an exciting feeling."

According to Audrey, the three roles are critical to being a prekindergarten teacher, but it takes more to be an excellent teacher. Listing ten factors in order of importance, Audrey says the number one, most important thing a the teacher must have is

real enjoyment of the ages and acceptance and appreciation of the essential nature of the beast [human beings]. Just who people are when they are three and when they are four and when they are five. They all are who they are, of course, but there is developmental reality there.

Second, an excellent prekindergarten teacher should have "knowledge and experience with the ages and the developmental terrain they are crossing."
The third and fourth factors on Audrey's list focuses on parents. The excellent prekindergarten teacher should have "understanding and empathy for parental development that runs in tandem with that of children. It [adult development] doesn't mirror necessarily but runs in tandem with the development the children are going through." Equally important is "the ability to communicate with the children's parents."

Fifth, the excellent prekindergarten teacher should be an advocate for young children. Audrey elaborates on this point by stressing, "the ability and comfort with being an advocate for children in a way that is useful." Sixth, the teacher needs to develop the "ability to know when to step in and when not to step in, just in terms of very practical day to day [happenings]." Seventh, it is important for the teacher to have "interests other than young children and teaching that can circle back and enrich the teaching and the work with children." Eighth, trust in children is a key component. "Trust in children to seek what they need. Trust in play and playfulness as the finest approach to learning for young children." Ninth, the excellent prekindergarten teacher should develop the "ability to know individuals and the group, whatever group that it might be." With this knowledge of individuals and the group, the teacher should be alert or aware so she can "anticipate and keep things running along smoothly."

Last, the teacher should be "comfortable with allowing natural consequences to happen when useful." Audrey explains,
for example, baking cookies. If no one bakes them, they're not there to eat. Allowing that to happen when it seems appropriate. To give the children the idea that they are making things happen as well and it won't happen without them. So returning the responsibility to children when it is appropriate. Let them keep that [responsibility and consequences] because there are wonderful feelings of power and capabilities that comes from that.

I ask Audrey what practical advice she would give a new teacher. Audrey replies, "That is a hard one." After a long pause, Audrey says, "The more you see children as capable and as problem solvers, the more interesting you will find teaching, [and] the more exciting and probably the more effective you will be as a teacher." After further thinking, Audrey adds the new teacher should learn how to "focus on the individual or with the individual and still feel that [she] has the group there."

The various interviews were conducted during the school year and during those interviews Audrey's comments expressed her theories of action in a consistent, coherent manner. What was Audrey able to accomplish in her classroom with her "gift group" of children? In the next section, let's take a look at Audrey's classroom near the end of the school year.

A Glimpse of a Day in May

The school year will be over in a few weeks. All 12 of the children have grown. The children, now four and five, are even more independent, social, verbal, and creative than they were in the fall. They are the nursery schoolers and they are part of the Shiloh School. They belong! The room and environment is theirs and they know how things are done.
A beautiful, warm, sunny day beckons the children to the playground as soon as they arrive. After greeting Audrey and telling their parents goodbye, the children run to the west playground. Playing the entire length of the school building, the children play in groups of two and three.

Displaying their personalities through their clothes, the children dress in their own unique fashion sense. Staying true to her self-developed style of dress, Isabella's outfit consists of a short silver skirt, a pink lacy blouse, purple knee socks pulled up past her knees, and cowboy boots. Ribbons adore her hair, and necklaces and bracelets complete her ensemble. With leggings that stop just below the knee, white socks, black dancing slippers, and a child-sized flowing shirt with balloon sleeves, Damon is dressed like a Shakespearean actor. Wearing Army style black boots, Nolan is dressed completely in khaki green fatigues. His bosom buddy, Lynton has on cut-off denim shorts, tee-shirt, and cowboy boots. Regardless of what they are wearing, the children are there to play and play they do.

As always, the tire swing is popular and two groups of boys are wanting to play on it. The two groups agree that one group will go first and will play on the tire swing ten minutes and then it would be the second groups turn. "Audrey, Audrey," they shout. Audrey goes over and the second group of boys tell her, "They get ten minutes on the tire swing. Will you keep time?" Audrey looks at her watch and agrees to let them know when ten minutes are up. The first group plays on the tire swing and the second group goes to the sandbox, which is close by. After only three
minutes, the second group asks Audrey, "Is their time up yet?" "No," Audrey replies, "They still have seven minutes left. I will let you know when seven minutes are up." When seven minutes have passed, Audrey tells both groups the ten minutes are up.

Another discussion ensues when the first group, who now have to relinquish the tire swing, tells the second group, "You guys get the swing for five minutes!" One of the boys in the second group, shakes his head no. "We want to play on it for infinity!!" The first group yells, "NO! You can't have it for infinity!" Audrey, who is trying not to smile, becomes the mediator and asks, "How long did the first group have the swing?" "Ten minutes," the boys reply. "If the first group had it for ten minutes, how long should the second group have it?" asks Audrey. "Five minutes," yells the first group. "Infinity," hollers the second group. Again, Audrey comments, "The first group had it for ten minutes. What would be a fair time limit for the second group?" The boys agree that if the first group had it for ten minutes, the second group should have it for ten minutes. "But, I would really like to have it for infinity," replies one of the boys from the second group.

Audrey walks the length of the playground observing the children. If the children want or need her, they call out her name. Jacob and his mother appear at the end of the playground near the parking lot. "Hi," Jacob yells and six children go running toward him. Jacob and his family have been on vacation and this is his first day back in over ten days. The children greet him,
and bombard him with comments and questions. "Hi, we missed you." "Glad to see you." "Did you have fun on your vacation?" "Come and play with me."

Audrey and Jacob's mother, who is holding a baby in her arms, stand and talk while the children run off to play. Explaining about the field trip to Jordan's house on Friday, Audrey asks, "Would you be able to help get the children to Jordan's? We are going to take a walk along the hiking path that runs by the river." Jacob's mother replies, "Oh, I would love to. It is a wonderful path and it is safe. We go cross-country skiing along there every winter. The children will love it. Who else is going?" Audrey tells her names of three other parents who will be coming along. "It will be a lot of fun," the mother replies. The mother tells Audrey good-bye and leaves.

As she carefully but unobtrusively observes the children, Audrey continues walking the length of the playground. Nolan, Lynton, Nick, and Vince are in the sandbox digging. The three older boys start joking and try to out-gross each other. Talking about snot and slobbers and farting, the boys giggle and laugh. Nolan turns his back on the three boys, bends over, and chants, "Bootie, Bootie," as he shakes his butt at him. The other boys laugh and start shaking their butts at each other.

Coming up quietly behind me, Audrey whispers, "The children are really in to humor. Some of the boys are into body humor, typical body parts, and bodily functions. The rule of thumb is as long as no one is uncomfortable with the words, it is okay." Drawing on her knowledge of young children and non-human primates, Audrey explains, "This is all part of figuring out
themselves and their world. It is interesting that in studies of chimpanzees that learn sign language, at the age comparable to four year old children, the chimpanzees use many body part signs."

From afar, I hear Damon announce, "Let's do a play!" Soon two children are clustered around Damon and they agree they want to do a play. Running to Audrey, Damon tells her, "We have a plan. We want to do a play. Will you write it down for us?" "Sure," Audrey replies, "Let me go get some paper and a marker." Soon Audrey returns with the writing materials, a poster size paper and a magic marker. Damon asks, "Can we write the play now?" "Yes, let's find a place to sit," Audrey answers. They find an area where Audrey can place the paper so she can write.

"Damon, who do you want to help you write the play?" Audrey asks. Loudly, Damon yells, "Who wants to help do the play, come here!" Four children come running cluster around Audrey and Damon. Jordan declares, "I want to be a guinea pig." Jacob pipes in, "I want to be a tiger." Now speaking English quite fluently, Nick, who has seen Disney's Lion King, proclaims, "I will be the Lion King."

Noticing that two children in another area of the playground seem to be having a disagreement, Audrey asks the playwrights, "Could you guys decide what you want to do in the play? Think about it. I will be right back." Noticing the children are trying to verbally settle the disagreement, Audrey stays outside their circle of communication, just listening. The disagreement is quickly resolved without Audrey's help, but she stays within hearing distance
a few more minutes to lend support if needed. When it is obvious the children are satisfied with the outcome, Audrey begins walking back to the playwrights, observing what the other nursery schoolers are doing.

When Audrey returns to the children who have been discussing their play, Damon tells Audrey, "I want to be a horse back rider." "I want to be a pretty, beautiful horse that is a girl," Victoria announces. Diligently, Audrey records the various acting parts of the play. Victoria asks, "Did you write down that the horse is a girl?" "Yes, I did," Audrey answers.

"Now, what is your story?" Audrey asks the young playwrights. The children discuss what the story should be about. Having seen a number of kindergarten plays and having written several other plays this year, the nursery schoolers have different ideas about how to write this play. Audrey asks, "How does it start? How does the story go?" As the playwrights are discussing the play's story line, several more children join the crew congregating around Audrey. "Think about what you want in your play. What is the beginning of the play? How does the story start? What are the words." The children are trying to decide. Trying to help the children, Audrey asks, "Do you want to start with a long time ago?" "No," Damon answers. "Make it a short time ago." Audrey carefully writes down a short time ago on the paper.

Giving the children time to think and talk, Audrey waits patiently for them to decide what comes next. "When you know what you want me to write down, just tell me," Audrey reminds the children. Seven children
discuss the possibilities. The group decides the next line in the play should be, "There lived a circus." Jacob tells Audrey to write down, "In that circus, there was a tiger." Damon adds, "And a horse back rider." Victoria continues, "And a beautiful, girl horse, named Blue-eyes." Jacob follows with, "And there was a guinea pig in the circus." Audrey is writing as fast as she can to keep up with the children's declarations. "Do you want me to read back what you have told me?" Audrey asks and the children say, "Yes." Audrey reads it back. The children talk some more.

Audrey asks Jordan, "What does the guinea pig do?" Jordan thinks for a few seconds and answers, "There was a guinea pig in the circus who could stand on another guinea pig's back." After she gets the line written down, Audrey asks the children, "What is next? What happens in this circus?" The children start talking about the tiger eating the guinea pig and the tiger getting the horse. Audrey interrupts, "We want to be sure no one gets hurt in the circus. How could we do that? We need a circus play where the animals don't get hurt." Jacob, who wants to be a tiger, says, "Audrey, write down the tiger finds something to eat." After she gets that down, Audrey asks Nick, who is the Lion King, "How about the lion, Nick? What does he do?" Nick replies, "He eats the people." "Well," Audrey replies, "In the circus play we have to make sure the people and all the creatures don't get hurt." Nick thinks for a few seconds and announces in a loud, clear voice, with perfect English pronunciation, "The lion went into the house to eat some snacks."
One of the children shouts, "Let's have a rehearsal now." Audrey, "I think we need more words before the play is ready for us to rehearse. What are some more words for the play?" Victoria replies, "Write down the horsy finds some oats to eat for lunch." Damon declares, "That is the end of the story." Audrey asks Damon, "What is the horse back rider going to do?" Damon looks at her and Audrey rephrases her question, "Damon, what do you want the rider to do?" With his head cocked and a finger to his chin, Damon thinks. Audrey asks, "What will be rider be doing in the circus. How should I put that down?" Damon responds, "The horse back rider finds the horse." Audrey write that down and asks, "What happens next?" Damon answers, "The horse back rider does the circus stuff." Audrey replies, "Okay, how does the play end so the people know it is over." "Well," Damon answers, "Just say the end!"

With gentle, questioning Audrey asks, "How will you know it is the end? How will you know when the tricks are over?" Damon looks at her and says, "When you say stop!" Audrey, still trying to get the playwrights to include an ending in the play, again asks, "What could be part of the story so the audience knows the play is over?" The six children talk some more and Damon tells Audrey, "Write the horse back rider did tricks on the back of the horse. Then they were finished."

Looking around, Damon notices Nick is no longer with the group. Yelling loudly, Damon calls, "Lion, lion, what are you going to do in the play?" Nick comes running, "I told Audrey the lion goes into the house to eat
Nolan and Lynton come running and announce, "We want to be in the play!" "Okay," Audrey replies, "What would you liked to be?" Nolan answers, "I want to be the wolf." Lynton quickly adds, "I want to be a grizzly bear. We will be the bad guys in the play." Damon replies, "We don't have bad guys in our circus." Audrey asks, "Lynton, how will the bear be part of the circus. What would you say? I can write down your part." Lynton replies, "The bear eats meat." Nolan informs Audrey, "I want to be a gorilla instead of a wolf. Write down there was a funny gorilla who scared the bad guys away. Did you get that?" "Yes," Audrey replies, "I got it all down."

Damon yells loudly, "Does anybody else want to be in the play?" Isabella comes over and informs the group, "I will take care of the chairs for the audience." Leah declares, "I will take care of the props." Excitedly the children want to start rehearsing. Audrey looks at her watch and tells the group, "We won't have time today for the rehearsal. It is almost snack time. I will take the play home, type it up, and bring it back tomorrow. In the morning we can rehearse." "Can we invite the kindergartners to be our audience?" the children ask. Audrey agrees, "Yes, we can invite the kindergartners to be our audience." Jumping up and down with glee, the children clap.

In a few minutes the children meander into their classroom, find a quiet toy, and sit on the oval rug. Playing with the small Lego blocks, Nathan announces, "Hey look, I made a ship for this bear to go the moon." Several children cluster around, look at his space ship, and talk about rockets and the
moon. Jordan takes a piece of paper to Audrey and asks, "How do you spell, Forget It!?" Audrey slowly spells the words while Jordan writes each letter down.

Audrey, Vince, and Leah start to prepare snack. When snack is ready, Vince and Leah, in unison, announce, "Snack is ready." The children quickly go wash their hands and sit down at the table. They are hungry and in a talkative mood. The cups Audrey has provided are the Dixie cups with jokes printed on them. Noticing the jokes, the children start telling jokes. "What does the cookie say who goes to the dentist?" asks Damon. When no one answers, he laughs and tells the children, "I feel crummy." The children laugh.

"Audrey, Audrey, read the jokes. Read the jokes," the children ask. A child hands her a cup and says, "Audrey, read this one!" Audrey reads, "What did the skeletons say at lunch?" The children look perplexed, shake their heads, and tells Audrey to read the answer. Audrey reads from the cup, "Bone Appetite!" The children look at Audrey as if to say, "What?" Noticing their confusion, Audrey asks, "Does anyone know what bon appetite means?" One of the children states, "It is French." "Yes, it is French," Audrey replies. Another child adds, "And it means good eating." "Yes, it does mean good eating," Audrey responds. Continuing, Audrey adds, "The way bon appetite was used on the cup was for a joke. They wrote bone appetite instead of bon appetite." The children quickly hand Audrey more cups so she can read more jokes.
After snack the children go to the oval rug for circle time. "What song would you like to sing," asks Audrey. "Kum Ba Ya," the children answer. Waiting for a signal from Audrey, the children begin to sing. After several verses, Audrey stops and asks the children, "Let's see if we can sing it together in the same tone." The children and Audrey sing together, blending their voices. Every child was trying and succeeding in joining his or her voice with the others. At the conclusion of the song, the children exclaim, "We did it. We did it. We sang it together." The children comment on how good it sounds when they sing together. "It was beautiful!" declares Isabella. Very proud of themselves, the children want to sing some more and they do.

"Which book would you like me to read?" asks Audrey when it was time for reading aloud. "Read the new riddle book," the children answer. Nolan jumps up, finds the riddle book, and gives it to Audrey. As she reads each riddle, the children try to guess what the answer might be. Sometimes they guess right, sometimes wrong, and sometimes the riddles are simply over their heads. For the last riddle of the day, Audrey reads, "Why does the humming bird hum?" Vince quickly answers, "Because he eats hummus!" Trying not to laugh, Audrey replies, "Well, that is a good guess. Sometimes we think we know the answer but riddles can trick us. Do you want to know what the answer is in the riddle book?" The children nod their heads yes. Audrey reads from the riddle book, "He hums because he doesn't know the words." "Oh, man!" Nolan groans. The children laugh.
What an interesting group of children to observe! I can see why Audrey refers to them as her "gift group." Their growth in language, their ability to resolve conflict, the depth of their creativity are partly due to Audrey's supportive assistance. Audrey has been a catcher-in-the-rye for these children. Her patient, low-key, consistent, quiet, gentle caring, and indirect teaching has allowed this group of children to do what Audrey believes young children do: play, grow, develop, and learn on their own individual time schedule. A catcher-in-the-rye is a wonderful metaphor for what Audrey does in her classroom!

Epilogue

During the year Audrey was involved in this research project, she struggled with the dilemma of making the nursery school day longer to accommodate working parents. Ethically and professionally, Audrey had grave concerns about offering what she referred to as "institutionalized care." Her fellow teachers and school board left the decision up to her. Audrey told me she had "agonized over having afternoon care. I feel a certain amount of [self-imposed] pressure in terms of making this happen, in terms of the health of the institution." Shortly before the end of the school year, Audrey informed me she was going to try an extended day nursery school program the following fall.

During the summer, Audrey worked on the logistics and legalities of having the three and four-year-old children stay at Shiloh School double or triple the number of hours of the traditional nursery school. The following fall
parents had three choices: (a) regular nursery from 8:30 to 11:30; (b) extended day nursery from 8:30 to 3:00; and (c) extended day nursery plus after school care from 8:30 to 6:00. At 3:00, Shiloh school day is officially over but there is an after school daycare program that lasts until 6:00. The parents of the extended day nursery children could elect to have their children stay until 6:00. In her planning, Audrey wanted to have no more than five of the 12 nursery school children in the extended day program so she could create a small, family size program. Seven sets of parents needed the extended day and/or extended day with after school care. Audrey accepted all seven children whose parents needed childcare.

As the following year progressed, Audrey diligently worked on creating a daycare program that possessed the nursery school quality and atmosphere. Later in the year, Audrey told me the extended day nursery pilot was doing okay. The quality of the nursery school is there, but extended day is still the third best choice for the children and their development. The first best choice is just the three-hour nursery school. The second best choice would be for another family member or another trusted adult to care for the children in their home after the nursery school morning. This extended day is the third best choice.

In my mind’s eye and ear, I can see Audrey standing on the playground that sunny, fall day, and hear her telling me with great concern in her voice, "The nursery school concept is a dinosaur. We are becoming extinct."
I wanted to add something to what I said about seeing things differently. Maybe it is not actually seeing things differently. It is just an inner sense. I have really been thinking about that. I woke up at a quarter to three thinking about this and couldn't go back to sleep. Thinking about all of these things we talked about. But seeing things differently is like a preschool teacher having a sixth sense. It is like a sense. You know you are using all of your senses plus there is another sense, a sense of an emotional, an emotional sense, a sense of feeling, a sense of awareness, or a sense of need. So all of that kind of makes up a kind of sixth sense that you have or that you develop.

Maggie Jackson talking into a tape recorder at 3:00 A.M.

Cassette tape in hand, Maggie greets me at the door with, "Margaret, I just couldn't stop thinking about the questions you asked." Handing me the tape, Maggie continues, "The night after our interview I woke up at 2:45 and it just came to me so I taped this for you." Earnestly, Maggie says,

Any time you want to talk about anything or whatever, ask. It really makes me think. It makes me search my soul. I love that. It is a good feeling. It makes me want to be a better teacher. Do more. Makes me aware. You know, sometimes you are too busy to just stop and think why you do things.

Be a better teacher! This from a woman who was awarded the state's Association for the Education of Young Children Teacher of the Year award. From a woman who amazes anyone who visits her classroom and observes
her teaching. A woman the student teachers think walks on water. Maybe it is this sixth sense Maggie talks about that amazes those who enter her classroom. Maggie does see things differently, differently in a sense that she can see the possibilities others don't see as well as her heighten awareness and sensitivity to what a child sees, feels, needs, wants, and understands.

After 35 years of teaching three and four year old children, Maggie still is on her eternal quest to be a better teacher, because children deserve no less. In her 60s, Maggie’s devotion to teaching, to young children, and learning is a major focus of her life. Tall, with strawberry blond hair, and dressed with the flair of a model, Maggie presents a serene, calm, and gentle demeanor, but underneath is a fierce protector of child’s right to be respected and valued as a human being.

With an engaging smile and laughter in her voice, Maggie explains her metaphor of teaching is that of a mother hen and her chicks. “I feel like the mother hen and the children are my brood of chicks. I am responsible for them.” Maggie continues, "I know I am not their mother and I do not have the emotional bond with them that a parent does, but I am protective of them when they are in my classroom.” Maggie expands her metaphor by explaining,

I feel responsible for every child in here. Everyone. I want to be sure that they are okay. I am their protector. I protect their feelings. I want them to be emotionally safe and physically safe. I try to let them have lots of positive experiences. All the experiences I can give them. This includes the toys, equipment, supplies, activities, whatever. I want them to have a rich environment. It is all so important. I protect their right to be children and to have a childhood. I protect their right to
play. They deserve it and it is my responsibly to see that they can experience the very best. AND be the best they can be.

How did Maggie arrive at such an interesting perception of her role as teacher? Maggie has thought a great deal about her role of teacher and admits that her background and teaching experiences have influenced her view of what it takes to be the best teacher she can be. Freely sharing her background, Maggie tells of her life, because her life has framed who she is now.

Born in the mountains of West Virginia in the mid 1930s, Maggie was, as she describes it, "given into a family to raise." Maggie comments, "As early as I can remember, I knew I was given to the people I called Mom and Dad." For the first 10 years of her life, she lived with the family in a coal camp. The economic reality of the times plus living in a coal camp ensured that life would be hard. Money was scarce and luxuries were few and far between. Toys and things like crayons were luxuries and Maggie says, "We had no store bought toys. Nobody had toys or anything like that so you learned to create your own play. All the kids just played together because there wasn't television then. We made up things and just played." As a child, Maggie recalls that she was a "player. I really was a player. I played in the woods. I learned to build doll furniture out of slabs of wood. My dad built me a little table and kitchen cabinet. Any toys we had we made."

When she was 10, her family moved from the coal camp onto a 29-acre farm. Life changed and Maggie's play changed with it. Her play now included farm animals, the gardens, flowers, and open fields. Maggie
remembers, "I had to create my play from what was in the environment. I learned about nature and learning and playing and singing to the cow [laughter]. Whatever was in the environment I could find to play with."

When she was 13, her Mom and Dad were able to legally adopt her

Maggie said one of her favorite play themes was playing teacher. "I wanted to be a teacher when I was little. As far back as I can remember I have wanted to be a teacher. I use to make the kids be my students and I was their teacher." When she graduated from high school, she desperately wanted to go to college but in the early 1950s, going to college was expensive and the money was not available. Nearly 50 years later as Maggie tells me her story, she has tears in her eyes when she explains, "I wanted to go to college so I could be a teacher, but it was out of my reach. I wanted to go so bad. When I realized I couldn't go, I cried and cried."

Taking a very practical view of what she could afford, Maggie signed up for training as an X-ray technician at a hospital. "It worked like this," Maggie tells me. "I got free room and board and a stipend of $50 a month." At the end of the two-year program, Maggie took a state board exam, passed, and received her license to be an X-ray technician.

When her fiancée completed his military duty, they were married and he went to college on the G. I. bill. Maggie worked in the medical field while he was in college. Their first child was born after her husband graduated with his physics degree. Maggie's husband obtained a job in a Midwest state and the family, like thousands of other families, migrated from West Virginia.
When their first child was not yet 18 months old, Maggie had twins. The day Maggie came home from the hospital with the twins, they moved into a new house in a new neighborhood, a typical plat of houses built during the rapid housing growth of the 1950s. The neighborhood consisted of other young, college educated husbands starting their careers, stay-at-home moms, and lots of kids.

With a smile, Maggie describes what life was like,

I had three [babies] under 18 months. So then it really was play all over again. It was a way of life. Babies and little kids. No car and no money in this foreign state! [laugher]. Not knowing anybody. At first, it was just family and creating play again from things like I did when I was young. Then it was having the kids in the neighborhood at my house to play. It was just like when I was growing up.

Within walking distance of their new house was a large, Methodist church, which Maggie attended. When the church asked for volunteers to teach Sunday school, Maggie volunteered and went through a training program that was sent from the church's national office. As Maggie tells it, "I learned so much from those workshops and training. The literature was excellent. Just using everyday things. A lot of science and art. Helping children find joy in the world." Eventually Maggie became head of the children's education department at the church.

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, Maggie conducted a nursery school in her home. Maggie quickly adds, "This was before state day care licensing laws." Smiling as she tells the story, Maggie explains, "The neighborhood children use to play all the time at our house anyway, so I
decided to open a nursery school." The children attended three mornings a week from September to April. Maggie's three children and three other children who lived within walking distance were the students in her nursery school. "The parents would walk them over and then come back and get them in three hours." Laughing, Maggie explains, "The three other children would go home, eat lunch, and then come back in the afternoon to play with my kids at our house." Remembering the nursery school years, Maggie describes it as a time where "I learned how to make paste, playdough, and things like that. Save and scrimp and use left overs. So that is kind of the things I had before, from the church workshops, and from when I was little."

The community where Maggie and her family lived had a very large population of children, the public schools were overcrowded, and there was a severe shortage of teachers. In the early 1960s, when her children went to kindergarten, the public school rented rooms from a church for the kindergarten classrooms, but they did not have enough kindergarten teachers. Based on her work with the church and with her own nursery school, Maggie was urged to apply for a kindergarten teacher position and was called for an interview. Maggie explains,

that was before you had to have a kindergarten certificate. I went for an interview. At first I was scared to death. It was the first kind of official teaching position I ever interviewed for. But, I could never, never call myself a teacher, you know, never, because I didn't have any college. I went but I did not get the job but they hired me as a substitute. They hired somebody that had some college education as a teacher. I didn't have any college.
Maggie never did any substitute teaching for the kindergarten because in October of that year she was hired as a nursery school teacher for the Community Parent Co-op Nursery School. Thus began Maggie's 18-year tenure at the Co-op. The nursery school consisted of 70 families of upwardly mobile, college-educated parents from her fast-growing community. Maggie explains, "At least one parent had to be involved as a teaching parent in order for their child to go to the nursery school, and it usually was the mother who did the teaching." Maggie not only taught the children, but also taught the parents how to teach and work with groups of young children. Maggie explains, "My duties consisted of instructing the parents, planning lesson plans, teaching my own lesson plans, and helping the parents teach the plans that I had planned." Modeling how to teach and how to talk to children were key components in her work with the parents.

As a teacher, Maggie served on the board that ran the co-op nursery school. In addition to the monthly board meeting, there was an educational parent meeting once a month, and parents and teachers were required to attend. Maggie describes these parent meetings as educational and social. We studied different aspects of child raising or rearing and things like nutrition or activities to do at home, especially the importance of creativity activities. We studied all kinds of important things parents wanted and needed to know. Professionals in the field conducted the meetings. These meetings really were learning programs as well as a social time for the parents back then. There was always a lot of on-going learning at that time.

In the early 1970s a local two-year college began to offer early childhood education courses. With her husband and children's
encouragement and support, Maggie decided to try college. Twenty years after she graduated from high school, Maggie enrolled in her first college course. Maggie remembers, "I was scared to death. The first class I took was a sensori-motor, movement course. I really liked that and could relate to the movement activities part and could use it right away with the children in the Co-op." For most of the 1970s, Maggie would take one class at a time, mostly at night, working slowly toward getting her degree. "I knew," Maggie explains, "some place down the road that I would have to have a degree to teach. So that kept me taking classes." Reaching a point where all she needed were the two student teaching courses, Maggie had to put her quest for a degree on hold because the first student teaching was only offered during the times she was teaching at the Co-op. As Maggie tells it,

actually the degree was delayed for a long period of time because the college only offered the first student teaching course on Monday-Wednesday-Friday mornings. I taught in Co-op on those mornings and the college never offered it at another time. NEVER. Each quarter, I would always pour through the listing of classes to see what they had to offer and when they would offer student teaching. The chairperson of the ECE program told me, 'Maggie, you will just have to quit your job and do the student teaching.' I was really afraid to do that. I just didn't have the confidence to quit and take a chance on getting my job back. Maybe it was because of my West Virginia background. And then one quarter, I swear, they had changed it [the student teaching course] and offered it on Tuesday and Thursday. I could not believe it! There it was! I could take it and I took it.

In the early 1980s, nearly thirty years after she had completed high school, Maggie graduated from college with an associate degree in early childhood education. "One of the best things that happened to me was getting that degree," Maggie reminisces. "It made me feel good about what I was
doing at the Co-op. It made me feel more comfortable with my planning, and the things I thought about and thought were appropriate for children." In her mind, Maggie could finally call herself a teacher.

In the mid 1980s, Maggie made a major career decision. Malcom State College, a college within driving distance of her home, expanded its daycare and laboratory school and were hiring more teachers. Maggie had to decide if she would apply and leave the Parent Co-op after 18 years. Maggie recalls,

I heard they were hiring and I had to make up my mind when I applied that if I did get it that I would go. So that was the biggest decision that I had at that time was to apply or not. I was just thinking that I would realize that I would have to come. I did, and I’m glad that I did, and here I am!

**Maggie’s Current Teaching Position**

Thirteen years ago Maggie became a lead teacher at Malcolm State College’s childcare center, which also functions as a laboratory school for the college’s early childhood education department. Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young children, Malcolm provides care for children ages 3 to 5 in three different classrooms, two classrooms for full-time childcare, and one room, Maggie’s room, for part-time childcare. The two full-time childcare classes enroll 24 children apiece. If the parents want full-time care, they must enroll their child in one of the full-time childcare classroom. Maggie’s classroom provides the part-time childcare. If parents only need part-time care, they must enroll their child in Maggie’s classroom. To distinguish it from the full-time childcare classrooms, Maggie’s classroom is named Part-Time Care and is referred to as the PTC classroom.
Maggie is the only full-time teacher for the PTC classroom. One other
degreed teacher works 3/4 time. College student workers are hired to help
maintain adult to child ratios of 1 to 8. The center is open from 7:00 in the
morning to 6:00 in the afternoon. Maggie's official hours are from 6:30 A. M.
to 3:30 P. M., but she is usually at the center at 6:00 and does not leave until
after 4:00. Her lead teacher responsibilities include: teaching the children;
developing, planning, and implementing the curriculum; hiring student
workers; supervising the other teacher and student workers; conducting
parent orientations; working with college faculty who place ECE student
teachers in the PTC classroom; working with ECE student teachers;
conducting parent-teacher conferences; ordering equipment and supplies;
and seeing that the classroom is kept clean, neat, and well-organized.

**Malcolm State College and Its Locality**

A state supported institution of higher education, Malcolm is an urban
college located in a large, Midwest city in one of the state's largest counties.
Situated in the downtown area near the intersection of major interstate
highways, Malcolm State draws students primarily from the county it is
located in and from surrounding counties. A large commuter college with a
student head count of 20,000, the profile of Malcolm's average student is a
white female, age 29, with children.

Due to the rapid growth Malcolm State experienced in the 1970s and
1980s, the vast majority of the buildings have been built during the last 25
years. Relying on the same modern architectural design, the majority of the
buildings are alike in looks: gray, concrete buildings with limited windows. Since Malcolm is located in the downtown area, campus land space is limited and the majority of the buildings are clustered together. As with any large commuter college, adequate parking is a necessity. Several parking garages and parking lots are situated throughout the campus area.

Luckily for the children, Malcolm placed the childcare center in an older brick building at the edge of its downtown campus. The building has been remodeled, yet was able to retain much of its character and charm: tall windows, tall ceilings, large rooms, and a feeling of open space. The childcare center is situated on the first floor of the building. While the childcare building and classrooms have charm, potential problems exist with its location. Within 1/2 block of the building are two very large homeless shelters. For safety and security issues, the college has installed surveillance cameras at every entrance of the childcare building and has placed three cameras on the playground. A campus security officer is permanently assigned to the building and is visible when I enter the main entrance. Off the main corridor are the childcare classrooms.

**Maggie's Classroom**

When I enter Maggie's classroom for the first time, a number of impressions bombard me at once. Although the room is a large square room with very tall ceilings, the size and height are not what catches my eye. The wall of glass that looks out onto the playground captures my attention. The glass wall extends from near the ceiling to the floor and in this wall of glass
are two large, glass patio type sliding doors. The patio doors provide access to the playground. Not only does the glass wall provide a source of natural light but it also makes the playground seem an extension of the classroom. The second impression is one of color, balance, and spaciousness. Cut flowers grace the desk where the parents sign the children in and out. Various green plants are situated throughout the room. Posters and children's artwork decorate the walls. Aesthetically pleasing is what comes to mind as I absorb the color and feel of Maggie's classroom. With this come an impression of how organized the room is and how everything seems to fit exactly where it is placed. Obviously, Maggie has given a great deal of thought to maximizing the floor space and establishing the best traffic flow pattern for the different interest areas. A feeling of beauty, balance, and harmony exists while at the same time I realize the room is a very functional space for children.

With the exception of several wooden cabinets strategically placed along two walls, everything in the room is child-sized: the short and long tables, the chairs, and the low shelves. A rich array of interest areas are carefully situated throughout the room. Many are those typically found in an early childhood classroom such as dramatic play, housekeeping, large motor, music, books, blocks, manipulatives, science, water table, sand table, and easel. In addition, Maggie has a computer area where three computers are placed so the children can play with them without adult assistance. Another interest area, which is very popular, is the writing table, where the children have access to different kinds of paper, paper and ink stamps, writing tools,
envelopes, and hole punches of different kinds. Such a rich array of toys and materials beckons the children to come explore and discover this classroom. Looking at the room, the toys, the furniture, and equipment, it is very evident Malcolm State provides the childcare center with a budget for maintaining a state-of-the-art early childhood education classroom.

On the wall opposite the glass wall are four doors. One is the entrance to the classroom. Near the entrance, high on the wall, is an emergency button, which can be used to summon campus security. A second door provides access to a conference room and multi-purpose storage room, which also contains a washer and dryer. Third is a door into a very small kitchen, which contains a commercial size refrigerator, a stove, microwave, dishwasher, sinks, and kitchen cabinets. The college cafeteria provides the lunch meal, but morning and afternoon snack are prepared in this small kitchen. The fourth door leads into Maggie's small office. In her office, Maggie has a desk, a telephone, a filing cabinet, storage cabinets, bookshelves, a computer, and a printer.

The Playground

Running the width of the building, the playground is divided into two parts. First is a large patio area, which is carpeted with outdoor, green carpet. A large roof with numerous skylights cover the patio area so the children can play outside even if it is raining. On the patio are various toys for the children to use in their outdoor play: large and small plastic blocks, small climbing
apparatuses, a merry-go-round of four bicycles, a small basketball hoop, balls, roller skates, hoppity balls, sit-and-spin toys, wagons, and tricycles.

The second part of the playground is the more traditional playground, but in no way it is anything like most playgrounds. There are sidewalks around and crisscrossing the playground, but instead of dirt or grass, the actual playground is covered in a state-of-the-art playground covering, a red and green rubberized surface, which helps prevent injuries. Several beautiful wooden climbing apparatus beckon the children to climb. Two slides and a swinging bridge encourages children to test their physical abilities.

Surrounding three sides of the playground is a tall wall, which Maggie refers to as the "Great Wall." The wall accomplishes a number of things. First, it keeps unauthorized people from using the playground. Second, it blocks out the downtown street noise. What the wall really creates is an island for the children, an island of space of their very own within a busy, noisy city.

The Children

No more than 24 children are scheduled to be in Maggie's room at one time, but because of the staggered enrollment of the children needing part-time care, over 50 different children are in Maggie's classroom each week. Approximately 80% of the children in Maggie's class are the children of Malcolm State College students. The children are enrolled the hours that correspond to their parent or parents' college class schedule. The majority of the children enrolled in Maggie's PTC classroom are young three-year-olds.
Approximately 10% of the children are children of Malcolm State’s faculty and staff who want their children to have a quality preschool experience. The remaining children come from the community. The community children usually fit one of two profiles. First are children whose parents or guardians have been referred to Malcolm’s childcare center by Children’s Services or other agencies. Second, there are children who have been disenrolled, a fancy word meaning "kicked out," of other childcare centers and the parents, by way of the grapevine, have heard that Malcolm has a good center and can handle children with behavior problems. Because Maggie has a reputation for being able to work with challenging children, these community children are placed in her room. In addition, Maggie is often given the challenging children from Malcolm’s full-time childcare classrooms. Even though the policy is that a child who needs full-time care has to be placed in one of the full-time childcare classrooms, the rule is bent when the other classrooms cannot handle a child, and the child is then assigned to Maggie’s classroom.

The idea of providing quality part-time childcare seems daunting, but Maggie has implemented a process and procedure that keeps everything running smoothly and it appears, effortlessly. The parents sign up, in advance, for childcare time slots that correspond to their class and work schedules. Once the parents' schedules are finalized, the parents sign a contract for childcare at those times for the entire college term. By the end of the first week of the term, the children's schedules are in place and the same
children attend the same times each week for the rest of the term. The next
term the process starts all over again.

Some children attend as little as six hours a week and some attend for
as much as 35 hours per week. The times vary greatly, but the largest number
of children are in Maggie's classroom when the college is offering the most
classes, from 9:00 to 2:00 Monday through Thursday. In the afternoon, some
children nap, some just rest, some play, and some are picked up after lunch.
A number of children only come on Fridays, which is the day the allied health
majors have all-day hospital clinicals. Some children come long distances
with their parents and may have an hour or more travel time to and from
college. In any case, children are coming and going from 7:00 in the morning
until 6:00 in the evening based on their parents' schedule and need for
childcare.

The children are equally divided between two parent families and
single parent families. A small percentage of the single parents are fathers
who have custody of their children. A number of the parents receive financial
aid packages from the college. Regardless of the circumstances, the College's
purpose for the PTC classroom is to provide its college student parents with
quality childcare while they are in college and to provide a laboratory school
for its early childhood education majors. For Maggie, however, the PTC
classroom is for the children and she structures it and organizes it so it
belongs to the children. Maggie's classroom becomes an oasis for the children,
an oasis from the stress of living in a fast paced world, a world where their
parents are parents and college students and workers and who have to assume various other adult roles.

What is it like in Maggie's classroom? In the next section, I will provide an example of a day early in the school year.

A Day in Maggie's Classroom Early in the School Year

Six o'clock in the morning! What an early start to what will be a busy day! I have just arrived at the parking lot adjacent to building where Malcolm's childcare center is located. Maggie comes zipping into the parking lot in her little, foreign-made, sporty looking car. As she gets out of her car, Maggie smiles and exclaims, "Isn't this a beautiful fall morning? The air is so crisp and clear. Can't you just smell fall in the air?" Pausing, Maggie unloads two large bags from her car, and says, "These are some of my things I brought from home for next week. I have lots of my own materials I store at my house." Laughing, Maggie explains, "Sometimes I feel like a bag lady! I am always bringing or taking things back and forth in bags or boxes. But then, most ECE teachers do the same thing." Before leaving her car, Maggie reaches into the front seat of the car and picks up a bunch of cut flowers. Maggie explains, "The flowers just add something special to the room."

As we walk to the building, Maggie says, "I am so glad you are here on a Friday, because Friday is kind of my day in the center. Monday through Thursday, the ECE majors are in the center doing the first of their practicum type classes. We are a lab school and we have lots of ECE majors in the center four days a week. I love having them, because they bring so much to the
children and to the classroom. When the ECE majors are there, I kind of step back and let them have more interaction time with the children. But Friday, well, Friday is my day. I get to have more interaction time with the children. It is a great way to end the week."

When we reach the building, we come to a locked, glass entranceway. Maggie looks through the glass and sees the campus security officer who is stationed in the building. Maggie waves and he smiles as he unlocks the door. Maggie greets him, "Good morning, Officer Mike. It's a beautiful morning, isn't it?" He smiles and agrees with Maggie. Maggie continues, "Let me introduce you to Margaret. She will be coming to visit my classroom often this year." Officer Mike shakes my hand and says, "Welcome to Malcolm. Let me know if I can help you in anyway".

As Maggie and I make our way down the hall to the door of her classroom, I notice several security cameras strategically placed at various points near the ceiling. Using her key, Maggie unlocks the door, turns on the lights, and the double checks to see that the door is still locked. "I love this early morning time," Maggie says. "It is quiet time and there is just this anticipation of all that is going to occur this day." As she walks to her tiny office directly off the classroom, Maggie takes a quick scan around the room to see what shape the janitorial staff had left the classroom in. When she reaches her office, Maggie proceeds to place her purse in a filing cabinet. "Would you like me to put your purse in the cabinet and lock it up?" Maggie asks me. "It is
best to keep it locked up. You don't want to leave it lying around. It is best to be cautious with your belongings.

After putting things away, Maggie goes to the thermostat and adjusts the room temperature. Maggie explains, "Room temperature is important in terms of the children's comfort and activity level." Going to the art area, Maggie removes the cloth, which is covering the easel, and puts out fresh paint on the holding trays on each side of the easel. Next, Maggie removes the cover from the sand table. "The children love to play in wet sand. It is one of their favorite activities," Maggie tells me as she pours water into the dry sand. Going to the computer area, Maggie turns on the three computers, and explains, "The children enjoy playing with the computers. It is more of a social activity that you would think. They help each other with the software." Laughing, Maggie adds, "The children know more about the computers and the software than do most of the adults in the room."

Taking a trip around the room to each interest area, Maggie double checks to see that everything is in place and looks inviting to the children. Aesthetically pleasing and harmonious are words that come to mind as I look at the classroom. As we make our way around the room, Maggie explains what each interest area is and all the many things children can learn from each one. Sounding more knowledgeable than most ECE textbooks, Maggie is a fountain of practical, down-to-earth information about what children can do and learn from all that is in the classroom environment.
With her typical approach of trying to help adults understand what all children can learn from a sensory rich environment, Maggie tells me about putting Post-it Notes™ in the writing center. "The children were fascinated with the fact that the notes had a sticky part to them. A big discussion ensued about things that stick and things that are sticky. I thought what a wonderful idea for a theme." In typical Maggie fashion, she asked the children if they wanted to help plan activities around sticky. Of course the answer was yes. Maggie continues, "The older children, who were here last year, know and understand about themes and they had lots of ideas about what kinds of activities to do. The younger children listened and joined in. The children and I brainstormed about possible activities to do around sticky. Children know so much more than we give them credit for. One child told me, 'things stick to my socks.' I told him we can do an experiment and see what things stick to our socks." Pausing for a breath, Maggie concludes, "The theme for this week and next focuses on the concept of sticky, things that are sticky, and things that stick. Many of the activity ideas came from the children. Today is favorite activity day. I will put out some of the children's favorite sticky activities from the last four days."

In dramatic play, Maggie has set up a doctor's office with toy doctor equipment and real Band-Aids™, lots of different sizes of Band-Aids, which the children can use. In the housekeeping areas are newborn size Huggie® diapers with sticky tabs that hold the diaper on the baby. Several newborn size baby dolls, with different racial features, are placed in the baby doll beds.
In the play kitchen area are wooden vegetables cut in half, but are stuck together with pieces of Velcro. The children can play like they are cutting the vegetables with a plastic knife and the pieces break apart. In the writing center are many different sizes of Post-It-Notes, envelopes, stickers, and stamps. A clear acrylic easel has water in its tray and there are foam shapes floating in the water. When the foam shapes are put on the clear acrylic, they stick to its surface. In the art shelves, which the children have access to, are different kinds of tape: scotch tape, tan masking tape, and colored masking tape. A large piece of clear contact paper has been taped on to the wall, with the sticky side out. Next to it is a box of different collage materials the children can stick on the contact paper: feathers, colored pasta, strips of paper, and sparkling items. "Later," Maggie explains, "I will put out some other things to do over in the art area, which is area where we do a lot of the messy activities. That area has a tile floor and the rest of the room is carpeted."

Changing subjects, something Maggie does frequently, she begins, "If the ECE majors could learn to listen to the children, really listen to the children, and pay attention to what they are saying and doing and are interested in, they will be good teachers. If only more people would listen to the children."

It is now 6:30 and Maggie's official work time has begun, but she has been moving and doing things non-stop for the last 30 minutes. Maggie goes to the small kitchen off the classroom and begins to make a new batch of play
dough. "I make our own play dough," Maggie tells me. "It is so much better than what you can buy. It is just has such a nicer feel to it and it is easier to work. I make fresh batches several times a week. I can change the colors and the textures to match what we are talking about." Maggie quickly mixes up the ingredients for the play dough and then proceeds to make it in a way I had not seen before. Maggie explains, "I experimented for years until I found just the right way to make it so I always get the texture and consistently I want. One secret is don't mix it or work the dough too much, just kind of fold the ingredients together." Watching Maggie, I think of watching my grandmother who was an expert at making biscuits. Maggie works the play dough as if it were biscuit dough, with just a few folding-type strokes until it has just the right feel, a feel that only an expert recognizes. When Maggie has finished, she sets the play dough aside so it can cool. "I can put it out on the play dough table when the children arrive," Maggie explains.

The children are supposed to start arriving at 7:00, the official hour the center opens, but before 7:00 we can hear a child and parent waiting outside the classroom door. Before unlocking the door, Maggie puts the fresh flowers in a vase of water and places the vase of flowers on the table where the parents sign the check-in book. "It just adds a bit of beauty to the day," Maggie explains as she quickly and artfully arranges the flowers.

A few minutes before 7:00, Maggie unlocks the door. "Good morning," Maggie greets Missy and her mother. Missy, a young four-year-old, who is bright-eyed and ready to go, greets Maggie and then tells her mother, "Let me
find my name tag." Missy's mother picks up one of the clear, plastic boxes of nametags and holds it so Missy can look through the box. Quickly finding her name, Missy hands it to her mother with a smile. There are two nametags with Missy's name on them. One is for the cubbie and the other is for her to wear. Handing Missy the nametag for her cubbie, the mother pins the other nametag on to Missy's shirt. Once her nametag is on, Missy walks up and down the row of 24 cubbies looking for the cubbie she wants to use today. The mother waits patiently. Soon Missy stops and says, "This is the one I want today," as she places the nametag, which has a strip of Velcro on it, onto the Velcro attached to the cubbie box. "What's for lunch?" Missy asks her mom. "Let's see," replies her mother as she looks on the parent bulletin board for the lunch menu. "You are having hamburgers, French fries, pears, and salad." Missy listens carefully and nods her head in the affirmative as her mother reads.

Once Missy has everything fixed to her satisfaction and has found out what is for lunch, she and her mother walk to the sign-in book. Knowing children like to imitate what adults do, Maggie has two check-in books, one book for the adults to sign in and another book for children to sign. The children's sign-in book contains blank pieces of paper, which the children can write on if they want to. While her mother signs the adult check-in book, Missy signs the children's sign-in book and begins talking to her mother about the flowers. For a few minutes the two admire the flowers, and then Missy
and her mother hug good-bye. As Missy’s mother leaves the room, she and Maggie wave good-bye.

Missy goes to a box of books near the sign-in books, carefully looks through the books, selects a book, puts a large blue card with her name on it into the book, and places the book in another box. She then goes to Maggie, who has been quietly watching, and tells her, "I picked out my library book for naptime." Missy then begins talking about what has happened in her life since she left Maggie yesterday. After a lengthy report of her activities, Missy asks, "Is the sand wet?" "Yes," Maggie replies, "I added water a few minutes ago. Do you want to play in the wet sand?" "Yes," Missy answers. With a purposeful stride, Missy walks to the sand table and begins playing in the wet sand with the various sand toys.

Another mother and child, a boy named Tyler, enter the room. Maggie greets the mother and the mother replies with a very short, "Hello." Tyler stands very still, clutching a blanket in his arms. The mother finds his nametags, slaps one on a cubbie box, hangs up his coat, and pins the other nametag to his shirt. While his mother signs the check-in book, Tyler stands where she left him. She gives him a quick kiss on his cheek and leaves. The mother is in and out of the classroom in a minute.

Tyler is still standing in the same place. Moving slowly, Maggie approaches Tyler, who is still clutching his blanket. Maggie stoops down so she is at his eye-level, and touches his elbow. With a soft, soothing tone to her voice, Maggie smiles and says, "Hello, Tyler." Pausing, Maggie waits for some
response from Tyler. He leans into her and Maggie gently hugs him and rubs his back. Tyler looks like he is half-asleep. "Would you like to rest some this morning?" Maggie asks. Tyler nods his head yes. Taking his hand, Maggie leads him to the book area where there is a futon-like couch. As he hands Maggie his blanket, Tyler lays down on the couch. She spreads his blanket over him and tucks it around him. For a few minutes, Maggie gently rubs his back as Tyler drifts off the sleep. Missy is playing in the wet sand singing quietly to herself.

Once Tyler is asleep, Maggie leaves him. Talking quietly so only I hear, Maggie tells me, "This is the first term Tyler's mother is in college. She drives for an hour before she gets here each day. You know, it is stressful enough being a parent, but can you imagine being a parent and a full-time college student and work part-time and have to make a two-hour commute each day?" Looking toward the book area where Tyler is sleeping, Maggie continues, "He is pretty flexible child. When he wakes up, he will be able to join right in."

The children continue to arrive one by one. The good-bye routines fall along the continuum from the leisurely, relaxed leave-taking like Missy and her mother to the short, quick, 'I have to hurry' version Tyler and his mother shared. Smiling, Maggie greets each child and parent, trying to set a positive tone for the leave taking. Always seeming to know, how best to help each child make the transition into the room, Maggie carefully observes and watches for cues from each child. The older children, who were here last year,
act right at home. Knowing the routine, they take charge of finding nametags, selecting a cubbie, selecting a book for their nap time reading (if they are one of the nappers), and talking to Maggie. The room is theirs and they move confidently into the room, greeting other children, and going to the interest area and activity of their choice. The new children, who are mostly young three-year-olds, need more assistance in making the transition to the classroom. Being attuned to the children, Maggie knows just how to respond to each child. Some children only need a quick, smiling hello from her, and others need a gentle touch or hug.

Blanche, another bouncy four-year-old, and her father arrive. The two go through a leisurely, loving good-bye routine. Maggie is sitting on a small-child-size chair near the check-in book. Maggie tells the father, "Good-bye. Have a good day." With a big smile on her face, Blanche comes to Maggie and grins. Maggie smiles back and says, "Good morning, Blanche. How are you this beautiful day?" Blanche grins bigger, and starts shaking her head. Her ponytail starts bouncing around. Maggie grins back and exclaims, "You have a ponytail today!" Missy comes walking over and Maggie tells her, "Missy, you remember Blanche. She has her hair different today. She has a ponytail." The two girls start talking and Missy asks Blanche to come and play in the wet sand.

At 7:30 a student worker arrives and Maggie gives her directions for the morning. By 8:00, ten children have arrived and are engaged in various activities that are close to the check-in area where Maggie is usually
positioned for the greeting routine. Tyler is still sleeping. Missy and Blanche are playing together at the sand table. One child is at a computer and two other children are standing by his chair, listening to him talk about what the computer is doing. The other four children are playing alone, doing self-selected activities. The atmosphere of the room is quite, calm, almost sedate.

At 8:30, fifteen children are now in the room involved in various activities. Tyler wakes from his nap, takes his blanket, folds it up, and walks to the cubbie area. He walks up and down the cubbies looking for his name. When he finds his name, he puts his blanket in his cubbie box, and goes to the child-size restroom located off the classroom. When he comes out of the restroom, he goes back to the book area and starts looking at a book.

A mother and daughter arrive. The child is Ella, a very young three year old with dark, curly hair. The mother does not smile as she hurriedly goes through the check-in routine. Ella stands close to her mother trying to hold on to her. Maggie again sits in one of the small chairs near the check-in book and smiles at Ella. Seeing Maggie, Ella leaves her mother, walks over to Maggie and leans into her. Maggie responds by placing her hand on Ella's back, and greets her, "Good morning, Ella. How are you?" as she gently rubs her back. Ella leans closer to Maggie, who asks, "Do you need a hug this morning?" Ella shakes her head yes and Maggie gives her a gentle hug. Noticing that Ella has been crying and that she has a runny nose, Maggie asks, "Do you need a tissue? Guess what? We have seven boxes of tissues in the room. Allen, the boy who is at the computer, counted them awhile ago.
Which box would you like to get a tissue from?" Ella gets a tissue from the box closest to Maggie, and then returns to Maggie, leaning into her once again. The mother starts out the door and Maggie tells her, "Good-by." Ella just watches as her mother leaves, leans even closer to Maggie, and burrows her face into Maggie, who gently rubs Ella's back.

"Do you remember when we made flubber earlier this week? Remember we mixed water, glue, food coloring, and borax?" Maggie asks Ella, who nods her head yes. Maggie continues, "I remember that you liked to play with it, right? It was sticky at first and then we could stretch it and bounce it. It is like Silly Putty®." Again, Ella nods her head yes. "Well, let's go over to the art area and get it out and play with it, okay?" Ella nods in the affirmative as she takes Maggie's hand and pulls her toward the art area. Knowing how this process works, Ella takes the place mats off the shelf and puts one on the table in front of each of the six chairs as Maggie puts a big, plastic bowl, which contains the flubber on the table. As soon as Maggie sits down at the table, five children hurry to the table and quickly take the remaining seats. Ella doesn't have a chair. Maggie pulls another chair from the table behind her and puts it next to her chair. Ella sits in the chair and squeezes it as close to Maggie's chair as she can get.

Missy and Blanche, who are now bosom buddies, are at the art table. The youngest at the table is Thomas, who is a young three year old. Being a very verbal child, Thomas surprises people with how well he can carry on adult-like conversations. He was at another center, but had difficulty there,
especially with their nap routine. Thomas's father had Maggie as his preschool teacher more than 30 years ago. When Thomas had difficulty at the other center, his father wanted Maggie to be his teacher. Now he and his wife take turns driving a good distance so Thomas can be in Maggie's classroom.

Maggie looks around the table and smiles at each of the six children. Looking at Ella, Maggie says, "Ella, we have a new friend, Thomas. Remember this is his second week here. Thomas, this is Ella." Looking at each child as she says his or her name, Maggie continues, "You know Blanche and Missy. You know Allen and Ray." Ella briefly smiles at the children and then ducks her head. Maggie asks Missy to take the plastic lid off the bowl. With a strong sense of confidence and know-how, Missy quickly pries the lid off the bowl, which contains six big, balls of flubber, the Silly Putty like substance. Missy takes one ball of flubber and passes the bowl around. Each child takes a ball and passes the bowl to the next child. Ella gets the last ball of flubber. The children begin playing with the flubber and talking and talking and talking, except Ella who plays and listens.

A discussion begins about the weather and how warm it will be today. Thomas asks, "Will it be warm enough to go outside to play?" Maggie looks at Ella and asks, "Ella, I wonder if you touch the window, if it will be warm or cold?" Ella jumps up from the chair and runs to the window, placing both hands on the glass. Next she lays her cheek on the window. She feels the glass in several different places. Once she comes to a decision, she runs back to Maggie and the other children and declares loudly, "It is warm!" These are
the first words Ella has said since she arrived. Maggie smiles at her and says, "Since it is warm, we will go outside to play in a little while."

Noticing that Sean and his mother have arrived, Maggie gets up from the table and tells the children she will be back in a few minutes. Sean, a red-haired, freckled-face four-year-old, is one of the two assigned children from the other Malcolm classrooms. Sean was not able to function in the other classroom and so he was "assigned" to Maggie’s class even though he needs full-time childcare and is in the center more than 40 hours a week.

Sean’s mother hurriedly pins the nametag on him, signs the check-in book, and gives him a push into the nearest interest area and hurries out of the room. Maggie approaches him and says, "Hi, Sean. I did not see you come in. How are you this morning?" Maggie sits down in a small chair and Sean leans into her. He is frowning and you can tell he is not happy. Maggie smiles at him and asks, "Did you bring smile today?" Sean shakes his head no. Maggie comments, "Maybe a smile is in your pocket?" Sean briefly smiles. Maggie checks out his shirt and pants and says, "You don't have any pockets today!" With just a little smile, Sean replies, "NOPE!" Noticing his nametag is pinned awkwardly as well as being upside down, Maggie asks, "May I turn your nametag around?" Sean replies shakes his head yes. Maggie repins the nametag. Sean makes a comment but he has some articulation problems so it is difficult to understand what he said. Maggie replies, "I am sorry. I didn’t hear what you said. Please tell me again." He repeats his comment. Maggie can only understand two words so she asks, "Two holes?" Maggie says,
"Show me." Sean points to the two holes on his nametag. Maggie smiles and comments, "Yes, two holes. Two holes on the nametag. It takes two holes for the safety pin." Sean smiles and nods yes.

"What would you like to do this morning?" Maggie asks. From her previous experiences observing and interacting with Sean, Maggie knows he likes to start his day playing with the trucks or computers and that he does better with a set routine. Maggie asks Sean, "Do you want to play with the trucks or the computers this morning?" Sean takes Maggie's hand and walks to the computer area. "Here," Sean tells her. Maggie smiles as Sean gets down to work.

It is now 9:00 and there are 20 children in the center. Michaela, the assistant teacher arrives. She has a degree in ECE and was hired to work 3/4 time. Another student worker also arrives.

Morning snack is a self-service snack where the children who want snack serve themselves. Not all the children want morning snack, depending on how long ago they had breakfast. Maggie places cups, napkins, and small paper plates on the shelf near the snack table. She also places a picture of five whole-wheat crackers on a plate next to a bowl of crackers. The children are to put five crackers on a small plate and bring it along with a cup and napkin to the table. As soon as Maggie sits down at the snack table, five children quickly wash their hands and come to the snack area. They fix their plates and sit down at the table with Maggie. On the table are three very small pitchers of milk and three, plastic, cylinder containers of honey. The children
pour their own milk and squeeze the honey onto their crackers. As they eat, the children tell Maggie that honey is sticky if you get it on your fingers. Maggie asks, "What other things have we made this week that we ate and that we put sticky stuff on?" Thomas quickly replies, "We made French toast and put syrup on it! It was good!" Tyler adds, "We made pancakes and we could put jelly on them or honey or syrup." Sean replies, "English muffins." Maggie repeats, "Yes, we had English muffins and you could decide what jelly you wanted. The jelly was sticky." "Well," Missy begins, "We also made cookies and the cookie dough was real sticky. The dough stuck to my hands and we had to put flour on our hands to keep the dough from sticking." Maggie replies, "Yes, we did have to put flour on our hands so the dough would not stick to them."

Soon a discussion started about peanut butter and jelly sandwiches being sticky. Ella joins in, "Peanut butter and jelly sticks the breads together and it sticks in your mouth." Making eye contact, Maggie replies, "Yes, peanut butter and jelly does make the bread stick together and sometimes it does stick in your mouth." Thomas adds, "Sometimes, I eat peanut butter with a spoon and sticks in my mouth." Maggie nods in the affirmative. As the children are eating, Maggie makes a record of who eats and how much.

When the first group of children finish eating, they throw away the paper cup, plate, and napkin. Finally, they wipe off their place at the table. As the children leave, more children come and Maggie repeats her question and another discussion ensues about sticky foods. After all the children who
want snack have come and gone, Maggie does a double check of her list to see who did not eat. She quietly goes about the room and asks the children who did not eat, if they want a snack. Most say no and Maggie simply says, "Okay."

As she cleans up the snack area, Maggie quietly, almost in a whisper, tells me, "We usually don't have honey, syrup, jelly and things like that, but since the theme is sticky, I wanted to have sticky foods." With a little laugh, Maggie adds, "Do you know how hard it is to come up with healthy food ideas for sticky? Most of the foods that are sticky are sweet."

At 9:30, Maggie starts lining up about eight chairs near the door that goes out to the playground. Maggie informs me, "The three classrooms have to share the playground. We take different time slots. My morning time slot is 9:30 to 10:30 and I try to use all of that time."

Maggie doesn’t say anything, but some of the children know when Maggie turns the chairs that way, it is time to go outside to play. They quickly get their jackets, put them on, and sit in the chairs looking at Maggie. The two student workers are waiting on the playground. Maggie opens the large, sliding glass door and eight children go outside. The other children see what is happening, get their jackets, and sit down in the chairs. In less than four minutes, Maggie has all 20 children out on the playground with a minimum of effort or without anyone needing to wait but just a very few minutes. Maggie gets her coat and goes outside to be with the children. Michaela, the assistant
teacher, stays inside to watch for the arrival of parents bringing children or coming to pick children up.

Outside the children find many things to do. Three different structures are available for the children to climb. One structure has a swinging bridge on it. Another structure, which is called the fort, has three stories or levels and the children play on the multiple levels. There are two different sizes of slides. Tricycles, large, plastic building blocks, a short basketball stand with a hoop and basketballs, a smaller climbing apparatus, several wagons, and a tricycle type merry-go-round are on different parts of the play yard. The children have so many different things to choose from and play with while they are at Macolm's childcare center.

From 9:30 to 10:15, Maggie is on the playground with the children, talking with them, watching for possible safety hazards, and being ready to help prevent conflict or assist in resolving conflict. Maggie encourages children to run from one end of the playground to another, and run they do. Coming over to where I am standing, Maggie explains, "The children need to use their large muscles. They need to run and climb and ride the tricycles. The swinging bridge is great for practicing their balance." Several times, Maggie was up on the swinging bridge structure helping children to feel safe about crossing it. Always vigilant and involved, Maggie keeps tabs on the children as they play outside on this beautiful, sunny, warm fall day.

At 10:15, Michaela comes out on the playground and Maggie goes inside. Maggie explains as we go inside, "I need to put a few more activities
out. From 10:30 to 11:30 there are more group type activities the children can select from or they can play in the different interest areas. It is their choice."

Pausing, Maggie continues, "But I also need to be inside to greet Ross. He is a four-year-old who has never been in any kind of group childcare center. Ross, his mother, and his dad have always been together, but the father is in the military and was stationed at a remote location and his family could not go with him. The mother moved here so she could live with her father, who is ill. Ross is having to adjust to his dad being gone, living in a new place, and attending a child care center for the first time. That is a lot of adjustments for a child. He is a sensitive child and he is a worrier. You know, some children are worriers. The mother is taking classes and Ross is in here from 10:30 to 2:00 three days a week. He is having a rough adjustment and he does better if I am the one to greet him. He stays close to me. I am his anchor while he is in here."

In the art area, Maggie puts out the play dough on one table. She places a variety of different utensils the children can use with the play dough including two plastic, potato ricers. Maggie tells me, "The children love watching the play dough come through the ricer, but it takes a lot of muscle for them to squeeze it. You would not believe the conversations that go on just from their exploring and experimenting with the ricer."

She places four, square, plastic boxes on another table. In each of the plastic boxes is what Maggie calls, "Pud." Maggie continues, "Pud is cornstarch and water. It has wonderful properties. It looks solid but when
you pick it up in your hand it becomes more of a liquid and it runs through
your fingers. It feels sticky. I got the recipe from the Children's Science
Museum." Checking the wet sand, Maggie adds more water to the sand.

Taking a larger, square, clear plastic box filled with cotton balls, Maggie
puts water onto the cotton balls until they are soaked with water. Carrying
the box over to the large motor area, Maggie puts it on the floor and then
brings back some masking tape. She places four strips of tape on the carpet so
there are three lanes, so three children can participate at a time. Looking at
me, Maggie says, "The children love this activity. They throw the wet cotton
balls onto the wall of glass. The wet cotton balls stick to the glass." Laughing,
Maggie adds, "Yes, the carpet gets wet, but it is only water. And yes, the
children miss the glass wall sometimes. But think of what they are doing.
They are practicing their throwing skills. Some children throw over handed,
some underhanded, and some throw sideways. The children have to figure
out how close they need stand to the glass wall so the cotton balls will land on
the glass. They have to figure out how hard to throw the cottons balls so they
stick. They practice and learn a great deal from this activity and there is a lot
of discussion and laughter."

At 10:30, six children come in from outside, hang up their jackets, wash
their hands, and go to the interest area of their choice. A student worker
supervises in the restroom as the children wash up. As one group of children
finish washing up, Michaela sends another group of six children in from the
playground and the process repeats itself. In just a few minutes all the children are in and playing in every interest area of the classroom.

Maggie is sitting near the check-in book talking to several children. Ross and his mother come into the classroom. Ross is sobbing and his mother looks like she is ready to cry. In her usual quiet, careful approach, Maggie places herself so she can look at Ross and he can look at her, but he is clinging to his mother sobbing as if his heart is breaking. His mother completes the check-in process. Giving him a hug and kiss, his mother explains she has to go to her school right now and she will call him between classes. Ross continues to sob. Maggie moves closer, stoops down, and gently touches his elbow. "Ross, your mommy will call you between her classes." Maggie knows the call is as much a reassurance for the mother as for Ross. Continuing, Maggie tells Ross, "Your mommy will come back and get you." The mother adds, "At 2:00, I will be back. I promise. I always keep my promises. I will be here at 2:00." Pointing at his nametag, Maggie puts her finger on the times he is in the center, "See, Ross. Here it says 10:30 to 2:00. That is when you are here in your school. Remember, your mommy will come and get you when her school is over for the day. You will be at your school right here and your mommy will be in her school for grown-ups." The mother leaves and Ross clings to Maggie. He is crying silently, but I can see that he is breathing really fast and hard as his little chest moves in and out.

Taking him by the hand, Maggie walks with him to the sand table where Tyler and Sean are playing. In a soft, gentle, smoothing voice Maggie
comments to Ross, "Let's go over here and see what Tyler and Sean are doing. Come on. Right over here. Let's see what they are doing." Maggie pulls a small chair up to the side of the sand table and sits down. Ross leans into her and she puts her arm around him. Although he is still crying, Ross seems to take comfort from Maggie's voice and her physical presence. Maggie begins a soft, almost singsong like narration of what Tyler and Sean are doing as she speaks quietly to Ross. "I want my mommy," Ross tells Maggie. She replies, "Your mommy is coming later. She is going to call first. Remember she is at her grown-up school and you are here at your school." Maggie reaches for a box of tissues and offers it to Ross, who takes the entire box, pulls out a tissue, dries his eyes, wipes his nose, and moves away from Maggie briefly while he throws the tissue away.

Maggie informs Ross, "I need to move over to the play dough table. Do you want to come with me?" Ross nods yes, but he still has tears running down his face. Pulling out a chair, Maggie sits down and then pulls out a chair for Ross, who sits sideways in the chair so he is facing Maggie. "Here is the play dough." Ross watches and listens to Maggie as she talks. In a gentle, voice, Maggie comments, "School is a good place to be. Yes, it is. School is a good place to be. Uh hum."

Ross stops crying and begins to look around. He watches Kia, a four-year-old who has been playing in the Pud, as she goes to the art area sink to wash her hands. Maggie tells Ross, "She is washing her hands." Ross turns in the chair, almost sitting backwards in the chair, and watches Kia as she
washes her hands. Maggie, speaking softly to Ross, comments, "She was playing with the Pud and there is some on her hands. Uh hum. Washing her hands to get the Pud off." Softly, Maggie adds, "I hope she uses soap so all the Pud will come off. Soap helps the Pud to come off. Do you know that? Do you use soap at home?" Ross shakes his head yes. The girl at the sink says "My mommy uses soap like this at home." Ross is still watching the girl wash her hands. Maggie, while looking at Kia, tells Ross "She is using liquid soap. That is what we use at school. Liquid soap. Look, she is rubbing her hands till she gets bubbles and then she will rinse the bubbles off."

At 11:00, Maggie tells Ross, "It is time for my lunch. I need to go in my office so I can eat my lunch. You can see my office. You know where it is." Big tears start rolling down Ross's cheeks. Maggie gets up and walks to the small kitchen off the classroom. Ross follows her to the kitchen and stops at the door. Maggie explains to him, "I am going to warm my lunch up in the microwave. While it warms up, I will go to the grown-up restroom." Maggie walks to the door that goes out into the hallway. Ross follows her to the door. Maggie explains to Ross, "Michaela is here in the room with the children. I am just going to the grown-up restroom. I will be right back." Ross waits at the door until Maggie returns. As she enters the room, Maggie smiles at Ross, "Did you hear the ding on the microwave? Do you think my lunch is ready?" Ross nods yes. Maggie gathers up her lunch from the kitchen and walks to her office, Ross trailing behind her. At her office door, Ross stops. Maggie reassures him, "I will here in my office, eating my lunch. When I finish eating,
I will come back into the classroom. I will be right here." Ross replies in a little, quiet voice, "Okay," as tears start rolling down his face. Ross moves away from Maggie's office door a few feet. He pulls a chair up to the sand table, which is the closest area to Maggie's office and puts his hand in the sand. As he plays with the wet sand, Ross looks around the room and watches the other children.

When Maggie gets in her office, she dims the lights and puts on some soft, relaxing music. Sitting down and giving a big sigh, Maggie rests in her office chair. This is the first time she has taken any kind of break since she arrived at 6:00 this morning, five hours earlier. As Maggie eats her lunch, she explains, "I am supposed to have one hour for lunch and one hour in the afternoon for planning time, but I never seem to be able to block those two hours out of my day. I am lucky to get 30 minutes for lunch." Shaking her head, Maggie adds, "I know I should plan my time better, but the children have to come first. I am the only full-time teacher for this classroom. The college has hired Michaela for only 3/4 time and she doesn't get any benefits. Yes, we can have student workers, but they may not have any ECE background and that can become a quality issue. I just feel responsible for everything that goes on here." Sighing, Maggie continues, "We have 54 different children registered for this term. Yes, only 24 are suppose to be here at a time, but there are still 54 different children, with different personalities, temperaments and that many different sets of parents, grandparents, or guardians. It takes a lot of time and effort to keep it all running smoothly."
Leaning back and closing her eyes, Maggie tells me she is going to "recharge her batteries" as she goes into a meditative like state for a few minutes. The phone rings and Maggie picks it up. It was the reminder from the childcare center secretary about a deadline Maggie needs to meet. As soon as she hangs up, Maggie tells me, "I need to tell Ross that the phone call was not his mother. He thinks that any time the phone rings, it will be his mommy. He really misses his dad and now he is trying to make this adjustment to being in a group childcare situation. That is a lot to adjustment for a four-year-old." Quietly opening the door, Maggie sees Ross standing by the door. "Ross, that was not your mommy. She is still in her class. She will call you a little later, okay?" Ross, who looks like he is going to cry, says, "okay. Are you finished with your lunch yet?" Maggie replies, "Almost, I just need a few more minutes and then I will be done."

At 11:30, Maggie leaves her office. Ross is waiting by the office door. "Do you know what, Ross? It is circle time. Do you want to help me get ready?" Ross nods yes. Taking a quick look around the room, Maggie notices which children have left for the day and which children have arrived in the last 30 minutes. Moving to the large muscle area, Maggie gets out the tape player. "Oh, look, Ross. The carpet is a little wet where the boys and girls were throwing the wet cotton balls on the glass wall. Did you see them throw the wet cotton balls and did you see how the cotton balls stuck onto the glass?" Ross nods yes. Maggie asks Ross, "Can you pull the masking tape up that is sticking to the carpet?" Ross pulls all the tape up. When some of the
children see Maggie in the area, they come over and sit down. Missy announces, "We are ready for circle time." Laughing, Maggie replies, "Well, I will be ready in just a few minutes." As they watch Maggie putting a Hap Palmer tape in the tape player, several children start humming the song Maggie uses for circle time greeting. Maggie asks Ross, "Do you want to start the tape?" He nods yes and pushes the play button. The words, "Hello. Hello. Hello. How are you today?" comes out of the tape player's speakers. The children all over the room begin to sing with the tape. The song is the signal that it is circle time. Maggie sits down on the carpet and Ross sits next to her. All over the room the children quickly put away the toy or activity they are playing with and come to the center. Maggie greets each child as he or she comes to the circle. The song continues, "You can say hello by waving your hands." The song has numerous verses, which involve moving various body parts, such as shake your head, wiggle your nose, open and close your mouth, wiggle your ears, shake your shoulders, pat your stomach, touch your knees, wiggle your fingers, touch your toes, and wave your hands. The song ends with "We have got to know ourselves today. Hello. Hello. Hello." The children join in all the verses, making all the appropriate movements. At the end of the song, everybody claps.

Kia pipes up, "I have a birthday." Maggie replies, "Yes, you do have a birthday. It is in December. Sean announces, "I have a birthday." Smiling, Maggie agrees, "Yes, we all have birthdays. Everyone of us has a birthday."
Kenny, a very young three, is wandering around the circle. Maggie asks Michaela to help him find a seat.

Smiling and making eye contact with each child as she scans the circle, Maggie announces, "We are going to sing our Hello song." Maggie begins singing and the children join in, "Hello. Hello. How are you today?" I'm fine. I'm fine. I'm fine. How are you today? Turn to your neighbor and shake their hands." When the song indicates turn to your neighbor and shake their hands, the children cross arms and shake the hands of the two people sitting next to them. At the end of the song, Maggie smiles and tells the children, "All right!" Everyone claps.

Blanche asks Maggie, "Can we sing the Barney song? We haven't sung it for a long, long time." Smiling, Maggie replies, "Sure," as she begins singing. The children and Maggie sing, "I love you. You love me. We are best friends. We're best friends as friends can be with a great big hug and kiss from me to you. Won't you say you love me too." At the end of the song, everyone claps.

Eric, one of the two boys assigned to Maggie's class, stands up and announces, "I have to go to the potty," as he proceeds to the restroom. Several of the young children announce they have to go potty. Maggie tells them, "You need to go one at a time. Michaela will let you know when it is your turn."

"Boy and girls, what is the theme for the week?" "Sticky," the older children announce loudly. "Yes," Maggie replies. "We have been doing activities about things that are sticky and things that stick. I have some special
kind of tape here I would like you to feel." Maggie stands up and moves about the circle letting each child feel the tape, a special kind of sticky, paper tape. "Feel the tape. Think about what it feels like. Tell me something about the tape," Maggie asks the children. As each child feels it, he or she has a comment about the tape. "It is slimy." "It feels like glue." "It is sticky." "It feels gummy." "Oh, it feels wormy." One child tells Maggie, "I don't want to touch it." Maggie replies, "You don't have to touch it if you don't want to. That is your choice. That is okay." The next child announces, "But I want to touch it." Maggie assures him, "You can touch it if you want to." Maggie goes around the circle so each child can feel the tape. Announcing to the class, Maggie explains, "I will put this special, sticky tape in the art area after nap. When you wet it, it gets real sticky and you can stick it on the paper or the boxes, which will be on the art table."

"You have played with lots of things that are sticky or that stick to a surface. What are some of the things you have played with that are sticky or that stick?" The children raise their hands. Maggie quickly calls on each child. Myriad answers come from the many experiences the children have had with sticky. Band-aides, the baby diapers, envelopes, stickers, stamps, Post-it-notes, painting with glue, flubber, Pud, wet sand, wet cotton bowls, glue, paste, honey, syrup, cookie dough, Velcro, masking tape, scotch tape, colored tape, the contact paper, and magnets are the most common responses the children provide. At each answer, Maggie smiles and shakes her head yes.
"All those things are sticky or stick. We had lots of sticky things in the room this week."

"Girls and boys, I have a finger play song for you and I am going to use special puppets to help with this finger play song," Maggie announces. Putting a large, furry glove on her hand, Maggie places a small monkey puppet on the tip of each finger where a strip of Velcro is located. Maggie asks, "Why do these puppets stick to my fingers?" The children reply, "Velcro." "All of you know this finger play," Maggie tells the children. The older children announce, "Five little monkeys." "Yes, five little monkeys," Maggie replies. "What are the monkeys going to do?" Maggie asks the children. "Jump on the bed," the children answer. Maggie replies with a question, "What happens?" "They fall off the bed," the children reply. "Yes, they fall off the bed and then what happens next." Sean pipes up before the other children can answer, "They get caught." Maggie nods her head yes. Missy adds, "And their mama had to call the doctor and the doctor said no more jumping on the bed." Smiling, Maggie answers, "Yes, that is what happens. Let's count the monkeys."

As she points to each monkey on the tip of each finger, the children count, "One, two, three, four, five!" Maggie, "Okay, let's tell the story." Maggie and the children sing the first verse of the song. At the end of the first verse, Maggie removes one of the monkey finger puppets from the tip of one of her fingers. She asks, "How many monkeys are left?" The children count, "One, two, three, four." Maggie and the children go through all the verses,
counting how many monkeys are left at the end of each verse. When the
finger play is over, everyone claps.

"Boys and girls, it is time for lunch. There will be four lunch tables and
six children will sit at each table," Maggie announces. The children stay seated
on the floor because they know Maggie will sing a song with their name in it
and that will be the signal to go wash their hands. "Sing little red box," the
children chant. "Okay," Maggie replies as she begins to sing, "If I had a box, a
little red box, I'd put Sean in. I'd take him out and kiss, kiss (making a kissing
sound as she kisses her fingers), and put him back again." When Sean hears
his name, he stands up and grins. He doesn't leave the circle until Maggie has
finished the verse. The children wait patiently for Maggie to sing. Missy and
Blanche ask, "Do us together." "Okay," replies Maggie, as she sings, "If I had a
box, a little red box, I'd put Missy and Blanche in. I'd take them out and kiss,
kiss and put them back again." When Maggie began singing, the two girls
stood up, held hands, and when the song was over, left together to go wash
their hands. Allen announces, "I want a blue box." "Okay," Maggie responds,
"If I had a box, a little blue box ..." As she goes through the group of children,
many children tell her what kind of box they want in their verse: a yellow
box, a sticky box, a green box, a red box, etc. When Ross's turn comes, he tells
Maggie, "I want to be in a sun box, a big, giant, yellow sun box." Smiling,
Maggie tries to make the words fit the song, "If I had a box, a big, giant,
yellow, sun box, I'd put Ross in ..." Ross stands up and smiles as Maggie
sings his verse. Soon all 23 children, who are still in the classroom, are either
at the table or washing hands. The transition has been made in a smooth, enjoyable way for the children.

Maggie washes her hands and sits down at one of the tables, where Ross, Thomas, Eric, Sean, Ella, and Amanda are sitting. Ross is sitting next to the teacher's chair so he can be close to Maggie. Thomas is the very verbal three-year-old, who likes to talk. Eric and Sean are the two children who were "assigned" to Maggie's class. Both boys are young four-year-olds but look to be about six. Earlier Maggie had mentioned to me that people tend to want Eric and Sean to act their size, but that they were just young four-year-olds, who are learning to communicate their ideas to others. According to Maggie, "They have come a long way in the few weeks they have been in here." The last child at the table is Amanda, an older-four-year-old, who is going on forty. Amanda always has an idea of how something should be done and she lets people know what to do and how to do it. One of the few girls who always wears dresses, Amanda looks like a model for Polly Flinder dresses, the frilly, lacy, fancy dresses. With never a hair out of place, Amanda wears matching tights, shoes, and appropriate hair adornments to complement her outfit.

The lunch is being served family style. The children pass the bowls around so everyone can have a serving of the different foods. Maggie asks Ross if he wants more salad. He replies "No, thank you." Maggie answers, "That's good manners to say 'no, thank you.'"
Noticing that Amanda is looking for something on the table, Maggie asks, "What do you need, Amanda?" Amanda replies, "Salad dressing, please." Maggie tells Amanda, "Kim, the person who serves lunch, is getting us some more salad dressing." Sean, who is sitting to Maggie's left, informs her, "I am done," but he not eaten anything. Maggie, smiling at Sean, replies, "You can set here with us while the other boys and girls finish eating. Here is your milk. Here is your bread. Would you like some more pears?" Sean shakes his head no. Maggie comments, "You might want to taste the pears. I think they are really good."

Looking at Thomas, Maggie asks, "Do you like pears?" Several children start talking about pears. Amanda comments, "We don't have pears very much, do we?" Maggie answers, "You know, we really don't pears very often, do we?"

Ella coughs. Gently, Maggie reminds her, "Cough into your shoulder." Maggie demonstrates how to cough into her shoulder. Maggie adds, "Okay?"

Eric asks, "When will we ever have those rolls again?" Maggie asks, "The rolls?" He nods. Shaking her head, Maggie says, "I don't know. Maybe someday soon." Pointing to the bread, Maggie comments, "That is the bread you are eating today."

Several children start talking about their nametags and the different stickers and numbers on the tags. Replying to a child's comment, Maggie explains, "Yes, there are different colored circles on their nametags. There are
five days in the week and we use a different color for each day. That way we know what day you are suppose to be here."

Kim, the lunch server, brings more salad dressing and more French-fries to the table. Smiling at her, Maggie says, "Thank you, Kim, for the salad dressing and French fries." First, Maggie passes the salad dressing to Amanda and gives the French fries to Ross. To the rest of the children, Maggie explains, "Amanda was waiting for more salad dressing. Everyone was waiting for more French fries and everyone will get some more." Maggie notices Eric has finished his salad. Maggie tells him, "Eric, here is some more salad," as she puts the salad bowl near him. Eric replies, "No, thanks."

Thomas looks at his nametag and tells Maggie, "I have a 4 on my name tag." Maggie replies, "Yes, that means you go home at 4 o'clock today."

Amanda, still on the nametag conversation, asks, "How do you know how to spell our names?" Maggie answers, "Before you started to school, your mother wrote down your name so we would know how to spell it. Your mother wanted us to know how to spell your name. That is how we know."

At another table, a child starts singing the ABC song. Maggie announces, "That reminds me. I did not start the music. We always play the music at lunch. Carrie always helps us to remember to play the music, but she is not here today. We need her here to remind us to play the music." Maggie starts playing a tape of soft piano music. She also dims the lights. Ella asks, "Why do you have the music?" Maggie replies, "We play the music softly and turn the lights down low so we have a pleasant time eating."
Half the children at Maggie's table have finished eating. The others are still eating. The children, who have finished eating, sit and talk.

Ella coughs, but forgets to cough into her shoulder. Maggie reminds Ella to cough into her shoulder so it will keep her hand clean. Ella coughs into her hands. Again, Maggie reminds her, "Cough into your shoulder, not in your hands. Germs will get on your hands and when you touch something, the germs get on what you touch." Thomas pipes in, "I make a fist and cough into my fist." Maggie explains, "The germs will still get on your hands when you cough into your fist." Sean announces, "I cough into my elbow." Nodding her head yes, Maggie tells him, "That will work. You can cough on your elbow or into your shirt or into your shoulder." With a silly grin on his face, Eric tells everyone, "I cough on top of my head," and then he laughs. Maggie, laughingly replies, "You can't cough on top of your head." Amanda announces, "I don't cough at all." Ross, who has been listening intently, "I do cough and I cough on my elbow." Maggie replies, "That is a good health rule. Sometimes we have rules that keep us safe and sometime we have rules to help us stay healthy." With great emphasis, Amanda tells everyone, "I don't want other people's germs!" Trying to keep a serious expression on her face, Maggie replies, "Yes, you don't want germs on your hands." Ella asks, "If you cough on your elbow, you won't have germs on your hands?" Nodding Maggie answers, "You are right. If you cough on your elbow or shoulder, you won't have germs on your hands. The germs will just be on your clothes."
Amanda adds, "Then you can wash your clothes and that will get rid of the germs! And you have to wash your hands too before you eat."

The phone rings. Ross perks up, "Is that my mommy calling me?"
Maggie replies, "I will answer the phone and see who it is." Ross follows Maggie to her office door and stops. He waits while Maggie answers the phone. "Yes, he is right here," Maggie answers into the phone. Looking at Ross, she announces, "It is your mommy. Come in and talk to her." Ross quickly moves to the phone, "Mommy, when are you coming to get me?" He listens and repeats, "Two o'clock. Your school will be done at two o'clock?" Pausing he listens again. "You promise you will come at two o'clock?" he asks. "Bye, mommy." Ross hangs up the phone. There are tears in his eyes as he looks at Maggie, "My mommy is coming at two o'clock. When is two o'clock?" Knowing he won't understand but trying to help him realize that time passes, Maggie takes her watch off and tries to show him what time it is now and when it will be two o'clock. Ross listens and watches intently, but he doesn't understand. Maggie asks, "Would you like to hold my watch and you can check it every once in awhile. If you want me to tell you the time, just ask, okay?" Ross takes Maggie's watch and holds on to it. Maggie tells him, "We need to go back to the lunch table." He follows her to the table.

When Maggie and Ross arrive back at the table, Amanda announces, "I am finished." Maggie replies, "Okay, you can wash your hands right here," as she points to the nearby sink. Eric informs Maggie, "I ate my pears." Maggie
answers, "It is good to eat fruit everyday." Thomas tells Maggie, "I eat fruit everyday and I eat till it is gone. I like fruit."

Amanda comes back to the table to join in the conversation. Thomas, Eric, and Sean talk about eating apples. Amanda tells her, "I always wash the apples before I eat them. I wash off the germs." Maggie replies, "That is good. You are washing the germs off before you eat the apple." Ella asks, "What is a germ?" Maggie answers, "It is something you cannot see. It could be very little, like a tiny speck of dirt." A conversation continues about apples and germs.

The three other lunch tables had a total of 17 children. Michaela, the assistant teacher, sat at one table and the student workers sat at the other two tables. The children at the other three tables have finished eating and have left the table, but all of Maggie's six children are still at the table talking with Maggie and each other. Maggie and the children continue to talk. The conversation begins to slow down and the children finishing eating.

The children begin to talk about who is napping today and who doesn't have to nap. With a frown on his face, Thomas firmly informs Maggie, "I don't have to nap." Just the mention of the word nap causes a great deal of concern for Thomas. Maggie replies, "Not a nap. Just a little rest." Shaking his head no, Thomas answers, "My mom said I don't need a little rest." Smiling, Maggie leans forward and tells him, "Just a little rest today."

Frowning and becoming more upset, Thomas insists, "No, I don't have to rest either!" Gently, Maggie replies, "Let's call your mom and ask, okay?"
back by Maggie's response, Thomas insists, "I don't have to have a little rest. I am not tired." "Let's go to my office and call," Maggie asks him. Standing up, Maggie tells the remaining five children, "I will be right back." Thomas watches as Maggie walks to her office, which is just a few feet away from the lunch table. Once Maggie has Thomas's mother on the phone, Maggie calls for Thomas, who reluctantly drags himself into the office and takes the phone Maggie is holding toward him. Thomas listens and then says into the phone, "But I DON'T need a little rest. I am not tired." He listens some more and hands the phone to Maggie without saying good-bye to his mom. Maggie tells the mother good-bye. Looking at Thomas, who looks not to pleased with what his mother had told him, Maggie asks, "What did your mom say?" "My mom said I have to take a little rest," Thomas answers and then adds, "But I don't know why because I am not tired!"

Maggie and Thomas, who is dragging his feet as if he has been punished, go back to the table where the five remaining children are still talking. Ella asks, "Do I nap today?" Inspecting Ella's nametag, Maggie answers, "Yes, see this blue line. That means you are a napper today." "Okay," replies Ella. "I am a napper, too," Eric adds. "So am I," responds Sean. "Well," Amanda joins in, "I have to nap also." Ross just listens and doesn't add anything to the conversation. He does not have a blue line on his nametag. Thomas informs the group, "I don't have to nap. I just have to take a little rest."
(The children who have been in the center all morning and who will be picked up toward the end of the day nap. The children who have only been in the center a few hours and who will be picked up by 2:30 don’t have to nap. The non-nappers stay in the classroom and go to the interest area of their choice.)

The six children at Maggie’s table are finished eating and talking. They stand up, and push their chairs under the table. The younger ones watch the older ones and follow their lead. The children throw away their paper plates, napkins, paper cups, and plastic ware. They go to the restroom, use the toilet, and wash their hands. The five children go to the hallway door, stand on the red and blue footprints, and wait to be taken to the nap room, which is across the hall. Maggie waits until her group of five nappers is ready to go to the nap room. Her group is the last to go to the nap room today.

Although, he does not have to nap, Ross follows Maggie to the door. As Maggie gets ready to leave the room, Ross asks, "Where are you going?" Maggie replies, "I am going to the nap room and help the children get ready for their naps." Ross looks very worried. Maggie stoops down, touches his elbow, and whispers in his ear, "You know, Ross, I think Michaela and the children, who are not napping, are going to go outside on the playground in a little while. Would you like to go outside with them?" Ross looks anxiously around the room, looks at Michaela, at the other children, and then he looks at Maggie’s watch he has been carrying. "When is two o’clock?" Ross asks. "Let me see," Maggie replies as she looks at the watch. "It is now 12:30. Here is
when it will be two o'clock," Maggie tells him as she points to where the clock
hands will be at two o'clock. "Ross," Maggie continues, "Why don't you get
your little book of photographs from your cubby? You can take it with you to
the playground and look at it? I will be out on the playground after I help the
other children settle down for their nap." Maggie watches Ross as he gets his
little book of photographs. "I am going to the nap room now. I will be back in
a little while," Maggie tells Ross as she opens the classroom door.

As soon as Maggie and the five children enter the nap room, the
children each find their cots, which are located in the same place each day. On
their cots are the pillows, blankets, and cuddly toys they bring from home.
On top of their blankets are the library books each child selected when he or
she entered the classroom this morning. The children take off their shoes,
climb onto the cots, and begin to "read" their library books. The first thing
Maggie does is adjust the thermostat. "It is too warm in here," she tells Kim,
the person who helps with lunch and nap. "The children sleep better if the
temperature is cooler. Since the children have their clothes on and use a
blanket, the temperature needs to be cooler. If it is too warm, they can't sleep
comfortably," Maggie adds.

Maggie moves around the room and helps adjust the children’s blanket
or just speak quietly to each child. Amanda asks for Maggie's help in
adjusting her frilly dress so it won't get wrinkled. "I don't want to look messy
when I wake up," Amanda solemnly tells Maggie.
When the children finishing "reading" their books, they lay the books down on the floor near their cots. When most of the children finish "reading" their books, Maggie dims the lights about halfway down. The dimmed lights signal the children that it is now time to go to sleep. Maggie turns on the tape player and soft, gentle music filters through the room and blocks out the noise from the hallway.

Thomas announces, "I am not tired. I am not going to take a nap." Maggie reassures him, "You are just taking a little rest." Sean asks, "Maggie, will you rub my back?" "Rub mine, too," demands Eric. Sean and Eric's cots are next to each other. Maggie sits on the floor between the two of them and rubs both of their backs at the same time. At Maggie's signal, the student worker turns the lights down. In just a few minutes, the children all settle down. A quiet, restful sound settles over the room. Thomas is the first child to fall asleep. When all the children are asleep, Maggie leaves Kim and a student worker in charge of the sleeping children.

As we make our way back across the hall to her classroom, Maggie tells me, "Thomas had a really bad experience at his first center. He is so afraid of the word nap. If you mention that he needs to take a nap, he becomes really, really upset. The word rest doesn't bother him as much. He is a very young three-year-old and he plays so hard. He needs to at least rest, which for him is sleeping. I know it sounds like we are splitting hairs, but we really aren't. The word nap has a negative meaning for him. The word rest accomplishes the same purpose, but it doesn't hold all that negative stuff for him. Part of
understanding children involves knowing how they interpret words, and the meaning they have for a word may not be the meaning it has for us."

When we enter the room, we can see the children out on the playground. All the children, except Ross, are playing on the fort. Ross is sitting on a bench near the door clutching his book of photographs. As soon as Maggie opens the door, Ross comes up to Maggie and asks, "Are you finished in the nap room?" Smiling, Maggie nods her head yes. "Do you want to look at my pictures?" he asks. "Sure," Maggie replies, as she stoops down to his level. "This is my daddy. He is far, far, away," Ross tells Maggie as he points to a picture of his daddy. Maggie and Ross look at several pictures. After a few minutes of talking and looking at the photographs, Maggie tells Ross, "I need to go over to the fort. Do you want to come?" Ross nods his head yes.

When Maggie gets to the fort, Allen calls out, "Look, Maggie. See what I am doing," as he jumps from one step to another instead of walking down the steps of the fort. "Yes, I see. You are jumping down the steps!" Maggie exclaims. On the sunny, warm, fall afternoon, the children play and play. One by one the parents come to pick up the children. A few children arrive and join the remaining children on the playground.

Ross, who has been close to Maggie's side since she came to the playground, asks, "When is two o'clock?" "May I see the watch?" Maggie asks. Pulling the watch out of his pocket, Ross holds it up to Maggie so she can see it. "Well, Ross, in just a very few minutes it will be two o'clock. Your mom
will be here real soon. She will come out here to the playground to get you," Maggie explains. After carefully putting the watch back in his pocket, he looks to the door, but does not leave Maggie's side.

At two o'clock, Ross's mother comes out onto the playground. Seeing his mom, Ross runs to her. "Is your school finished? Is it two o'clock?" Ross asks as he takes the watch out of his pocket, looking at it. He holds the watch up so his mother could see it. "Yes, it is two o'clock. My school is finished for the day. I came at two o'clock just like I said I would," replies his mother.

Maggie is standing near by watching the reunion. Smiling, Ross walks to Maggie and gives her the watch. He runs back to his mother, takes her hand, and waves to Maggie as he and his mother leave.

Shortly after Ross leaves, Maggie calls the remaining five children, and they make their way to the classroom. After washing their hands, the children serve themselves snack from the self-serve snack counter. This afternoon they are having milk, slices of apple, toasted English muffins, and their choice of two kinds of jelly. When the children finish eating snack, they go to the interest area of their choice.

Maggie puts the sticky paper tape she had shown the children earlier onto the art table. There are four colors of the tape and Maggie positions the rolls of tape on a device her husband had made. Maggie puts the tapes onto a round cylinder, positions it in a holder, and then threads the tape under a small wooden bar, which the children can use to tear the tape as they pull out the length of tape they want. Next, she places small pie pans of water on the
table as well as heavy construction paper. As soon as Maggie starts setting out the sticky tape activity, several children come over to the art table. When everything is ready, three children sit down, pull lengths of tape from the holder, tear the strips off using the wooden bar, dip them into the water, and stick the strips of sticky paper onto the construction paper. Maggie watches and smiles as the children talk about the tape, the colors, the water, the sticky feel, and how the tape sticks to the construction paper. Watching Maggie, I see that she is carefully observing the children, listening to their comments, and noticing how involved each child is in the activity.

At 2:30, Maggie goes to the nap room again. Slowly, she turns the light up by a few degrees. In just a few minutes the children begin to wake from their naps. Noticing Maggie standing near the lights, Thomas, the first to wake, declares, "I took just a little rest. I'll tell my mom I took just a little rest." Nodding her head, Maggie smiles at Thomas. Smiling back, Thomas asks, "Can I go play?" Maggie replies, "Yes, you took a little rest. In just a few minutes, we will go back to the classroom. You can have snack and then play. That is what we do after resting."

When the nappers return to the classroom, they use the restroom, wash their hands, and serve themselves snack. All the nappers are hungry and most of them have second helpings of the snack. Maggie sits at the snack table with them and the children carry on a conversation much like they did at lunch. As the children finish eating, they go to the interest area of their choice.
At 3:00, Sean, who is playing in the block area with Eric, calls loudly, "Maggie! Maggie! We need tape." Maggie comes to the block area and asks, "Which kind of tape do you want? Do you want scotch tape or masking tape or the colored masking tape?" Eric replies, "We need the colored tape." "We need it to make roads here in the block area," Sean informs Maggie. "All right, let me get the box of colored masking tape," Maggie replies. Soon she is back with a plastic box, the size of a shoebox, and it is full of rolls of various sizes and colors of tape. "Okay, which size of colored tape do you need? Here is the smallest tape. It is 1/4 inch wide. Here is the next size. It is 1/2 inch wide. Next, we have the one inch wide tape and then the two inch wide tape," Maggie informs the boys as she holds up one of each size. The boys carefully look at the four different sizes. Together the two decide they want the one-inch wide tape and they point to it. "We want to use that size to build our road," Sean informs Maggie. Nodding her head, Maggie answers, "Okay. Why don't I set the box here on the shelf close to you and you two can decide what color of one-inch tape you want. We have several colors of the one-inch wide tape." The boys separate the one-inch wide tape and discover they have four colors to work with. Soon they have numerous roads taped around and through the block area.

Some children are at the computer, some in the book area, but most are at the art table playing with the wet, sticky, paper tape. Three-thirty, which is suppose to be the end of Maggie's day, comes and goes, but Maggie stays in the room observing the children, responding to their questions, and
comments. As parents come to pick children up, Maggie greets the parents, talks briefly with them, and tells the children good-bye as they leave.

At 4:00, Michaela, the assistant teacher, and a student worker gather up the remaining six children and take them to the classroom next door, where they will stay until the parents come to pick them up. Michaela returns to the classroom and her paid-time is officially over, but Maggie and Michaela begin putting things away, straightening up, and preparing the room for the janitorial staff. After things are put away, they start collecting things to put out in the different interest areas on Monday. At 5:00, Maggie and Michaela begin to finish up. Michaela leaves first. Maggie soon follows carrying two bags.

As we walk to our cars, Maggie recaps her day. "It was a really good day. Did you notice how involved the children were in all the activities? They were using their senses and their motor skills a lot. The children feel comfortable and safe. Well, Ross is still making progress in that area, but he is getting there." Maggie adds, "I love teaching. I don't know what I would do if I wasn't a teacher. I enjoy being with the children. I learn so much from them." Climbing into her little, sporty car, Maggie zips out of the parking lot. Eleven hours after she arrived, Maggie is finally on her way home. As she leaves, I think about her long day and wish I had her energy and enthusiasm after such a long, busy, sometimes hectic day.
Maggie's Theories of Action

During the time I was in Maggie's classroom, I was very aware that Maggie, just like Kate and Audrey, possessed a consistent, coherent set of beliefs about teaching young children. Maggie's theories of action were strongly aligned with NAEYC's philosophy, values, and assumptions about teaching and learning. Maggie's teaching and classroom could be another example of developmentally appropriate practices in action.

Maggie's Concepts and Beliefs

Speaking in a manner common to many Appalachians, Maggie continually switches back and forth from I to you in her speech and from complete sentences to short phrases as she shares her story and her beliefs about teaching and learning. When asked what was her philosophy, Maggie quickly replies

First, I look at each child as an individual and as individuals they have needs. In my classroom, I try to meet their needs. I want them to know that they count, that they have value. That what they say matters. I want the classroom arranged so that they can function independently in it. The classroom is the world they live in while they are here. I want them to know what is expected of them so they can have success and feel good about what they do.

Listening to Maggie, it is apparent that respect for children is at the heart of her belief system. After a short pause, Maggie continues her statements about her philosophy.

You have to genuinely like children and respect them and respect their feelings. They are human beings and they are very sensitive and aware. They have such intense feelings, about certain things, and as a teacher, you have to be aware of that. Children are like that and they each have needs. The physical needs you can see, but they have
emotional or social needs that you need to be aware of. You have to
aware of each child's needs.

Carefully trying to express the beliefs that are the foundation of her
teaching, Maggie explains,

a teacher in a preschool setting is providing an experience for children
to be themselves, to grow and develop emotionally and socially, to feel
good about themselves, and to be happy. If a teacher can do all of that
with a preschool child, she has really accomplished a lot. The children
learn as they are doing age and developmentally appropriate things as
they grow in whatever area of development that they are in at that
moment in time. But you are providing that experience for them. You
are providing the materials. You are giving them time to explore and
play. You are supporting them as they grow and develop. You are
providing a safe place, a good place for them to be in and learn in.

Play is an essential part of Maggie's philosophy. "Play is the whole big
part of it all. We do so much of this with play. Play through all the different
interest areas. To meet their needs and what they are interested in at that
moment." Just as Maggie respects children as individuals, she respects their
right to play.

Children need time to play together or alone. They are going to learn
how to play together by having an experience of doing that. If the
children are really into something that they are really interested in and
creating and building, my belief is that I don't interrupt them.
Interrupting them disturbs their play. The rule is do not disturb. It
stops their play dead. Let them play!

Attempting to explain something that can be complex, Maggie
summarizes her philosophy,

so I guess my basic philosophy is to meet the children's needs. One
way I do this is to carefully arrange the room so they can be
independent and care for their own needs as much as they can for their
age. When you think of it like that, it is kind of simple, but I feel that
sometimes children are under so much stress to act a certain way or
whatever that they can't be children. My philosophy is just letting
them be children in their learning environment. Having the learning environment set up so they can function as individuals, can play, be independent, and grow at their own rate and pace.

**Children's personal growth.** Listening to Maggie, it is obvious that she feels very strongly about supporting each child's personal growth, especially in the areas of emotional and social development. Maggie explains,

in my classroom, they are learning to feel good about themselves. They are learning to be happy and that they are somebody. They are learning to care for and about themselves and they learn that other people care about them. Of course, they are learning how to cut and share and use crayons and use paints and create and all of that. All of that is important too but the bottom line is being happy and knowing that they can do a lot of things and that they are important. They learn that letters make words and books are important. To talk and socialization. But, first, you have to be happy and know you are okay and be happy about yourself.

Before other learning can take place, human beings have to develop a feeling of self-worth. Maggie elaborates,

it is important to have a strong sense of self-worth, that you are somebody and that you count. You see children who come in and sometimes just the interaction with the parent, makes you wonder. You see it at that time and you think how does that child feel. How does that interaction affect the child? Do the children really have value? I think preschool should give children value. They need to value themselves. They have to learn to value themselves or else they can't really learn other things.

In her teaching and interactions with the children, Maggie conveys a feeling of a care. She is a caring, nurturing adult, one the children can trust. Maggie elaborates,

I care. They know that somebody cares about them. They learn that they are important, that they have meaning. What they do and say and feel has meaning. They have value and worth. They are somebody. They are special. They can do anything. It is like their world. They are in charge of it. Sometimes I think about when they go home, when they
get in the car and turn back into a little kid or something. I don't think of them as little kids. They are human beings with feelings and ideas. They have goals. They can think. They can solve problems. They have feelings. They are human beings.

Before the children can develop a sense of self worth and a belief that they have value, they have to feel physically and emotionally safe and secure.

Referring to children as you, Maggie explains,

you have to feel safe and secure. You know what is expected of you and you can handle it. The boundaries are set and you can do it. Nobody has to be telling you all the time what to do. You are moving on your own and making decision within this framework.

Part of this development also involves learning how to socially interact and getting along with one's peers. Posted on the wall are the three basic rules Maggie wants everyone in the room to live by. Maggie explains,

be safe, be kind, and be fair. I think that says it all and I think that is really good. If we can have a classroom like that, what else can you ask for? I want them to be friendly and kind to each other. Respectful toward each other. Respectful when talking to each other. Playing and getting along with others. Listening and socializing with others.

Believing that children learn through social interaction not only with adults but with other children, Maggie encourages and supports children's interactions with their peers. Maggie elaborates,

the children learn from other children. They notice what other children are doing and are interested in. Children learn from other children more than they do the teacher. The teacher helps with the environment, provides the situation, the materials but often what the children want to learn is from other children.

Another area of personal growth Maggie stresses is in the realm of physical development, especially physical fitness and self-help skills with an emphasis on personal hygiene. With careful thought and knowledge of what
children can do, Maggie establishes an environment where the children can personally care for themselves. From the first moment the children enter the classroom, the environment encourages them to do for themselves. The tasks range from hanging up their coats, finding a tissue if they need to blow their noses, throwing away the used tissue, getting a drink of water, going to the restroom without assistance, washing their hands, and taking care of their food needs. At the morning and afternoon open snack, the children are given a choice as to whether they want snack and if they do, they help themselves at the self-service snack table as well as clean up after themselves. At lunch, the children eat family style, serving themselves from the food bowls on the table. These sound like such simple tasks until I remember that the majority of the children in Maggie's room are young three-year-olds, many of whom still look like toddlers. Often the young children learn how to do these tasks by watching how the veteran four-year olds, who have spent a year in Maggie's room, manage all these tasks with such competency.

Being very aware of each child's motor skills and physical fitness, Maggie finds numerous ways to offer children opportunities to use the skills they have and to develop more complex skills. Maggie describes how she goes about offering these opportunities.

You look to the environment. Create a natural environment to encourage them to move and do things. We go outside two, sometimes three times a day. On the playground there are activities to meet everybody's needs. If they don't need it, it is still fun to do. If they need it, it enhances their motor skills. Either way the children are moving. Inside I put things in the large motor area daily. Sometimes I will encourage a child to try the activity. In any case, they need to have
feelings of success at whatever level they are at and they must have opportunities to practice naturally. Whether it is painting at the easel or cutting paper or using the playdough, they can do all these without the stress of having to do it a certain way. What is important is the doing, at whatever level they can.

A healthy sense of self, an I-can-do-attitude, an I-have-value belief, an I-know-how-to-get-along-with-others attitude, and feelings of independence and self-sufficiency are goals Maggie has for the children in her room. In all of this, Maggie helps young children learn how to learn and to realize they are capable learners and that learning is fun. How Maggie accomplishes this hinges not only on her one-on-one treatment of children but also on her curriculum planning and implementation.

Curriculum planning and implementation. Listening to Maggie talk about curriculum planning and implementation reminds me of a symphony conductor. Just as a conductor knows his music, his players, and what they are capable of doing, Maggie knows children, child development, and what children have the potential to do. A highly skilled curriculum developer, Maggie can freely and in-depth express myriad areas and levels of what it takes to provide a curriculum that works for young children.

Being turned on and tuned in are the expressions Maggie uses when she first begins to talk about curriculum. With excitement in her voice, Maggie elaborates how she is always looking for ideas for curriculum, when you are a preschool teacher, you are always just ON! Turned on. If you see something, it clicks in. If you see something in a magazine or a journal or a picture or whatever, it clicks in. You see the possibility for new curriculum activities and new themes. You are constantly just
aware of ideas, things you can do. You are always just on. Aware to the possibilities.

But Maggie's biggest source of ideas comes from the children. Building on what is in their lives and what they are interested in are the main sources of Maggie's curriculum ideas.

What I am trying to get out here is that you are always learning and extending. You have to be tuned into the children. You really have to be tuned in. First, you would listen to the children, the things that they are interested in. Really listen to them, the things that they talk about or relate to. Children are the best sources [for curriculum ideas]. They have wonderful ideas. You have to be aware. You have to be sensitive to what they are saying and doing, what they are interested in, what they are living, and what they are asking about. You have to be aware of the opportunities for learning.

Drawing on the children's interests, things Maggie knows children like to do, and things Maggie is interested in become the fountain from which she draws ideas for her curriculum. The policy of the Malcolm Childcare Center requires Maggie to do thematic planning, but Maggie tries to incorporate a more emergent style of curriculum. Maggie explains,

well, I do the more formal themes for two weeks instead of one. I try to use the children's interests and ideas in coming up with topics for themes. During the two-week period I try to catch the moment and build on what the children are doing so we have more immediate type curriculum activities. Some things carry over for weeks or months or for the year such as an interest in learning to write.

Offering the children three levels of curricular activities at any given time, Maggie provides the two-week theme, the emergent activities that often occur at a teachable moment, and the on-going and long-lasting curriculum interests exhibited by different children. Maggie adds, 'I would like to do
more of the emergent curriculum. The possibilities are endless. Everything in their world can be the basis for curriculum."

Some of the basic themes Maggie uses deal with color or shapes or a season, but the majority of the themes come from things the children are interested in and that are part of their world. Maggie has developed themes around handles, and as Maggie tells it, "Handles are everywhere. You can do so much with handles." Another interesting theme focuses on the concept of clear and things that are clear. Things that have holes is another theme based on children's interests. Things that have pockets and things that are shiny are a few more themes Maggie and the children have developed.

Being very aware of what is in the children's world outside of the classroom, Maggie draws on what children talk about with her and the other children. Several years ago, Maggie developed a theme related to spots because of the children's interest in the 101 Dalmatian craze. Beanie babies and Blue's Clues are other themes Maggie has used. Maggie is aware that some teachers frown on using highly commercialized topics for themes, but she uses them because the children want to talk about them. Maggie explains these commercial things are in the children's world. I think it is important to allow them to talk about it, whatever it is. When we do one of these themes, more language occurs than you would believe. They talk and talk and talk and they are so excited. This is their world. Why deny it? Why not use it? These decisions are easier to make, if you listen and watch and react and respond to the children.
Once Maggie and the children come up with the theme, a number of different things have to be considered when planning what kinds of activities will be made available to the children. In quick succession Maggie lists, the ages of the children. To have activities that are board enough that three-year-olds can do as well be a challenge for five-year-olds. The things need to be real, hands-on. I mean really hands-on and something that they can relate to, that they can manipulate. Something that is in their environment. Something, maybe, we can sometimes extend and expand on its own or into other areas. You have to think of things like health and safety.

During this process of curriculum, Maggie brainstorms all the possible activities that could relate to a theme keeping in mind the things listed above. Consulting her memory of toys and materials she has, past activities that many children have liked, new ideas, and things she and her husband can make, Maggie writes down all possibilities. Often the children, especially the veterans, the older fours and five-year-olds, will help her brainstorm possible activities. During these teacher-children brainstorming, Maggie becomes the recorder and writes down all the children's suggestions. Laughing, Maggie explains, "The children can really think of things I hadn't. They are so much more creative than we are. They really are. If you will only listen to them, they can teach you so much."

After the brainstorming, Maggie begins to gather the materials she will use in the classroom. With an ample budget, Maggie has access to many toys, materials, equipment, and supplies. In addition, Maggie has many of her own materials she and her husband have made and collected over the years. As she
is gathering, collecting, and making what she will need for the activities related to the theme, Maggie takes the next step, explaining,

I think of the room as a whole. I think of all the curriculum areas in the room. I also really want to have something for each area of development. I look at what I would like individual children to have opportunities to practice or do. I want interesting, interactive things the children can really relate to, can manipulate, and use a lot. I always look at the physical skills they will need and everything in here requires physical skills of some kind. I want them to have lots of choices.

Once Maggie has everything ready, she begins the process of setting up the new toys, materials, equipment, and activities into the existing environment. While doing this, Maggie again thinks about the children and what they will be able to do.

Will they be able to manipulate the materials? Can they have successes at whatever level they are at? You also have to keep in mind from the beginning what they are going to do with it and what the outcomes might be. You really have to think of all the possible outcomes they could have. Is it going to be something that engages them for extended periods of time or for just a short interaction kind of activity? Are there enough activities out in all the interest areas? You have to check and double-check everything. Is it going to be interesting enough for them to want to interact, explore, and experiment? There is a lot to think about.

Once Maggie has the items in the environment, she then checks for how things look. The aesthetics of the room are important. Maggie explains,

how things look are important. The sound is important. The sounds and the light in the room are real important. Once the children are there, I listen for a positive hum all around the room. The positive hum lets me know the children are involved and interacting in a positive way.

After all Maggie's planning and work, she is still tuned into the children. Earnestly, Maggie says,
you learn real quickly that if it is going to be a success you have to change with the children. If they are going to do it, you meet their needs instead of them meeting your needs. It is easy to do, but you have to be tuned into the children. To see what they are doing with it. You have to be accepting and not be upset as a teacher that it isn't like you planned it. If you think about it like that and get involved with them, it even goes further because they can extend it. You would not believe. They are so much more creative than we are. They are so open and can think outside the box. They really do. When I see how far the children can take something, I know they are learning how to learn. They feel good about what they can do. They are happy. The classroom is their world and they can master it. I learn so much from the children.

Factors Influencing and Guiding Maggie's Theories of Action

What factors have influenced and guided Maggie's theories of action? Without hesitation, Maggie carefully articulates a number of major factors that have influenced and guided her. "I think," Maggie ponders, "when you are older you think more about what life has been like and why you are where you are. I know how I was raised and the people who raised me have had a great impact on me."

Maggie credits much of her understanding of play and the enjoyment of childhood to her Dad. With a smile in her voice, Maggie explains, my Dad would always play with us and I was so proud of him. He just went to the third grade and he just acted like us, sort of. He was fun and all the kids loved him. I liked that they liked him and I really liked him too. He would do things and have us do things and all that. I was always use to kids being around and doing things with them.

Continuing, Maggie says, "He helped shaped my view of what children should be allowed to do. Playing, laughing, having fun, and creating. He also helped me learn about making do with not very much and how to see beyond
the surface." Maggie recalls one example of his ability to see beyond the
surface. Smiling as she reminisces, Maggie tells the story,

my Dad was a coal miner and at the mines was a big pile of sand. Dad
called it our sandbox. So we had the biggest sandbox in the world. The
sandbox was a huge big box, as big as a building. The bottom part of it
was where they dumped the sand they used in the mines and it was
dumped from railroad cars. That is how big the sandbox was. So we
did all kinds of creative, fun things there. We played and played in the
biggest sandbox in the world.

The woman Maggie called Mom had a totally different impact. "Mom,"
Maggie explains, "was so different than Dad. She was serious, somber, and
rarely smiled. Where Dad saw possibilities and joy, Mom only saw the
negative things." Maggie remembers trying to please her mother and that it
seemed an impossible task. "I knew I was given into this family," Maggie tells
me, "and I remember worrying when I didn't please Mom. If I was given
away once, would she give me away when I didn't do what she wanted or
couldn't please her?" Even as a child, Maggie knew she shouldn't have to feel
the way she did. Maggie recalls, "I can remember growing up thinking about
Mom's ways and thinking I never wanted children to feel like I felt as a child."

From her experiences with her mom, Maggie believes it is important for
children to know that they have value. "Children deserve," Maggie declares,
"to have an emotionally safe and emotionally secure environment." Maggie
believes children should be listened to and that the adults should make sure
the children feel like they are okay. Children should be with people who will
protect their feelings and their rights to be children. Maggie freely admits she
has struggled with some of the feelings her Mom instilled in her, but she
understands more now than she did as a child. "You know," Maggie explains, "Mom had nine brothers and sisters and most of them were like her. Serious. Negative." As an adult, Maggie looks back and asks herself was it a genetic trait or was it something they learned. Maggie adds, "I wonder about that."

Another important person in Maggie's young life was an aunt who was married to her Mom's brother. Maggie explains,

oh, my gosh, I remember her so well. She had an impact on me. This one aunt had a lot of kids. She was so good to her kids and she always did things with them. I always wanted my mother to do things with me, but she didn't. At Easter time, this aunt made Easter baskets out of oatmeal boxes with crate paper. This was 55 years ago. She would create and do things. I think I got a lot of my creativity from her doing things. Having a Christmas tree and we didn't. Things like that. She did things with us like walking around to the mines on the railroad track on Sunday. We would walk on the tracks and do things. We would make baskets and play and make cookies, and things like that. I had such a good feeling about her. She had the biggest impact on my life of anybody, next to my Dad. I used to wish she were my mom.

After Maggie's Mom and Dad died, this aunt helped Maggie find out about the woman Maggie calls, "My real mom." The aunt is still living and Maggie stays in contact with her.

A second major factor, which has influenced Maggie's theories of action, is the Sunday school nursery education and training she had at the Methodist church more than forty years ago. Maggie recalls,

when I did the training at the church, they used wonderful literature. It came from the church's national office and it was excellent. I know at that time we talked about things that later I had again when I took college classes in early childhood education. There were so many things that were similar that I could relate back to that time [church workshops and literature].

401
In the church workshops, Maggie had her first real education about teaching. Since she so desperately wanted to be a teacher, she applied herself to learning all she could about teaching young children. "We learned a lot of different things," Maggie recalls. "It was hard to understand starting off, but once I read and studied the literature and went to workshops, I learned." The curriculum areas Maggie learned the most about were science, dramatic play, and creative art. Maggie recalls the real, hands on approach she was taught.

We would have a science table set up. In the spring we had all the springs things out. We would talk about birds and birds' nests. We would look out the window at the birds at the bird feeder. We would watch for birds building nests in the spring. The focus was on things in the children's world and in their environment.

During those years when she was teaching Sunday school and directing the children's education department at the church, Maggie was introduced to and became familiar with the nursery school literature and the professional knowledge base of the day. From her determined effort to learn all she could and be the best teacher she could be, she developed a foundation in the traditional nursery school approach to educating young children. With a catch in her voice and tears in her eyes, Maggie comments, "If I can say this without crying, I feel like whatever I have been able to do or can do now comes from that time I was involved in the children's education program at the church."

A third major factor that has influenced Maggie is her son and twin daughters. Maggie explains, "My own children have impacted how I react to
children and teaching. If you can imagine having three children under 18 months!" Continuing Maggie says,

watching my children grow and having the neighborhood children in. Seeing them all together and how children interact and relate to each other. How other parents interact with their children. What other parents allowed and did not allow and things like that. Planning activities for us all to do. Going on a train ride or going to the park or whatever. It really has had more of an impact that I can actually describe.

A fourth factor that Maggie feels has influenced her is all the children she has worked with over the last 35 years. "I learn so much from each and every child," Maggie explains. "I learn more from them than they do from me. Each child is different. Each child is unique. They each have needs, wants, and desires. Their feelings are different. I have to study each one and learn about them."

Maggie is especially sensitive to the fact that children remember or have a feeling about their preschool experience and that what she does can have an impact on their lives. Former students come to visit her and they talk about what Maggie did and the kinds of things they had fun doing. Maggie explains, "It is scary to know I have that kind of responsibility. The first school experience. Learning what teachers are like. Finding out what they can do away from home. Just knowing this influences what I think and do."

A fifth factor that has influenced Maggie is her work with parents, especially the parents at the Parent Co-op. Maggie recalls, "They had and have a big influence on me. Just working with them in the classroom and seeing how they relate to their children." Maggie continues, "Attending the
parent education meetings and listening to their questions and concerns. Just learning from them as individuals."

The sixth factor Maggie mentions is working with early childhood education student teachers. The PTC center is one of three classrooms that are used as a laboratory for the ECE student teachers at Malcolm State College. Maggie tries to stay current with what the student teachers have studied. Maggie explains,

I read the books and articles they have to read. I view the videotapes they watch. It helps me to know what they are learning. I think it is important to have a handle on what they are learning at the time. I know they are learning all the newest trends and newest issues. It helps me keep up-to-date. It helps me be more open to change, to value what I am doing. It helps to know where the college instructors and student teachers are coming from. I want to be a step ahead of them or be with them. It is important that I read those things and keep up to date on that.

Listening to the student teachers questions and comments influences Maggie's perceptions. Maggie explains, "It helps to see how they see things. How they see the children and questions they have. Sometimes what they say makes me more aware. Sometimes they reinforce my thinking. Talking to them helps me think about my teaching."

The last factor Maggie discusses is what she refers to as her professional development. Maggie remembers, "I learned from the classes I had at the two-year college. I learn so much from the instructors." After graduating Maggie continued to take college workshops when new and interesting topics were offered. Being active in the local Association for the Education of Young Children, Maggie attends monthly meetings as well as the
fall and winter mini-conferences. Maggie also attends the state AEYC conference. Maggie explains, "I always learn something from the workshops. I especially like the exhibitors' hall. I find new toys, new ideas, and I think of the possibilities." One year Maggie was co-chair of the state AEYC annual conference. With a smile, Maggie describes it as a "real learning experience."

Maggie has also presented at the state conference. Maggie explains,

I didn't know if I could do it, but I wrote a proposal and it was accepted. I did a workshop on creating themes by following the children's interests, a kind of emergent curriculum idea. Over 150 people attended. I thought it went real good. I felt real positive about it and I learned a lot just preparing for it and doing it.

Part of Maggie's professional development is a comprehensive membership in the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Laughing, Maggie tells me, "You should see my chair at home. I have Young Children stacked there along with the books I get from NAEYC. I also get the Scholastic magazine for early childhood education. I am always reading and looking for ideas." Maggie, after 35 years of teaching, is still striving to learn all she can about teaching young children.

**How the Context Impacts Maggie, her Teaching, and her Theories of Action**

The context influences how Maggie's theories of action are manifested in her teaching. With a great deal of confidence and belief in herself as a capable, competent teacher of young children, Maggie attempts to mold and shape the context to match what she believes is best for young children. In some ways the context supports and fosters Maggie's theories of action, but in others Maggie has to use her exemplary teaching skills and organization skills.
to make adaptations to the limitations the context places on her. With a great deal of creativity in making the system work for her and the children, Maggie seeks ways to create what she sees as the best fit for all the young children in her classroom.

The context supports Maggie's theories in several ways. First, Malcolm's Childcare Center is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and the center's philosophy is aligned with NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practices. Since Maggie's theories of action match this philosophy and teaching approach, she is given a great deal of autonomy in implementing her approach to educating and caring for young children. Second, Maggie is given a certain degree of freedom in her development of the curriculum she uses with the children in her room. Third, Malcolm College is willing to provide an adequate budget for materials such as furnishings, toys, materials, equipment, and supplies as well as provide janitorial services so the child care center maintains the look of a state-of-the-art child care facility. This budget allows Maggie to purchase a wide variety of materials, which enhance and support her curriculum ideas.

An aspect of the context that could present a challenge to the implementation of Maggie's theories of action is the part-time childcare concept. Although no more than 24 children are usually in Maggie's classroom at one time, there can be as many as 40 different children, on any given day, coming and going from 7:00 A.M. and 6:00 P.M. In any given term, Maggie will have over 50 of the same children attend each week. Some
children are in her room for as little as six hours per week. A few children only come one day a week. Others are in Maggie's room for as much as 35 hours per week. If a child needs full-time childcare, which is considered 40 hours or more a week, he or she is supposed to be enrolled in one of the full-time childcare classrooms at Malcolm. However, it is not uncommon for Maggie to be assigned 1 or more children the teachers in Malcolm full-time childcare classrooms could not manage. Given the mix of children of college students, children of faculty and staff, and the challenging children from the other Malcolm classrooms and from the community, and given the fact that the majority of children are young three-year-olds and the rest are four and five-year-olds, Maggie is faced with a formidable task of facilitating the formation of a classroom that meets the needs of a diverse group of children. Given the transitory nature of the children's hours in the center, Maggie is also challenged to provide a smooth transition for the children as well as a classroom that is emotionally secure for such varying hours of attendance. Given her organization skills, creativity, pragmatic nature, and her deep concern for children's emotional and social well-being, Maggie has developed a system that works smoothly, efficiently, and one in which the majority of the children quickly feel comfortable and one in which the needs of most children are met.

Another challenge that arises from the children's varying hours of attendance is helping them establish positive relationships with the other children. Some of the children do develop strong bonds and friendships with
other children in the room. From the first day a child is in the center, Maggie makes a special effort to help the child learn the names of the other children and helps the children talk about what days and times they are in the center. In addition to the sign in books, Maggie has a large wall chart with the days and hours of attendance for the children. She also has another wall chart where the children's first names are listed alphabetically and which tells the days and hours of attendance. The children often ask Maggie when a certain child will be in the classroom. Maggie will go to the chart, look, and read the information aloud. The children quickly learn that it is easy to find out when their friends will be in the classroom. Maggie also introduces the parents to children their child is playing with so the parents can talk to their child about his or her playmates. If the parents of playmates arrive or leave at the same time, Maggie will introduce the parents to each other. After the first quarter of attendance, it is not uncommon for parents to try to coordinate their child's time in the center with the times of his or her playmates. Believing social development is very important, Maggie goes that extra mile to help children develop positive relationships with other children.

A third challenge that arises from the children's varying hours of attendance is providing a curriculum that all the children will have an opportunity to experience. Malcolm's policy required that the childcare teachers use weekly thematic planning. After presenting her case that the children's varying hours of attendance made it difficult for the PTC children to experience many of the activities she had planned, Maggie was able to get
Malcolm's administrator to agree to allow the PTC classroom to use the same theme for two weeks. Having a two-week theme allows the children extended period of time to explore, experiment, and investigate the topic whenever they are in the center. Although she is required to do thematic planning, Maggie bases most of her themes on the interests of the current group of children and makes an effort to incorporate some emergent curriculum ideas in her daily and immediate planning.

Being aware of when their parents or guardians are picking up individual children, Maggie tries to plan things that make it possible for the children to make a calm, easy transition from being involved to leaving the center. Maggie also works closely with parents to get them to be aware of what their child is doing when they come to pick the child up. If the child is involved in an activity, Maggie encourages parents to observe, to ask their child questions about what he or she is doing, and to give the child time to come to closure on the activity before telling him or her it is time to leave.

Another curriculum challenge Maggie faces is that of providing materials that young three-year-olds can do, but also entices the four and five-year-old children. Constantly on alert for what children are interested and can do, Maggie strives to have materials that are, as she describes it, "broad enough that three-year-olds can do as well as be a challenge for five-year-olds."

Working with Malcolm's early childhood education majors can also be challenging in terms of providing the children with a consistent, emotionally
secure environment. Each term Maggie's PTC classroom is used as laboratory for the first of three practicum experiences the ECE majors take as part of their degree requirements. Working closely with the college instructors who supervise the ECE majors, Maggie does numerous things to help the ECE student teachers learn about the PTC classroom, the children, and the curriculum. First, Maggie helps conduct an orientation for the new ECE student teachers before the beginning of the term. She provides them with information about the center's philosophy and the PTC classroom's routines and procedures. Once the term begins, Maggie conducts a short daily briefing before the student teachers start their time in the classroom. During this time, Maggie also answers any questions the ECE student teachers might have as well as fill the ECE majors in on what is happening in the center on that day. While the student teachers are in the center with the children, Maggie is constantly on alert to ensure the ECE student teachers have the support they need so they can interact appropriately with the children. Each term a new group of ECE student teachers enter the center and Maggie starts the process all over again.

Another aspect of the context that impacts Maggie is Malcolm College's reluctance to hire another full-time teacher for the PTC classroom. The college is willing to invest money in the building, equipment, materials, and toys, but not in hiring full-time teachers. Another full-time teacher would assist Maggie in her efforts to provide the children with consistency in terms of staffing. The college has hired one teacher for 3/4 time, but she is paid an
hourly wage with no benefits. Because of the difference in pay, the 3/4
teacher's job description is narrow and does not require her to assume any of
the tasks that consume so much of Maggie's time. The college does allow
Maggie to hire college student workers for the minimum wage, but it is
becoming increasingly more difficult to hire college students at the wage the
college is willing to pay. If at all possible, Maggie hires ECE majors for the
student worker positions, but it is not always possible to do so. Being the only
full-time teacher in the PTC classroom, Maggie ends up carrying the bulk of
the responsibility for what occurs in the classroom. The hours Maggie spends
in and out of the classroom stands testimony to the fact that the job takes
many more hours than she is paid. Her normal workweek is 40 hours, but she
easily spends 50+ hours in the center each week and 10 or more hours at
home doing the paperwork required of her position.

Despite the demands placed on her by the context of providing part-
time childcare and being the only full-time teacher in the PTC classroom,
Maggie works so diligently that she makes everything seem to run so
smoothly and effortlessly. With her devotion to young children and her zest
for being the best teacher she can be, Maggie continues to strive to provide the
children with the best she can offer, because to Maggie, "children deserve no
less than the best I can give."

**Maggie's View of an Effective Prekindergarten Teacher**

When I ask what it takes to be an effective teacher of young children,
Maggie pauses and carefully considers her answer. Thoughtfully, Maggie
replies, "You have to want to do it. It takes enthusiasm. It takes energy. A preschool teacher needs to have good health. She really does. A lot of patience. Patience and caring and all those [prosocial] helping words."

Maggie stops, thinks, looks off into space and smiles, and begins again,

caring, aware of feelings. I remember thinking this is kind of stupid, but this just a personal thing. It is like with your own family life and your husband, children, and all. Loving and caring. The family situation that you have is real caring and loving. You want to extend that. You want your teaching to be an extension of that, of the caring and love. Somehow that [your teaching] and your family are all involved. It is all of one thing. What you are at home extends out to the children. It [teaching] is just an extension. It is not that you are one way at home and another way at school. It is not that. It is just an extension.

From Maggie's perspective, the effective preschool teacher has to be willing to become emotionally involved with the children. Maggie states, "Teaching preschool is different, because preschool teachers have to be so involved with their children, emotionally. Children need to know that the teacher cares about them."

Being able to think like a child is a very important skill a preschool teacher has to have. Maggie elaborates,

you have to be able to think like the children. You have to be willing to see things from the child's view. You've got to do that. Try to think like a child. Look at how the child would view it. Be able to put yourself in their place. You have to adapt your thinking.

An effective teacher has to be a life-long learner. Maggie explains,

it takes constant learning. Learning and relearning. Being aware to new trends and issues and changes in education as far as children are concerned. Being able to adapt and want to adapt. Learning about the children and their lives. Being able to adapt and wanting to meet their needs.
I ask Maggie what practical advice would she give a new teacher. Very quickly and seriously, Maggie replies, "Listen. Listen to the children. Really, really, listen to the children!" After further thought, Maggie adds,

it takes a lot of energy, dedication, and you must really want to do it, because the pay isn't that much. It has to be something you really like doing. And you need to be able and willing to spend the time and energy in doing it.

Pausing, Maggie thinks some more and then continues,

remember that children are people. They are very sensitive and very aware of the teacher and how she feels about them. You have to genuinely like them and respect them and respect their feelings. Children have feelings and the teacher has to be aware that children are like that. They each have needs. Physical needs you can see, but children have emotional and social needs that a teacher needs to be aware of. It is important to be aware of each child's needs.

Drawing on her work with many student teachers, Maggie contemplates what new teachers need to know. Thoughtfully, Maggie adds,

be aware of the children's emotional and social needs. Each one has something. You become aware by being tuned into each child. Listening, watching, and observing. Talking and interacting with them. Seeing how each child interacts with you, with the other children, with the parents, with the environment, with the activities. You have to find out what they need from the teacher and from their preschool experience. But you have to develop this ability, this awareness. These are not things that you can learn from just reading a book. It is a sensitivity and awareness you use when you are working with children and with others.

Again pausing, Maggie adds, "Keep learning. Take classes, workshops, go to conferences, read books, and magazines. You have to know what is happening in education. You have to keep learning."
Maggie poignantly ends our talk by sharing her feelings about teaching.

You get back from teaching so much more than you put into it. Even though you put in 14 to 15 hours a day [laughter]. You really do. I think about it as I am getting older now. I think about the alternative to not teaching. What would I do if I wasn't teaching? I can't see not teaching.

The interviews were conducted during the school year and in those interviews Maggie's comments expressed her language of practice and her theories of action. What was Maggie able to accomplish in her classroom with the children who attend only part-time, at varying times during the week, and whose attendance times change as their parents' college class schedules change? In the next section, let's take a look at Maggie's classroom near the end of the school year.

A Glimpse of a Day in June

Bright, fluorescent colors can be seen throughout the room. Bright flowers set on the check-in table. Obviously, this week's theme is something to do with colors. It is 10:30 and the children are busy in every interest area of the room. A productive hum is heard as the children engage in various activities.

Maggie is in the art area talking to Blanche, who is now five and will be going to kindergarten next fall. From the look of concentration on Blanche's face, she is paying close attention to what Maggie is telling her. Blanche nods her head yes, looks at Maggie, and smiles the biggest smile. Sitting down in the teacher's chair at the art table, Blanche rearranges the paper, two trays of
various small, fluorescent objects such as feathers, pieces of paper, stickers, markers, balls of yarn, and crayons. Blanche counts the glue sticks and looks around the table for something. "Maggie, where is the marker you use to write the names?" Blanche asks. Maggie pulls a marker out of her pocket and gives it to Blanche. When she is ready, Blanche yells, "Does anybody want to make a fluorescent collage?" Missy, Amanda, Ella, and two other children come to the art table and sit down. Acting very business like, Blanche announces, "Today, I am going to be the teacher at the art table."

Making eye contact with each of the five children at her table, Blanche asks, "What is the theme of the week?" "Fluorescent!" answers the children. "Yes," Blanche replies, "This week the theme is fluorescent and today you can create a piece of art from all the things here on the table." As she is talking, she sweeps her arm around to indicate all the things on the table. "Now, what color paper do you want?" Blanche asks the children as she fans the heavy construction paper sitting in front of her. "See, we have lots of colors to choose from. Missy, what color would you like?" Missy tells Blanche, "Yellow." Blanche pulls out a piece of yellow paper. Looking intently at Missy, Blanche sees a black line on her nametag, which indicates, Missy knows how to write her name. Blanche hands Missy the yellow paper.

Looking at Ella, Blanche asks, "Ella, what color paper would you like?" Ella selects bright pink. Noticing that Ella does not have a black line on her nametag, Blanche asks, "Do you want me to write your name on your paper or would you like to write it?" "You write it," Ella replies. Looking intently at
Ella's nametag, Blanche says aloud, "E," and then she carefully writes the letter E on the pink paper. Leaning forward so she is closer to Ella's nametag, Blanche looks at the second letter of Ella's name, and says, "l," and then she writes a small l next to the E on the bright pink paper. Blanche continues to say aloud each letter of Ella's name as she reads it and writes it down. Ella listens intently and the other children wait patiently. As soon as she gets Ella's name written, Blanche takes a deep breath and exhales as if she had just run a long race. Blanche, then proceeds to ask each child what color paper she wants and then writes the child's name if the child can't write it herself. The children begin to sort through the two trays looking for objects they want to use as they create their work of art. Missy takes a lid off the glue stick and begins putting glue all over the paper until the glue is down to the edge of its container. Blanche notices Missy struggling trying to get the glue up out of its container. Very confidently, Blanche proceeds to show Missy how you have to twist the container a certain way and then the glue stick will come up.

Blanche continues to talk to the children. She asks open-ended questions and makes comments about the items they are using. During this time, Maggie is assisting other children in the large motor area, but she keeps an eye on Blanche. I can see Maggie is smiling as she observes Blanche's teaching behaviors. All at once Blanche sneezes and then proceeds to swipe her arm across her nose. Trying not to laugh, Maggie groans as she sees what Blanche uses to wipe her nose. Up to this point, Blanche had been doing a five-year-olds imitation of Maggie's teaching!
I walk around the room and see so many activities and numerous fluorescent items. I didn't know you could find so many things that were fluorescent. In addition to the fluorescent collage activity that Blanche was teaching, there are fluorescent cookie cutters with the fluorescent colored play dough, fluorescent paint at the easel, and a giant, fluorescent drawing board. A large wooden frame, which has strings threaded both ways, acts as a weaving activity. Numerous pieces of fluorescent material and yarn are next to the frame. Two children are weaving the pieces into the strings on the wooden frame. Maggie has placed fluorescent shapes on the light table and has the Lite-n-Brite® plugged up.

In the housekeeping area are fluorescent stuffed animals, and dress-up clothes that are bright fluorescent, almost psychedelic, hats, purses, dresses, pants, and shoes. It looks like Maggie cleaned out the closet of someone, who had saved all the 1960s clothes from her Haight-Ashbury days. Fluorescent plates, cups, place mats, and plastic ware are in the child-size kitchen area.

The theme for the dramatic play area is summertime on the beach. Maggie has taped a large piece of plastic over the carpet and she has sand on the plastic. Small, low beach chairs with small umbrellas sit on the sand. Fluorescent sand buckets and other fluorescent colored sand tools are scattered around the sandy area. Fluorescent bathing suits the children can put on over their clothes are hanging on a child-size clothes rack. Bright colorful hats and fluorescent sunglasses are a few of the other things the children can select from. An empty, children's sunscreen bottle that is
fluorescent in color completed the items the children had to choose from. Three children are playing in the sandy area and all have on bathing suits over their clothes, and are wearing sunglasses, and hats.

   In the block area, Sean, Eric, Thomas, and Ross are building an elaborate city. Blocks denote buildings, airports, and roadways. Plastic people are scattered throughout their city. Bright colored plastic cars, trucks, airplanes, and helicopters are strategically positioned in this city. There is even a heliport for the helicopters on top of one of the tall, block buildings. The four boys are engaged in conversation surrounding their plans for this complex city. Sean goes to Maggie and says, "Maggie, we need more cars and trucks and planes for our city. Do you got any more?" "Let me think," Maggie replies. Placing a finger to her head, she continues, "Let me look in the closet." Sean looks back at his three building partners and informs them, "Maggie is going to look for some more." Maggie and Sean walk to the storage closet door. Maggie opens the door into a closet stuffed full of toys and materials. Sean stands by the door looking in as Maggie rummages around for a few minutes. Soon Maggie emerges victoriously with a plastic, shoebox of small cars, trucks, and planes. "Will this work?" Maggie asks. Excited, Sean replies, "Wow! More cars and trucks and planes. This is just what we need for our city."

   Almost running, Sean carries the plastic box to the block area where his building partners are waiting. He carefully sits the box down on the floor. The four boys inspect the contents of the box. Thomas selects three cars and
tells his buddies, "I will put these vehicles in the garage." Eric picks out the helicopters and tells the crew, "I will build another heliport for these helicopters." Sean and Ross thoughtfully place the remaining vehicles around their city. Ross picks up the now, empty, plastic box, turns it over, and inspects it from all angles. With a look of delight on his face, Ross announces, "Hey, you guys. Look at this! This can be our swimming pool!" as he holds up the plastic box. The four discuss where is the best place in their city for the swimming pool. Soon they agree and carefully place it on the agreed upon spot. Each of the boys select small, plastic people to go swimming in the pool.

As I look around the room, I see a room that is a beehive of activity. The children are busy, engaged in a wealth of sensory-rich motor activities. Language abounds as the children carry on conversations with their play partners. Maggie floats around the room as needed and observes the children as they play.

At 11:30, Maggie plays the circle time song and the children quickly put away their toys. Ross comes to Maggie and asks, "Can we leave our city out? We can play with it after lunch." Nodding, Maggie answers, "Yes, but you might have to put it away by yourself since Thomas and Sean will be napping and Eric will be leaving before lunch. Are you okay with that?" Ross nods his head, "Yes, I will put it all away by myself. I can do that." Ross returns to his buddies and tells them, "We can leave our city out."

Soon all the children are at the circle and they sing their greeting song. On the wall behind Maggie is a list of all the songs the children have learned.
to sing this year. The children select songs to sing. After singing several songs, Maggie asks the children, "Would you like to go outside for 15 minutes before we eat lunch?" A resounding yes is heard, as all the children want to go outside. Maggie calls the names of six children and they go to the glass door. Michaela lets them out onto the playground where a student worker is waiting. Again, Maggie calls six children and they go out. In just a few minutes all the children are on the playground. I can see the children running, climbing, and riding tricycles. Busy, engaged children enjoying being children!

Maggie quickly grabs her lunch out of the refrigerator and goes to her office. "We are short a couple of student workers today. It is near the end of the term and the student workers are often absent," Maggie tells me. "I had to rearrange some of the things I had planned to do," Maggie continues. Continuing, Maggie asks,

Didn't Blanche do a great job? I needed a teacher there to keep things going smoothly so I asked Blanche if she wanted to be the teacher today. You would have thought I gave her the greatest gift ever! You know, I only had to give her the briefest of instructions. I wish you could have seen Blanche when she started here two years ago. She was a lot like Ross was last fall. Look at her now. She is so confident. Seeing the children grow and develop in such positive ways is one of the biggest joys of this job.

I ask, "How did you come up with the idea to do a theme on fluorescent colors?" "The children," Maggie replies.

We have done a lot with color this year. A few weeks ago several of the children were talking about the bright colors of beach balls. A discussion ensued about other things that had bright colors. So we decided to study fluorescent colors. The children helped find all the
things we have in the room and in storage that were fluorescent colors. Then I went and bought some more stuff. We have had so much fun this week with fluorescent colors. The children really notice and talk about the colors. They have brought things from home that are fluorescent. You know, I have told you that if a teacher would just listen to the children she would learn so much about what they are interested in. I just use what they are interested in and go from there. They are having fun and learning how to learn. Almost everything we do engages their senses and requires them to use their motor skills in some way and the language just follows. I have as much fun with these curriculum ideas as the children do.

In less than 15 minutes from the time Maggie enters her office to eat her lunch, she goes back out to help transition the children in from the playground to the lunch table. As I look about the room, I again realize that Maggie just sees the world differently than most adults, because she can see it from the eyes of the children.

As I am leaving the room, a mother stops me and asks, "You are studying Maggie and her teaching, aren't you?" I nod and answer, "Yes, I am." The mother introduces herself as Eric's mother. She asks, "Can I tell you something I like about Maggie and her teaching?" Again I nod. With great sincerity, she explains, "Maggie is not a fixer." "Not a fixer?" I ask. "No," Eric's mother answers, "she is not a fixer. She doesn't look at a child as if he is broken or as if something is wrong with him. She doesn't look at a child as if he is lacking something that she has to be fix. She just looks at each child as a child and he is who he is. She sees a child for what he can do, not for what he can't do. In Maggie's eyes, children are children and she looks at them as capable, human beings. I love that about her teaching. Eric has been so lucky to have her for a teacher. He has so much fun in her class and he has learned
so much. Thank you for listening to me. I just wanted to tell you. I wish more teachers were like Maggie. Think of what all children could learn if they were lucky enough to have teachers like Maggie."

As I walk to my car, I think of Eric's mother's comments about Maggie not being a fixer and her ability to see each and every child as a capable human being. I think of Maggie's comments about being a teacher of young children requires having a sixth sense. For Maggie, a preschool teacher has to see things differently. I remember the cassette tape Maggie gave me where she said, "You know you are using all of your senses plus there is another sense, a sense of an emotional, an emotional sense, a sense of feeling, a sense of awareness, or a sense of need." I think of one more sense that Maggie has and that is a sense of wonder and joy for living and for life. How rare and precious to be able to see the wonder of the world through the eyes of a child!

Epilogue

Recently I talked to Maggie and she told me she was thinking of retiring. With a very serious tone, Maggie told me,

I will be 65 on my next birthday. I will be eligible for social security. Each year has been a gift. My health is a gift. Well, my whole life has been a gift. I usually don't tell people my age. Not because of vanity, but because people tend to treat you according to your age.

Someone once told me that you start feeling your age at 60. Well, I didn't but in the last year my physical stamina is not the same. I come to work at 6:00 in the morning and stay till 4:30 or later and when I go home I am really tired. I use not to be so tired, but now I really feel it.

I can't imagine not being a preschool teacher. I can't imagine not thinking, 'Oh, the children will love this.' I can't imagine not saving all the things I save to use with the children. I can't imagine not being a preschool teacher and thinking, 'Oh, I'll pull these leaves for science, or
I'll collect this for school or different things like that.' I just can't imagine not being enthusiastic about making play dough or looking for new ideas and new recipes and new themes. I can't imagine not looking for new things for the children to do, learning kinds of things that are fun and enjoyable. I can't imagine not being interested in that. I can't imagine looking at a book or a paper or anything without thinking, 'How could I use that or what could I do with it with the children? How can I make it a learning experience?'

I wanted to be a teacher when I was little. As far back as I can remember I have wanted to be a teacher. I just can't imagine not being a preschool teacher.
CHAPTER 7

THEMES AND IMPLICATIONS

My method is called through-composition. I am very focused and directed, organizing and reorganizing my motifs that build upon the improvisation at the moment. In my mind are all my road maps of theory and practice, and I have no mind space to spare to space out.

R. Carlos Nakai, Native American Flutist

Like talented musicians, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie have teaching methods similar to through-composition, a musical form used in musical story telling. The music, which usually stays true to a certain musical genre, changes with the unfolding of the story. Being in different childcare settings, with different children who have different needs and interests, these three educated, experienced, exemplary early childhood teachers, much like skilled musicians, stay focused and directed while responding to the unfolding story of life in their classrooms. The three teachers organize, reorganize, and evaluate their language of practice, the motif that is the salient element or theme of their teaching. Using their language of practice, which for them is the professional discourse of developmentally appropriate practice, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie build upon what the children need, the children's
interests, and upon the demands of the context each moment of their day. Always in their minds are the road maps of their theories of action, and the three teachers are constantly aware and following the unfolding story of life in their individual classrooms striving to provide the children with the best education and care.

The theories of action, the roadmaps of the three teachers' thinking, were explored in this study. Throughout the educational criticisms, the answers to following four research questions were described, interpreted, and evaluated:

1. What are the theories of action of the teachers in the study?
2. What factors have influenced the teacher's theories of action?
3. How do their theories of action guide their teaching?
4. How does the context of the setting and the children impact the teachers, their teaching, and their theories of action?

Using a layered story approach, the educational criticisms illuminated the theories of action, answered the research questions, and strived to assist the reader in understanding the teachers and their thinking.

Continuing with the educational criticism methodology, this chapter explores the thematics of the three educational criticisms. This aspect of the educational criticism genre answers the question what are the lessons learned. Eisner (1994) explains that

the thematic aspect of educational criticism provides the reader with a kind of summary that enables the reader to grasp the essential point. In a sense, the themes within an educational criticism not only provide a
distillation of the essential features of that criticism, but they also provide a naturalistic generalization that can guide one's perception of other classroom [sic], schools, teaching practices. Although no classroom is identical to any other, the distilled features of a particular classroom have some relationship to features that might be found in others. The identification of themes not only summarizes the essential points of the criticism, but it also enables one to use the criticism as a way of understanding other educational situations (p. 233).

Themes, then, are the essential points or pervasive qualities found in the text of the educational criticisms. Each theme "resurfaces throughout, and provides coherence and unity" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 81) among the educational criticisms. Several themes run through the educational criticisms of Kate, Audrey, and Maggie, and the themes provide a summary of the essential features. I have identified three themes in the educational criticisms about the three teachers' theories of action. First, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's theories of action are very similar and are aligned with the National Association for the Education of Young Children's values, philosophy, and guidelines. Second, the three teachers essentially identified the same factors that influenced their thinking, their ideas about teaching young children, and their theories of action. Third, each teacher brings special interests and talents to their teaching, but these easily fit into their shared theories of action.

Differences do exist among the three teachers and it is worth summarizing how they are different before I describe the themes and what they share in common. In the next section, I will focus on how the teachers are different.
## Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Kate</th>
<th>Audrey</th>
<th>Maggie</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age</strong></td>
<td>20s</td>
<td>40s</td>
<td>60s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Years of Teaching</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Degree</strong></td>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>Associate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Degree was Earned</strong></td>
<td>Large Research University in 1990s</td>
<td>Private Liberal Arts College in 1970s</td>
<td>Two-Year College in 1980s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Child Care</strong></td>
<td>Head Start Full Day</td>
<td>Nursery School Half Day</td>
<td>Part-time Childcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ages of Children</strong></td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
<td>3 1/2 to 5</td>
<td>3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Children</strong></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>24 at one time, but over 50 each week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background of Children</strong></td>
<td>Only 1 child lived with both parents. Low Income</td>
<td>All lived with both parents. Professionals</td>
<td>Over 50% lived with both parents who are attending college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Curriculum</strong></td>
<td>High Scope Curriculum, focusing on Key Experiences and interests of the children</td>
<td>Combination of themes and interests of the children</td>
<td>Combination of themes and interests of the children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Adults in the Classroom</strong></td>
<td>Was supposed to have 2, but only had 1 other adult</td>
<td>No other adults</td>
<td>One 3/4 teacher, student teachers &amp; college student workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 Chart of the Differences Among the Three Teachers
As is evident from Table 7.1, the three teachers are different in terms of age, years of teaching experience, and educational background. Each teaches in a different type of childcare center, serving different numbers of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and with different types of classroom assistance or help from other adults. Each teacher also brings different interests and talents to their teaching.

In addition, each teacher has different constraints placed upon her by the context of where she is employed. Audrey was the only teacher in the nursery school and Shiloh School had limited financial resources. Maggie was constrained by the college's reluctance to hire another full-time teacher for her classroom and the requirement of planning by themes. Kate had to deal with more constraints that did Audrey and Maggie. All year, Kate had to combat multiple contextual constraints: (a) a lack of educated help; (b) a mental health consultant whose philosophy was the exact opposite of hers; (c) a central office that dictated many requirements which were frequently in conflict with her theories of action and the needs of the children; (d) the interruptions caused by the many different people who entered her classroom daily; and (e) being assigned seven children who had been identified as having behavior problems.

Yet for all of their differences, the three teachers hold basically the same theories of action and are able to put them into practice in their classrooms. In the next section, I will discuss the first theme: similar theories of action aligned with NAEYC's philosophy and guidelines.
Theme 1: Similar Theories of Action Aligned with NAEYC's Philosophy and Guidelines

Given the differences in background, in the contexts in which they teach, and the contextual constraints each teacher deals with, it would be expected that the teachers would have significant differences in their theories of action, the "interrelated concepts, beliefs, and images teachers hold about their work" (McCutcheon, 1995, p. 34). However, this is not the case with Kate, Audrey, and Maggie. After a year long involvement in their classrooms, numerous interviews with each teacher, careful examination of written documents, formal interviews with their supervisors or fellow teachers, and informal talks with the parents of children in their classroom, I found the three teachers possess very similar theories of action. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie share fundamental values about children, child development, and interactions with families, and they possess similar assumptions about learning, teaching, and curriculum development. The values and assumptions the three teachers share are the foundation of NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practice guidelines.

Shared Fundamental Values

Just as NAEYC bases its guidelines on "certain fundamental values that are deeply rooted in the history of the early childhood field" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 7), Kate, Audrey, and Maggie base their theories of action on these same deeply rooted values.
The first value is based on an appreciation for childhood as a unique and valuable stage of human development. The education of young children focuses on what they can do and are interested in not just as preparation for formal schooling (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Kate views children as active learners who are capable of doing a great deal. Kate explains, "My philosophy is that children can do." Audrey believes "that childhood belongs to children" and that "children learn and grow by pursuing their innate curiosity." Maggie believes children "are human beings and they are very sensitive and aware." Further, Maggie understands that "children learn as they are doing age and developmentally appropriate things as they grow in whatever area of development that they are in at that moment in time." Her philosophy is to let them be children. All three teachers, in one way or another, see themselves as protectors of children and support the rights of children to be children.

The second value focuses on basing the education and care of young children on what is currently known about child development (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are very knowledgeable about child development. They know what to expect from young children and always keep in mind what children can do for the developmental age they are. Maggie's words summarize this view when she talks about "having the learning environment set up so they [the children] can function as individuals, can play, be independent, and grow at their own rate and pace."

The third value is an appreciation for the close ties between children and their families (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997). Kate, Audrey, and Maggie
make a special effort to get to know the families of the children in their classrooms. Sharing what happens at school and finding out about each child's experiences outside the classroom are important components of their teaching. All three teachers identified parents of the children they teach as influencing their theories of action. Parents are always welcome in their classrooms. These three teachers go the extra mile to support parents and their parenting and to create a bridge from home to school and back. Kate describes a key component of her philosophy as "getting to know the children and their families and building on where they are in helping them to develop in a way that is a shared cultural thing."

The fourth value is that "children are best understood in the context of family, culture, and society" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 7). By interacting so closely with families, the teachers begin to catch a glimpse of what life maybe like for the children outside their classrooms. Finely attuned to the culture, the society, and the world children live in, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are knowledgeable about what it is like to be a child in today's world.

Fifth, it is important to respect the "dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 7). Throughout the three educational criticisms are numerous examples of Kate, Audrey, and Maggie relating to children with a calm, patient, sincere manner that not only treats children with dignity, but that conveys to the children that they are worthy human beings. The children are seen and treated as individuals. Maggie explains, "First, I look at each child as an individual." Audrey says, "Learning
a vast array of different personalities that children bring [contributes] to knowing what I need to do."

The sixth value is helping human beings achieve "their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust, respect, and positive regard" (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997, p. 7). Kate, Audrey, and Maggie want children to be all they can be. Respect for each and every child is at the heart of each teacher's behavior toward children. As Maggie describes it, "You [as a teacher] have to genuinely like children and respect them and respect their feelings." All three teachers treat children with respect and view them in a positive light. The concept of trust is very important for all three teachers. Audrey explains, "They [the children] need the security of knowing they are with a trusted adult."

Assumptions about Learning, Teaching, and Curriculum Development

At the heart of NAEYC's developmentally appropriate practice guidelines and curriculum guidelines are the beliefs that "the nature of learning should inform the practice of teaching... [and that] the teaching-learning process is... an interactive process" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 14). Seven "basic assumptions about teaching and learning as an interactive process" (p. 14) are the foundation upon which NAEYC has built its guidelines. Again, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie consistently expressed these same seven assumptions.

First, "children learn best when their physical needs are met and they feel psychologically safe and secure" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 14).
At the foundation of Kate's beliefs about young children and learning is the essentiality of meeting children's physical, social, and emotional needs before focusing on other skills. In her own words, Kate explains, "If those needs are not being met, you can't even work with them in the other areas of development." Audrey believes "children need to feel safe," and that "nursery school should feel comfortable" and be "a safe place from which to explore and learn." Audrey wants children to "see themselves as capable and feel themselves as capable." Maggie believes children have needs. She explains, "The physical needs you can see, but they have emotional and social needs that you need to be aware of. You have to be aware of each child's needs." According to Maggie, children "have to feel safe and secure."

A second assumption is "children construct knowledge" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 14). Kate views children as active learners who construct knowledge and she explains that she tries "to do more constructivist things." It is through play, Kate explains, that children construct knowledge about their world. From her science background, Audrey believes "children are driven to be curious about their surroundings, to explore and wonder, and to understand. They all start out as scientists." Maggie strives to create a "natural environment to encourage them [the children] to move and do things." Through this movement, exploration, and discovery, children construct knowledge about the classroom. As Maggie explains, "They can do all these [activities] without the stress of having to do it a certain way. What is important is the doing, at whatever level they can."
The third assumption about learning and teaching is "children learn through social interaction with adults and other children" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 15). Social interactions are very important for all three teachers, and they encourage and support the interactions between children and adults, and between children and children. Basic to Kate's beliefs is the development of a sense of community. In her classroom children learn through the social interactions they have with the adults and children in the classroom. As Kate describes it, she works on "building up relationships between children and teacher, between children and children, and with the community that is created." Audrey, who is the only adult in her classroom, has the smallest group of children, who are very social children. Because of these factors, she is able to foster and support the children's social interactions with each other to a higher degree than Kate and Maggie. In her description of the nursery school philosophy, Audrey writes, "Humor, joy, play, and hard work are shared as children and teachers live and learn together." Like Kate and Audrey, Maggie encourages and supports children's interactions with their peers. Maggie explains, "The children learn from other children. They notice what other children are doing and are interested in. Children learn from other children more than they do the teacher."

The fourth assumption about teaching and learning is "children's learning reflects a recurring cycle that begins in awareness and moves to exploration, to inquiry, and finally, to utilization" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 16). From Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's perspectives, children's
learning begins first with awareness or interest and then moves on to exploration, inquiry, and finally knowledge acquisition. The children's actions, behaviors, interests, and questions open a window of understanding for planning what children want, need, and are ready to learn. When Maggie plans curriculum, she asks herself, "Is it [the activity, material, toy, or equipment] going to be interesting enough for them [the children] to want to interact, explore, and experiment?"

The fifth assumption about teaching and learning is "children learn through play" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 16). All three teachers value play and make it the main part of the children's day. Kate describes her philosophy as "play-based." It is through play that children construct knowledge about their world. While observing the children's play, Kate learns a great deal about the children. In her own words, Kate explains, "It is in those moments that you best see where a kid is." In describing the nursery school, Audrey writes, it

is a place where play is seen to be the finest natural way of learning. Play is the center from which young children learn how to get along with others, to know themselves, and learn about the world around them. Learning thorough play is seen as an essential part of being human. It is an ability to be nurtured for its own sake, and as the foundation upon which a child's continued learning will be built.

For Maggie, play is an essential part of her teaching philosophy. According to her, "Play is the whole big part of it all. We do so much of this with play. Play through all the interest areas."
The sixth assumption about learning and teaching is "children's interests and 'need to know' motivate learning" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 16). In her curriculum planning, Kate carefully determines what interests each child. To Kate, the children's "interest is number one. I just try to see what they are interested in." This in turn informs Kate of what they are ready to learn. Audrey follows the children's lead and interests. As Audrey explains, "As with anything else they do, the intrinsic motivation, the playfulness of [their exploration] needs always to be respected." According to Maggie, she tries "to meet their needs and what they are interested in at that moment." Maggie explains,

You have to be tuned into the children. You really have to be tuned in. First, you would listen to the children, the things that they are interested in. Really listen to them, the things that they talk about or relate to. Children are the best sources [for curriculum ideas]. They have wonderful ideas. You have to be aware. You have to be sensitive to what they are saying and doing, what they are interested in, what they are living, and what they are asking about. You have to be aware of the opportunities for learning.

The seventh assumption about learning and teaching is "human development and learning are characterized by individual variation" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 17). Kate, Audrey, and Maggie treat each child as an individual and realize that there is a great deal of variation in children's development. When planning her curriculum, Kate develops individual goals for each child based on his/her developmental level and interests. Audrey believes, "individuals learn different things in different
ways, on different time scales." Maggie also looks at "each child as an individual." She explains, children "grow at their own rate and pace."

In the next section, I will provide a summary of the shared beliefs, concepts and images of the three teachers.

**A Summary of Shared Beliefs, Concepts, and Images**

Kate, Audrey, and Maggie use the same basic language to describe their beliefs and teaching practices. To summarize, these common beliefs, concepts, and images are:

- Children’s safety and security needs must first be met before other learning can occur.
- Children’s social and emotional needs must also be met before other learning can occur.
- Children are individuals and develop on their own timetable.
- Children’s development impacts what they can do, but each child is different and therefore does different things at different times.
- Children are children and have their own unique view of the world.
- Children are people with feelings, emotions, and needs.
- Children deserve respect.
- Children need to develop social skills so they can get along with peers and adults.
- Children need to feel capable and competent.
- Children learn through play.
- Children construct knowledge.
• Children are the best indicators of what and when they are ready to learn.
• Children need real, concrete, first-hand experiences in order to learn.
• Children are internally motivated to learn. Teachers must pay close attention to the children's interests and curiosity, which are indicators of what is motivating them.

These common, shared beliefs and concepts about children, child development, and children's learning are pervasive throughout their educational criticisms. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie never wavered from these beliefs even though the contexts in which they taught were very different.

In the next section, I will provide a summary of the three teachers' common or shared approaches to teaching.

**Summary of Shared Teaching Approaches**

In addition to holding shared beliefs, concepts, and images, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie approach their teaching in similar ways. The three teachers:

• are gentle, kind, and caring individuals.
• speak in a soft, gentle, friendly voice.
• possess an abundance of patience.
• have a positive view of the world and see the positive things in children and their behaviors.
- always approach their interactions with children in a positive manner and use positive words.
- genuinely treat children with respect due to them as fellow human beings.
- can see the child's point of view because they remember what it is like to be a child.
- feel it is their responsibility to protect children's rights to be children and actively support children's childhood.
- are keen observers.
- are sensitive and aware of what is happening in children's play and in the children's interaction with each other and with materials.
- know child development.
- divide their classroom space into interest areas, carefully structure the classroom environment, and provide developmentally appropriate equipment, materials, toys, and activities.
- provide multiple opportunities for the children to use large and small muscles.
- support and encourage children's play.
- allow the children a great deal of freedom within the parameters they have established. These parameters support children's need to explore, discover, construct, and to feel like capable, competent human beings.
• help children learn the language of conflict resolution and how to get along with others.
• are especially sensitive to children's moods and behaviors.
• seek to understand each and every child they teach.
• actively watch for the things children are interested in, what they can do, and build curriculum activities on these interests and skills.
• provide multiple opportunities for language development.
• understand parents, makes special efforts to establish positive relationships with each parent or guardian, and then work closely with them.

Certainly not least, the three teachers are learners. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are life-long learners who actively pursue new information. Striving to stay current with their chosen field, the three teachers attend early childhood education workshops, conferences, read ECE professional journals and books, and talk to colleagues about teaching. Each teacher continues to strive to be the best teacher she can be. All three are either life or comprehensive members in NAEYC. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are seeking, learning, and trying to be better people and better teachers.

Kate and Maggie share another similarity in that they teach in a childcare center that has three or more classrooms. Both Kate and Maggie have reputations for being able to teach any child and, thus, are given the children the teachers in the other classrooms have difficulty teaching. As a result, Kate and Maggie have more than their share of children who have
challenging behaviors. Both Kate and Maggie are able to provide most of the children with the type of early education and care they need and generally the children blossom and prosper in their classroom. When it is evident a child has special needs beyond what can be met in their classrooms, Kate and Maggie seek the specialized professional help for the child and work closely with parents and guardians during this process.

A second theme in the three educational criticisms deals with factors that influenced their thinking and their theories of action. In the next section, I will discuss this second theme.

**Theme 2: Similar Factors Influenced Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's Theories of Action**

Kate, Audrey, and Maggie essentially identified the same elements when asked to describe five or more factors that had influenced their theories of action. I think it is important to tell the reader that Kate, Audrey, and Maggie had never met each other nor had their paths crossed, neither professionally or personally, before or during the time of my research.

As is evident from Table 7.2, on the following page, with the exception of two items, the three teachers selected identical factors that had influenced their thinking and ideas about working with young children. Kate, who is in her 20s, does not have children, but does have a niece and nephew. She mentioned that they influence her thinking about children and their development. Audrey has not had an opportunity to work with student teachers so that was not a factor she mentioned.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencing Factors</th>
<th>Kate in her 20s</th>
<th>Audrey in her 40s</th>
<th>Maggie in her 60s</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vivid childhood memories</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own parents</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own children</td>
<td>Niece and nephew</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children they have taught and are teaching</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents of the children they have taught or are teaching</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student teachers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Has not worked with student teachers</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colleagues</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Education</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECE conferences</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECE Workshops</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books &amp; Articles</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEYC</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 Factors Influencing the Teachers' Theories of Action
A third theme in the educational criticisms deals with the special interests and talents each teacher brings to her teaching. In the next section, I will discuss the third theme.

Theme 3: Special Interests and Talents Enrich and Enhance their Shared Theories of Action

Yes, Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are unique individuals with different life experiences and as a result bring different talents and interests to their teaching. Regardless of the interest or talent, each teacher is able to fit them into the common belief and value system they share. These special interests and talents enrich and enhance different aspects of their shared theories of action.

Kate, because of her family's interests and travels, brings a deep interest, a strong knowledge base, and an experiential base to her view of multiculturalism. Focusing on the cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds of the children in her Head Start classroom, Kate strives to understand the children and their parents. She attempts to create a bridge so the children and parents can understand the culture of the classroom. Possessing a strong background in music as well as being musically talented, Kate has a preponderance of music and musical activities in her classroom. Drawing on her mother's knowledge of music for preschool children, Kate has a song for everything and teaches them to the children.

Audrey brings a strong science background to her teaching. With her interest and understanding of ethology, Audrey has a deeper and more
scientific understanding of child development than most prekindergarten teachers. With her keen observation skills and her ability to observe behavior and see it as part of the developmental process, Audrey finds great enjoyment in watching children grow and develop. The scientist in her helps children become more skilled scientists in that she teaches them to observe, develop hypotheses, solve problems, understand consequences, and use words to state what has happened or will happen. Music is also important to Audrey, but she uses it differently than Kate. Audrey has two basic music goals for the children. First, she wants the children to develop a love for all kinds of music. Second, Audrey sees music as a foundation for mathematical understanding.

Maggie also brings special interests and talents to her teaching. Being able to see the possibilities for using almost everything for learning, Maggie credits her early years for helping her to develop this unique ability to see beyond the surface. The early experiences she had living in a coal camp and the lack of money for toys helped Maggie see that play and learning can occur anywhere and with anything. Being very creative and seeing the world differently than most adults, Maggie helps the children in her room see the endless, wonderful, exciting things that are in their environments. Because of the feelings she had as an adopted child, Maggie strives to make her classroom an emotionally safe and secure environment for the children. A third thing Maggie brings to her classroom is color, a world of beautiful, harmonious color. Living in a coal camp where everything tended to be gray, bleak, and dreary, Maggie has a special feeling for color and what it means to
one's enjoyment of the world. Music is also important to Maggie and she uses it in the classroom because it brings joy, color, and comfort to the children's world.

How can these three very different human beings, who bring such diverse backgrounds and interests to their teaching, share so much in common when it comes to their theories of action? Before I attempt to answer that question, I am reminded of Goodman (1972) statement that what we see depends on our conceptual organization. "There is no innocent eye" (Goodman, 1972, p. 142), because "what we find, or succeed making, is heavily dependent on how and what we seek" (Goodman, 1978, p. 39).

The conceptual frameworks I selected for this study became the lenses through which I have analyzed and developed an understanding of the themes found in the educational criticisms of the three teachers' theories of action. The three conceptual frameworks often overlap in terms of content, and tend to support the premises of each view, however, they do provide different ways of examining and analyzing the identified themes. Looking at the various explanations should allow the reader to view the three teachers' theories of action from slightly different angles thereby increasing his or her understanding of themes inherent in the educational criticisms about the teachers' theories of action.

In the next section, I will briefly review the conceptual frameworks of this study.
A Review of the Three Conceptual Frameworks

The three conceptual frameworks used in this study were: (a) idea-based social constructivism (Prawat & Peterson, 1999); (b) discourse theory from two viewpoints - Gee's Discourse theory (1989, 1992, 1997) and Bakhtin's view of professional discourse (1981, 1986); and (c) the concept of a language of practice (Yinger, 1987). In the next section, I will briefly review idea-based social constructivism.

Idea-based Social Constructivism

Idea-based social constructivism, which is rooted in the works of John Dewey and other pragmatists, "assigns a prominent role to the social and to the individual in the development of meaning" (Prawat, 1996a, p. 223). The individual comes in contact with a network of ideas, which are socially constructed and authored by a cultural group, family unit, community, and/or discipline. The ideas are expressed through the discourse of the particular group that developed it (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). Using the specific language, the members of the discourse community learn to look at the world in similar ways and "they develop similar anticipations" (Prawat & Floden, 1994, p. 44) about the world.

From the exposures to these various network of ideas, individuals strive to make meaning, strive to make sense of the idea(s), and will either accept, modify or reject the idea(s). Individuals, first, explore the "territory mapped out" by the ideas (Prawat, 1993, p. 13) and/or compare it with their past actions and experiences. During this exploration, individuals have to test
the ideas for themselves. Individuals have to determine, through some form of interactive inquiry, if the idea has merit for them, for the specific context, and for the situation in which they find themselves (Prawat & Peterson, 1999). Dewey and Peirce were convinced that an idea has merit and works if it fits the individual's personal needs, the situation, and the context (Dewey, 1908/1977). Some ideas are better than others, and the individual has to test or validate or modify or change the idea given the personal, the situational, and the contextual factors involved in her interactive inquiry.

In the next section, I will briefly review two views of discourse.

**Discourse Theory**

Discourse is an important aspect of the symbolic or language-oriented social constructivism. I selected two approaches, which illuminate the professional discourse of the three prekindergarten teachers. Gee (1989, 1992, 1997) brings a linguistic perspective to his theory of Discourse (with a capital "D"). Bakhtin (1981, 1986) brings a philosophy of language view to the development and understanding of professional discourse.

Discourses are a "way of being in the world, they are forms of life which integrate words, acts, values, beliefs, attitudes, and social identities as well as gestures, glances, body positions, and clothes" (Gee, 1989, pp. 6-7). Discourses are acquired through social practices. The primary Discourse is acquired as a member of a family unit, the primary socializing group. The primary Discourse is the one an individual first uses to "make sense of the world and [to] interact with others" (Gee, 1989, p. 7). Parts of an individual's
primary Discourse become "carriers or foundations for Discourses acquired later in life" (p. 8). The exposure to different secondary Discourses does not mean, however, that the individual simply absorbs, accepts, or assimilates the various Discourses. The human mind looks for patterns in the world and the mind is a "flexible and adaptable pattern recognizer" (Gee, 1997, p. 236). The Discourses an individual possesses can act as a guide in both the recognition and selection of patterns. Discourses can become connecting devices between the discourse community and the patterns in the world, "nudging" individuals toward some norm (Gee, 1992, p. 49).

When people select a profession, become educated, and socialized into the profession, they learn to speak, think, and act like a member of that profession (Gee, 1992). In becoming professionals, they master the Discourse of that profession. They master the professional discourse based on: (a) how well the their primary Discourse lays a foundation for acceptance of the professional, secondary Discourse; (b) how their other secondary Discourses complement the professional discourse; and (c) how their unique biological makeup and brain structure influence their construction of the Discourse. An individual's own embodied view of the professional discourse is "never completely ideosyncratic [sic]" (Clark, 1998, p. 93) because in the testing and the accommodation of the professional discourse, the individual accepts many of the commonalties of that particular discourse or else she would not be in that profession. Therefore, "even idiosyncrasy is socially colored and bounded" (Buchmann, 1989, p. 102) by the professional discourse.

448
Bakhtin (1981) takes a similar view of discourse in that it is "a social phenomenon - social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors" (p. 259). A discourse, according to Bakhtin, facilitates the construction of a worldview which insures a "maximum of mutual understanding" (p. 271). As an individual comes into contact with the discourse, a dialogic relationship ensues. It is through "the process of living interaction" with the discourse that the language becomes "individualized" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 276) and takes shape for the individual. "Responsive understanding," Bakhtin (1981) wrote, "is a fundamental force, one that participates in the formulation of discourse, and it is moreover an active understanding" (pp. 280-281).

As the individual develops an active understanding, the discourse begins to "knit together with specific points of view, specific approaches, forms of thinking, nuances and accents characteristics" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 289). The professional discourse takes on not only a shared vocabulary but assumes "intentional dimensions" (p. 289), that is, the discourse can drive the social practices of the individual.

How does one develop an understanding and accommodate a specific discourse? At first, "one's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 345). If the individual encounters an "internally persuasive discourse" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 342) and enters into a dialogic relationship with it, the discourse becomes "tightly interwoven with one's own words" (p. 345). The internally
persuasive discourse, according to Bakhtin, is "half-ours and half-someone else's" (p. 345). The "structure of an internally persuasive discourse is not finite, it is open; in each of the new contexts that dialogize it, this discourse is able to reveal ever newer ways to mean" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 346). It is through a "sharpened dialogic relationship" (p. 352) that an individual is able to acquire a professional discourse, which is personalized and becomes one's own.

In the next section, I will review the concept of a language of practice.

Language of Practice

Yinger (1987) defines the concept of language of practice as thinking and acting “in ways appropriate to the demands of the profession” (p. 293). Language of practice is a metaphor used to describe the vocabulary, specific terms, and special meanings as well as patterns of thoughts and actions used by a member of a profession. The language of practice is "a system of meaning and guidelines for effective practice” (p. 295).

Alexander (1979) developed the concept of a pattern language, which would allow professionals to express and transmit an infinite variety of arrangements or situations within a specific profession. "A pattern language gives each person who uses it, the power to create an infinite variety of new and unique [situations], just as his ordinary language gives him the power to create an infinite variety of sentences" (Alexander, 1979, p. 167).

The pattern language is a shared language which is "extremely practical" (Alexander et al., 1977, p. x). The patterns are viewed as hypotheses which represents the "current best guess as to what . . . will work to solve the
problem presented" (p. xv). The patterns are "all tentative, all free to evolve under the impact of new experience and observation" (p. xv). The patterns together form a coherent language allowing the practitioner to "create an infinite variety of combinations" (p. xi) unique to his or her situation, preferences, and context. The pattern language is a framework, a way to organize and represent the specific tasks of a profession while providing a means to take action appropriate for the task at hand (Alexander, 1979).

When entering the teaching profession, the teacher becomes a member of a knowledge community, which has developed a culture and a pattern language particular to that specific community (Craig, 1995). The professional culture and language the individual has acquired as a result of "formal and informal education, training and socialization" (Hirst, 1983, p. 18) will influence the teacher's concept of the teaching profession and in turn influence and mediate her view of the teaching world.

Integrated patterns of words, behaviors, routines, activities, expectations, meanings, understandings, ways of thinking, and actions denote the knowledge and language of practice of a particular culture or community (Yinger, 1987, p. 295). This "language of practice for teaching must be a language of action, a language of practical action" (p. 313).

The National Association for the Education of Young Children, with its publications, particularly Developmentally Appropriate Practice (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992), has articulated, through a
deliberative, collective process, both a professional discourse and a pattern language or language of practice for the field of early childhood education. These patterns, together, form a coherent language or framework that allows the early childhood educator to think and act in an infinite variety of combinations unique to her situation, preferences, and context while at the same time allowing her actions to be compatible with current knowledge and best practices. The developmentally appropriate practice guidelines are the result of more than 70 years of nursery school education experiences, explorations, maturation, growth, development, research, and accumulated knowledge base of information about quality early education and care.

In the next section, I will use the three conceptual frameworks to develop an understanding of the three themes and to help explain how three such unique individuals possess similar theories of action.

**How the Three Conceptual Frameworks Explain the Themes**

The three conceptual frameworks reviewed above do overlap, and they tend to support the premises of each view, however, they can provide slightly different ways of examining and analyzing the identified themes. The assertions in idea-based social constructivism, discourse theories according to Gee and Bakhtin, and the language of practice concept allow the reader to weave together a more in-depth understanding of the teacher's theories of action and of the themes in the three educational criticisms.

According to Gee, one's primary Discourse is acquired as a member of a family unit, the first and primary socializing group. The primary Discourse
is the first discourse one uses to interact with world and becomes the foundation for and can influence the acquisition of future, secondary discourses. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie consider their parents as important influences on their thinking about children and teaching. Each teacher has vivid memories of her childhood. The interactions with their parents, remembered feelings of being children, and childhood experiences are key elements in how the three teachers see and relate to children, and these in turn influence their ideas about early childhood education. As the three women grew, matured, and were educated, they were introduced to and experienced different secondary discourses. They used their primary discourse and accepted secondary discourses as guides in deciding what beliefs, concepts, and images about children and teaching they would accept.

When the teachers selected and became part of the early childhood profession, they, because of their primary and secondary discourses, were able to embrace the chosen professional discourse. For Kate, Audrey, and Maggie, NAEYC's values, philosophy, and developmentally appropriate practice guidelines became, as Bakhtin would call it, an internally persuasive discourse. As each teacher, with her unique primary and secondary discourses, encountered the professional discourse of early childhood education, she entered into a dialogic relationship with it.

In this dialogic encounter, the teacher engaged in an internal dialogue with a network of ideas, which had been socially constructed. For Kate, Audrey, and Maggie, NAEYC's values, philosophy, and DAP guidelines are
the socially constructed network of ideas they have encountered through their education and on-going professional development as they stay current with the professional knowledge base of their field.

The encounter with this network of ideas is not simply one of mere acceptance. The teacher has to strive to make sense and meaning of the ideas. From an idea-based social constructivism position, the teacher, first, has to explore the territory mapped out by this socially constructed network of ideas. Using all of her accepted discourses, she explores and compares the early childhood professional discourse with her other discourses, her past actions, and experiences. She engages in an ongoing, interactive inquiry with the professional discourse or network of ideas. Through this interactive inquiry and internal dialogue, she discovers if the ideas have merit for her. She experiments to see if the ideas and professional discourse work for her, for the situation she is dealing with, and for the context in which she is working. In this testing, she uses three factors to assist in this internal dialogue and interactive inquiry: the personal, the situational, and the contextual.

As the teacher develops what Bakhtin (1981) calls an active understanding of the professional discourse, she dialogues with the shared ideas, vocabulary, beliefs, and concepts of the profession until she makes or arrives at a goodness-of-fit or rightness-of-fit (Goodman & Elgin, 1988). In effect, she interacts with the discourse until she makes it her own. In doing so, the now personalized and accepted professional discourse influences her professional practices. This accepted professional discourse is not finite, but is
open to new possibilities, new ideas, and further interactive inquiry and internal dialogue.

The current early childhood education professional discourse is the language of practice for Kate, Audrey, and Maggie. The ECE profession, greatly influenced by NAEYC, offers a culture and a pattern language that is specific to working with, educating, and caring for very young children. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's active, responsive understanding of the early childhood education professional discourse helps them make sense of their teaching, and in turn mediates their views of teaching young children.

In the next section, I will discuss four major findings of this research.

Major Findings

From the results of this study, I have selected four major findings to discuss. First, results of this study indicate the three educated, experienced, and exemplary teachers have well-organized, explicit, easily articulated theories of action, which are aligned with NAEYC's philosophy, values, and guidelines, especially developmentally appropriate guidelines. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie are confident of their theories of action, and there is congruency between what they say and what they demonstrate in their classrooms.

The early studies of preschool teachers' theories of action determined the teachers' theories were usually implicit, not easily articulated, and were not always congruent with their actions, but those studies were not done with teachers who were educated, highly experienced, and exemplary. The research components of these studies were also completed before
developmentally appropriate practice guidelines were published or widely disseminated. The traditional nursery school values and philosophy were in existence when these early studies were done, but the early childhood education/nursery school values, philosophy, and teaching approaches were not concentrated into a single document as a standard of best current practice.

A second finding deals with the influence of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's many projects for improving the quality of early childhood education programs for young children. As I indicated in the section on NAEYC: History and Influences in Chapter Two, NAEYC has undertaken numerous projects to improve the quality of education for young children. Included in these efforts are: (a) in 1982 and 1996, early childhood teacher education guidelines for colleges and universities; (b) in 1984 and 1998, the accreditation of early childhood education programs; (c) in 1986 and 1997, developmentally appropriate practice guidelines; (d) in 1991, early childhood teacher certification standards; and (e) in 1992, curriculum guidelines for early childhood programs. If the results of this study are an indication, these NAEYC projects are starting to influence and impact the field of early childhood education.

A third finding deals with a language of practice for the field of early childhood education. Yinger (1987) believed it was possible to have a language of practice for teaching, although one had not been developed when he wrote about the concept. I contend that developmentally appropriate practice guidelines meet the criteria for a language of practice for the field of
early childhood education. This ECE language of practice gives each teacher who uses it, the power to create, to react, and to solve problems in an infinite variety of situations and yet still function within a coherent system that represents the profession's ideas regarding best current practices.

Kate, Audrey, and Maggie teach in different types of childcare centers, serving different numbers of children from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and with different types of classroom assistance or help from other adults. All three deal with various contextual constraints that could hinder the implementation of their theories of action. Yet for all of their differences and the contextual constraints, the three teachers were able to use their language of practice (i.e., developmentally appropriate practice guidelines) to deal with their unique teaching situations and, in doing so, work within a coherent system.

A fourth finding is that the three prekindergarten teachers are meaning-makers and decision-makers. They are intellectually engaged in seeking to understand the ramifications involved in teaching very young children and in making the appropriate decisions based on their theories of action. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie strive to understand and make sense of the teaching and learning process. Their theories of action were formed through their interactions with the many different discourses they have encountered both as individuals and as early childhood education professionals. Developmentally appropriate practice, as a language of practice, has combined with their other discourses to create theories of action that are
similar yet retain elements of the personal. The three teachers use
developmentally appropriate practice guidelines, not so much to forge their
theories of action, but to organize, test, classify, understand, and make sense
of their teaching world and to make decisions based on best current practices.
For Kate, Audrey, and Maggie, the socially constructed knowledge system
that is developmentally appropriate practice allows them to incorporate or fit
their beliefs about children, child development, learning, teaching, and
curriculum development into a coherent, explicit, compatible system that
works well for them.

In the next section, I will discuss implications of this research.

Implications

The research on Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's theories of action and the
resulting findings have implications for the following five areas: early
childhood teacher education, the National Association for the Education of
Young Children, ECE curriculum development, educational criticism as a
genre of qualitative research for early childhood education, and future
research.

First, the implications are many for early childhood teacher educators.
Kate, Audrey, and Maggie, as professional early childhood educators, use
developmentally appropriate practice as their language of practice, which
influences and is influenced by their theories of action. The three teachers
have been able to use their primary discourses and other secondary discourses
to study, question, test, explore, and eventually make their own the
underlying values and assumptions which form the foundation of NAEYC's philosophy and guidelines. These findings could provide early childhood teacher educators with multiple reasons and avenues for helping ECE students to develop an active understanding of the language of practice of their chosen profession.

ECE teacher educators could provide opportunities for ECE students to examine beliefs from their various discourses and compare them to NAEYC's philosophy and guidelines. An interactive understanding (Bakhtin, 1981) could be facilitated as the ECE teacher educators engage the students in a potentially, persuasive dialogue with the professional discourse: NAEYC's values, philosophy, and guidelines. Drawing on the idea-based social constructivism, ECE teacher educators can assist the ECE student in exploring the "territory mapped out" by the ideas presented in the professional discourse. The ECE students could be encouraged to compare it with her past actions, experiences, and with the practical situations they encounter during their professional development. In effect, the ECE students have to test the ideas for themselves through a variety of avenues. Using some type of interactive inquiry, the ECE students have to examine if the ideas have merit. What the ECE teacher educator would be doing is assisting the ECE students in learning to be meaning-makers and decision-makers, two important aspects of being exemplary teachers. Through this active engagement with ideas, meanings, and decisions, ECE students could acquire a disposition to be lifelong learners.
Second, the implications for NAEYC center on the impact they have had on providing educated, experienced, exemplary prekindergarten teachers with a professional discourse that can be internally persuasive. Given the results of this research, the multiple prong approach the organization has taken is impacting the quality of early education and care. Developmentally appropriate practice as a language of practice provides the ECE professionals with an explicit, organized, coherent, theory based foundation for thinking and acting in ways appropriate to the profession. This language of practice allows them to respond in an infinite variety of combinations unique to their situation, preferences, and context while at the same time allowing their actions to be compatible with current knowledge and best practices. The question is does NAEYC have as great impact on other less educated, experienced, and skilled prekindergarten teachers. How does NAEYC reach other populations of childcare teachers?

The third implication deals with the development of ECE curriculum and materials. Kate, Audrey, and Maggie use the children's interests as a basis for curriculum development. NAEYC advocates a curriculum that "promotes the development of cognitive processes, and it also emphasizes the role of personal relevance in curriculum decisions" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 17). In a personal relevance curriculum orientation, the emphasis is on helping individual children develop personal meaning (Eisner, 1979a, p. 57). The teacher's role is to facilitate, support, co-plan, and provide a resource-rich environment that meets the children's needs, interests, and explorations for
meaning and relevance (Eisner, 1979a). The development of cognitive
processes curriculum orientation focuses on helping children learn how to
learn and on providing the children with opportunities to develop, use, and
strengthen all of their abilities (Eisner, 1979a, p. 5). If many prekindergarten
teachers and programs are like those described in these three educational
criticisms, the development of ECE curriculum materials must encompass
cognitive process and personal relevance curriculum orientations. Unlike
elementary school curriculum, there is no set or expected subject matter that
very young children have to acquire. ECE curriculum developers must keep
these facts in mind.

The fourth implication deals with using educational connoisseurship
and educational criticism as a genre of qualitative research for investigating
prekindergarten teachers and classrooms. As mentioned in Chapter Three,
educational criticism is a small but growing genre. As far as I have been able
to determine, this study was the first time the educational criticism
methodology has been used to research prekindergarten classrooms and
teaching. The goal of educational criticism is to help the reader develop an
understanding of the art of the teaching world in vivid, insightful, and
thought provoking ways. If this has been accomplished, the reader should
leave these three educational criticisms with increased knowledge about what
it is like to teach very young children as well a deeper understanding of how
complex a task teaching very young children really is. Hopefully, the reader
will develop a new awareness of the intelligence, knowledge, and skill required to be an effective teacher of very young children.

Hatch (1994) contends that "we need educational criticism because we have to have meaningful descriptions of what happens when teaching and learning take place" (p. 364). It is important to know "what goes on in classrooms in multiple ways" (p. 364). As more and more children become involved in early education and care setting, our knowledge base of what is happening in those classrooms could be increased by having more educational criticisms. Educational criticisms are difficult to do well (Eisner, 1991), but I think the effort is worth the results.

The fifth implication deals with the need for more research. As with most research, many more questions were generated than were answered. Further research is needed to determine what is the thinking of other prekindergarten teachers. If this study was replicated in other areas or other states, would the results be similar? If this study was replicated with prekindergarten teachers, who had not been identified as educated, experienced, and exemplary, would the results be the same? What are the theories of action of public school prekindergarten teachers? Do they embrace developmentally appropriate practice as their language of practice?

If a teacher's theories of action are socially constructed and respond to the prevailing professional attitudes, beliefs, and practices regarding the education of very young children, what is going to happen as this state and others states stress school readiness for prekindergarten children. Across this
country more emphasis is being placed on proficiency testing in the elementary schools. Already the pressure to solve the poor proficiency pass rates for elementary children includes an increased focus on what young children should learn before they enter school. As this pressure increases, both from the legislatures and from parents, will prekindergarten and preschool teachers be forced to abandon more developmentally appropriate practices in order to focus on the academic skills which some believe children need in order to succeed in elementary school? How will these mandates impact prekindergarten teachers' theories of action? What conflicts will arise from the inherent philosophical differences between NAEYC's values, philosophy, and guidelines and the push to academically prepare young children for school?

As the federal government develops and implements new education performance standards to ensure school readiness for Head Start children will Head Start teachers be forced to abandon developmentally appropriate practice, as their language of practice, in order to meet the new standards? Will Head Start programs become less flexible than non-funded prekindergarten programs in focusing on the needs and interests of young children? How will these government mandated requirements impact prekindergarten teachers' theories of action?

These are only a few implications for future research. In the last section, I will briefly summarize the study.
In Closing

This study was aimed at understanding the theories of action of three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers in different non-public school prekindergarten settings. It was a study in teacher thinking.

From the onset of this dissertation I have looked at a teacher's story or journey as being influenced and shaped by her theories of action: the ideas, concepts, and beliefs, which influence her actions. These theories of action act as her road map as she makes this unfolding journey of teaching.

Using a layered story approach, the educational criticisms have illuminated Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's theories of action, describing what they thought, what influenced them, and why they employed the teaching practices they did. This study has examined how the teachers' journeys or teaching were different and what their journeys had in common. Using three different conceptual frameworks, I analyzed the recurring themes and examined why the three teachers' journeys were so similar.

This dissertation began with the following quote by Clark (1995):

*Teaching is like a story, like a journey. Story and journey are familiar patterns with infinite variations. Each story and each journey is special, distinct from all others. Yet all stories share some common features, as do journeys* (p. xv).

What I now understand is that the common features of Kate, Audrey, and Maggie's journeys are strongly influenced and aligned with the early childhood professional discourse, specifically NAEYC's philosophy, values,
and guidelines. The early childhood education language of practice shapes their teaching journeys. The three educated, experienced, and exemplary prekindergarten teachers use the familiar patterns of their professional discourse and their theories of action to guide them through the infinite variations they encounter in the unfolding journey of their teaching.
Appendices
Appendix A

NAEYC Guidelines for Curriculum Content

1. "The curriculum has an articulated description of its theoretical base that is consistent with prevailing professional opinion and research on how children learn" (Bredekamp & Rosegrant, 1992, p. 19).

2. "Curriculum content is designed to achieve long-range goals for children in all domains — social, emotional, cognitive, and physical — and to prepare children to function as fully contributing members of a democratic society" (p. 19).

3. "Curriculum addresses the development of knowledge and understanding, processes and skills, dispositions and attitudes" (p. 19).

4. "Curriculum addresses a broad range of content that is relevant, engaging, and meaningful to children" (p. 19).

5. "Curriculum goals are realistic and attainable for most children in the designated age range for which they were designed" (p. 20).

6. "Curriculum content reflects and is generated by the needs and interests of individual children within the group. Curriculum incorporates a wide variety of learning experiences, materials and equipment, and instructional strategies, to accommodate a broad range of children's individual differences in prior experienced, maturation rates, styles of learning, needs, and interests" (p. 20).
7. "Curriculum respects and supports individual, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Curriculum supports and encourages positive relationships with children’s families" (p. 20).

8. "Curriculum builds upon what children already know and are able to do (activating prior knowledge) to consolidate their learning and to foster their acquisition of new concepts and skills" (p. 20).

9. "The curriculum provides conceptual frameworks for children so that their mental constructions based on prior knowledge and experiences become more complex over time" (p. 20).

10. "Curriculum allows for focus on a particular topic or content while allowing for integration across traditional subject-matter divisions by planning around themes and/or learning experiences that provide opportunities for rich conceptual development" (pp. 20-21).

11. "The curriculum content has intellectual integrity; content meets the recognized standards of the relevant subject-matter disciplines" (p. 21).

12. "The content of the curriculum is worth knowing; curriculum respects children’s intelligence and does not waste their time" (p. 21).

13. "Curriculum engages children actively, not passively, in the learning process. Children have opportunities to make meaningful choices" (p. 21).

14. "Curriculum values children’s constructive errors and does not prematurely limit exploration and experimentation for the sake of ensuring ‘right’ answers" (p. 21).
15. "Curriculum emphasizes the development of children's thinking, reasoning, decision-making, and problem-solving abilities" (p. 21).

16. "Curriculum emphasizes the value of social interaction to learning in all domains and provides opportunities to learn from peers" (p. 21).

17. "Curriculum is supportive of children's physiological needs for activity, sensory stimulation, fresh air, rest, hygiene, and nourishment/elimination" (p. 21).

18. "Curriculum protects children's psychological safety, that is, children feel happy, relaxed, and comfortable rather than disengaged, frightened, worried, or stressed" (p. 22).

19. "The curriculum strengthens children's sense of competence and enjoyment of learning by providing experiences for children to succeed from their point of view" (p. 22).

20. "The curriculum is flexible so that teachers can adapt to individual children or groups" (p. 22).
Appendix B

Teacher Interview #1 Questions

1.1 Could you briefly talk about your own background.

1.2 How many years have you been teaching?

1.3 Total: _______

1.4 At this school _______

1.5 What college or university degree(s) do you hold? In what fields?

1.6 How old were you when you first began teaching?

1.7 Why did you first go into teaching? (prompt for any other reasons)?

1.8 Have you always taught young children (preschool age)?

1.9 Looking back over your experience as a teacher, has your teaching changed over the years? In what ways?

1.10 Could you go through your school day and tell a little about what you do?

1.11 Do you spend time outside the school day on class preparation or other types of school work?

1.12 What times are you supposed to be at your school/center? What hours are you typically at your center?

1.13 Do you belong to any professional associations? If so, which, and what is your involvement with each?

1.14 Do you have any other employment during the school year besides teaching?

1.15 If so, how much time per week does this other work require?

1.16 What aspects of your work provide the major sources of satisfaction?

1.17 Have you ever received any type of recognition for your teaching?
1.18 Are you required to use a specific curriculum, cover certain topics, teach specific skills, etc.?

1.19 If so, who requires what? Can you deviate from this required curriculum?

1.20 If not, are there any general expectations regarding what you teach?

1.21 When you first arrive in the morning, what is your first priority?

1.22 What is the most difficult time of the day for you and your class? Why?

1.23 What part of the day do you like best and why?

1.24 Can you think of a time recently when you felt discouraged about teaching?

1.25 What was going on at the time? What brought this feeling on?

1.26 What did you do? What was your reaction?

1.27 If you were talking with a beginning teacher, someone who is just starting out in their career, what practical advice about teaching would you offer?

1.28 How would you describe the sense of community with the other teachers in your school?

1.29 How do you think your administration could better support your teaching?

1.30 In your day-to-day teaching, what are the most difficult decisions for you to make?

1.31 How do you think the parents and their parenting styles compliment or hinder what you are trying to teach the children?

1.32 What do you see as the most difficult problems facing the education and care of young children today?

1.33 Have you ever worked with student teachers?

1.34 Finally, I'm interested in why you agreed to take part in my study.
Interview Questions for Interview # 2:

2.1 What does it mean to be a teacher of young children?
2.2 What is teaching in a preschool setting?
2.3 What is it about your relation to the children that makes you a teacher?
2.4 What do the children mean to you and what do you mean to the children?
2.5 What is it about teaching that makes it possible for it to be what it is?
2.6 What do you think it takes to be an excellent teacher of young children?
2.7 What do you think are the essential characteristics of an effective teacher of young children?
2.8 What is it about being a preschool teacher that is different from being a teacher of older children?
2.9 Identify five or more factors that have influenced how you think about teaching young children.
Interview Questions for Interview #3:

3.1 When you are planning the curriculum, what things do you keep in mind?

3.2 How does the classroom arrangement, selected equipment, materials, toys, and activities reflect what you want the children to learn?

3.3 What things do you consider when deciding what the children should have the opportunity to learn?

3.4 What factors influence what you do in the classroom?

3.5 How do you plan what to teach? What changes do you make in your plan while actually teaching? For what reasons do you change your plans?

3.6 What kind of classroom climate do you try to facilitate or co-construct with the children in your class?

3.7 What type or kind of classroom culture do you try to facilitate or co-construct with the children in your class?

3.8 What part does the language (communication style) you use play in facilitating the construction of the classroom culture?

3.9 What are the various roles you fulfill in being a teacher of young children?

3.10 What do you think are the most important things the children learn in your classroom?

3.11 If you had to describe your basic philosophy of teaching young children, how would you go about describing it?

3.12 When the children leave the center next June, what do you want them to leave with as a result of being in your classroom?

3.13 Are the other things you want for individual children?

3.14 When the children leave your classroom what do you hope they will remember about you?

3.15 Any other comments?
Interview Questions for Someone Who Has Observed and Knows the Teacher's Teaching

4.1 Would you please describe _________ teaching style?

4.2 What do the children have opportunities to learn in her class?

4.3 What do you think are her goals for the children in her class?

4.4 What does _________ give to the children?

4.5 What do you think are the skills, characteristics, and talents that make her a good teacher?

4.6 Has there been any examples of her teaching that you have witnessed that has led you to believe that she is an exceptional teacher?

4.7 How has her teaching and abilities to work with young children enhanced your program (school)?

4.8 What do you think motivates and guides her teaching practices?

4.9 How do you think she plans curriculum? Where do her curriculum ideas come from?

4.10 What type of classroom climate (atmosphere) does she establish in her classroom?

4.11 Could you describe the type of classroom culture (routines, rituals, expected behaviors, etc.) she has helped establish with the children?

4.12 How do you think she encourages the children to be part of a community of learners?

4.13 What do you think are the essential characteristics of an exemplary teacher of young children?

4.14 Any other comments you would like to make?
Appendix C

A Car Project

This project first began when several children were talking about cars. First we talked a little about what we knew about cars. Then we went and from the front door (it was really cold) we looked at the cars out front, drew pictures and had the following conversation:

Cars – A Conversation in February

“Drive. You drive them (Everyone).”
“They got steering wheels.” (Anthony)
“You cut salt off the car.” (Owen)
“You go to school.” (Rachel)
“I drive to my Dad house and my Mom house.” (Owen)
“I like to go to the store.” (Elizabeth)
“Put model cars in trunk.” (Anthony)
“You put tools in them.” (Rachel)
“It has seats. We sit in them and put our seat belts on. And we get into a wreck and we look in our mouths.” (Owen)
“It’s got a motor. It’s in the back.” (Anthony)
“It’s got napkins.” (Nadina)
“It’s got horsies in the top of the car.” (Rachel)
“Motor makes loud noises.” (Everyone made motor sounds.)
“How many wheels does a car have?
“4 wheels.” (Owen and Angel)

After this conversation we then made cars out of clay, referring to our pictures and to photographs of cars which were around the room and in magazines.

The following week I reread the above conversation about cars and asked them if there was anything else they know about cars now.

Owen changed his mind and said it is “snow,” not “salt” which is scraped off of cars.
Anthony says now that the motor is in the “front,” not the ‘back.”

The conversation then revolved about the number of wheels cars have. Owen said his car had “3” wheels, Rachel said “6” and Elizabeth said “4”. They also discussed how food can go in cars like “put some food in there in a bag and have cheeseburgers and french fries, salad, tomatoes, fruit. We drink pop.”

The next several weeks we worked on making cars out of cardboard boxes. The first feature of all of the cars was the steering wheel. Gradually other
things like wheels, windows, motors, and radios were also added in addition to creative paint jobs.

On March 16 we went outside and again drew pictures of cars, taking clipboards outside and getting a close-up view of a car from the outside and the inside. We already knew what the following things were. Steering wheel and horn, radio, seat belts, wheels, keyholes, lights, mirrors, doors, gas cap and windows. We noticed the antennae, dots in the hubcaps, writing in the different knobs, the motor and hoses, for the first time. The following is the conversation, which ensued after that experience as well as the drawings/notes we made.

"Motor is in the front." (Anthony)
"I saw wheels. Circle." (Rachel)
"I saw a steering wheel. In the inside. By the driver." (Elizabeth)
"There was handles. Doors. Some have keys." (Rachel)
"Hold the hood up." (Angel)
"The antennae, for the car to make some music." (Angel)
"A radio. Handles inside the car are to get out. There was windows." (Rachel)
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482


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