Editor's Note

By Lucy F. Townsend

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Throughout the 1980s, narrative was used increasingly in studies of educational experience. Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists, theologians, and educationists turned to narrative as a means of comprehending the ways human beings experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). This issue of *Thresholds* demonstrates some of the varied uses of narrative in teacher education, educational research, and classroom instruction.

In the first article Gloria Alter, a teacher educator in a large Illinois university, explains how she uses narrative to empower her teachers in training. In the second article, a team of Canadian educational researchers demonstrates how narrative inquiry enriched their understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers and how this understanding was used to shape their teacher education program. The third article describes the use of narrative in the development of a fascinating new social studies curriculum for Canadian elementary students.

The second half of the issue contains narrative essays written by undergraduate students in a sophomore course called Education as an Agent for Change. This course introduces university students from a variety of disciplines to major educational issues such as multiculturalism, mainstreaming, equity, and excellence. Throughout the course, students reflect on their past and present experiences as related to course content.

For years I provided classes with student narratives to demonstrate how well-constructed stories can powerfully communicate students' learning experiences. To broaden the impact of these writings, I helped students publish their narratives in campus and metropolitan newspapers. Yet it is only within the last year that I came to realize other benefits of using these writings as classroom texts. Students are captivated by good stories. An effective way to introduce educational issues is to have students read narratives by their peers as well as essays by educational theorists. For example, an essay by a leading proponent of gifted education can be read along with two student narratives, each of which presents a contrasting experience in gifted classrooms. Such texts invite a broad range of students to voice their ideas. Those who feel incompetent to interpret a theoretical article often boldly discuss narratives written by their peers. Student-generated narratives can also serve as an effective bridge between theory and practice. In addition, good stories allow students to have vicarious learning experiences which can alter their values and attitudes. They may discount the generalizations of an "expert" but reconsider their views after hearing the story of another student. For example, students who bristle when they read that women face discriminatory treatment in American classrooms seem genuinely moved by a student's story about a sexist teacher. They may be distrustful of mainstreaming but are delighted when they read the narrative of a student who learned important lessons from mentally impaired students.

Perhaps most importantly, the use of student narratives as classroom texts teaches students that their "voices" matter, that they can have a powerful impact on other students' learning and lives. Through dialogue about student texts, they learn how to "talk appreciatively with each other regardless of fundamental differences." (Noddings, 1991, p. 157). This capacity "is crucial in friendship, marriage, politics, business, and world peace." (Ibid.)

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Empowerment Through Narrative: Considerations for Teaching, Learning and Life

By Gloria Alter

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Is life really a power game where the object is to get what you want and where the winners often manipulate people and situations to their own advantage? Author Michael Korda (1975) presents this viewpoint in *Power: How to Get It, How to Use It.* Korda asserts that individuals, groups and institutions as well as heads of state frequently act in a way which perpetuates domination, oppression, and exploitation in the desire for "power over" others. However, this conception of power limits how we give and receive power personally and socially, and our own experience of power limits its conceptualization (Kreisberg, 1992).

The actualization of democratic ideals can be perpetuated by transforming our conceptual schema of power. Peaceful revolution in Czechoslovakia, for example, was linked with a democratic and humane concept of power:

> . . . the aspiration to contribute to the happiness of the community and not of the need to deceive or pillage the community. . . . the art of making both ourselves and the world better (Havel, 1990, p. 22).

The dynamics of shared power creates not only greater community inclusiveness and participation, but it also expands the resource of power as it is exercised and elicited in others (Kreisberg, 1992, p. xi).

The process of more fully exercising power ("power with") can be greatly enhanced by the use of narrative. Empowered individuals and groups reveal their strength in the nurturing of many voices and in the subsequent transformation of their lives.

The Dynamics of Empowerment

The dynamics of empowerment involves dialogue, decision-making, and community support (Kreisberg, p. xi). At the same time it raises awareness of the manipulative and controlling behaviors of individuals (e.g., the use of force, the influence of opinion and the enticement of reward or punishment) and the unconscious effects of "culture," "hegemony," and "ideology" (p. 40).

While the effects of domination are structurally observable, they are not easy to eradicate. Rather, those with access to power and resources come to believe it is their due, and consensus on alternative societal plans is difficult to achieve. In spite of the challenges to empowerment, a commitment to democracy requires that we pursue its promise.

Kreisberg (1992), concerned with developing a pedagogy of empowerment, provides extensive theoretical background to support alternative notions of power and draws on the insights of critical pedagogy to form a model of empowerment for the classroom. In his model called "Field of Empowering Education," both content and reflection/critical awareness are utilized in dialogue and decision-making toward the goals of classroom and social action. This view is consistent with Giroux's vision of schools as "democratic sites dedicated to self and social empowerment (1988, p. 185)."

In opposition to such empowering classroom dynamics, an approach based on teacher domination and student submission persists. This classroom process allows either that we control others or are controlled by others. Freire (1970) describes such a classroom as one where students listen, comply, adapt, and are disciplined; and teachers pass on their knowledge, choose content and direction, and discipline students. In the process, content is divorced from reality, understanding of the world is fragmented, and students do not develop and use their voices in authentic dialogue.

This use of power has been described as "ultimately dysfunctional" and in fact, not genuine power at all. "Genuine power is not coercive control but co-active control. Coercive power is the curse of

the universe; co-active power, the enrichment and advancement of every human soul" (Follett, 1942, p. xiii, cited by Kreisberg, 1992, p. 71).

Mary Parker Follett (1942) provides an explanation of the dynamics by which personal and social empowerment is achieved. It is a process of integration which draws upon "emergence" and "reciprocal influence." The "emergence" of new solutions, values, capacities, and power occurs in the process of interaction whereby individuals allow themselves to be open to and influenced by others (Kreisberg, 1992). "Each calls out something from the other, releases something, frees something, opens the way for the expression of latent capacities and possibilities" (Follett, 1942, p. 197, cited by Kreisberg, 1992, p. 71).

The integration process is developmentally challenging in that those with conflicting wants transcend self-interest and "discover their capacities to fulfill their desires together" (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 71). In empowered groups, individuals become freed to function in their full capacity, while recognizing that self-determination and assertion must be balanced with openness to and respect for the rights of others. This "dual dimension" of empowerment reflects our inherent value as human beings and our capacity for union.

Empowerment Through Narrative Reflection

Power based on "self assertion, openness, and human connection rather than self-imposition, invulnerability and human separateness" (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 67) is the hallmark of empowered classrooms and schools. Rather than promoting feelings of powerlessness, individuals are empowered "to be able" and even to share power and decision-making in the classroom. Existing assumptions about power and privilege are banished as the commanding, controlling and competing approach to education is replaced with collaboration, sharing and mutuality. Goals are no longer to achieve and maintain superiority and status. Instead, goals include the following: 1) discovering individual and collective voices, visions, and values; 2) developing the skills, flexibility, and confidence necessary to affect societal change (e.g., thinking, speaking, listening); and 3) connecting with a community base through shared values and commitments, trust, mutual respect and support.

Reflective processes which enable personal and social empowerment help to achieve these goals. They naturally focus on our personal and professional stories and social histories, leading us to see ourselves and our world from new perspectives. Increasing awareness of our culturally based assumptions also leads to a reexamination and reformulation of our very sense of reality. Perspectives are often transformed in response to disorienting life events or exposure to ideas which threaten our points of view. "Cognitive dissonance" results when our ways of knowing are no longer adequate to explain our experience. At that point, new "meaning perspectives" become a necessity.

Insights from the analysis of our selves, our classrooms or communities, and our world can result in more authentic teaching, learning, and living. Example exercises that I have used in my teacher education classes suggest a few possibilities.

Narrative Reflection Activity

Ask students to write a narrative about an important experience in childhood, adolescence, or young adulthood. After the narratives are completed and discussed, have the class reflect on the following:

1. Who are the heroes?
2. What are the challenges?
3. How do the stories end?
4. How do our real life stories compare to the mini-stories we tell?
5. What is highlighted or emphasized?
6. What are the lessons the stories tell?
7. What stories would we like to tell in the future?

Classroom Narratives

Have students write narratives about important classroom experiences, either positive or negative. After the narratives are finished and discussed, have students reflect on the following:

1. What power or empowered roles and relationships are observable in the classrooms described in these narratives? Who has the authority to be obeyed, determine rules, goals, curriculum and instruction? Why?
2. Who or what content is considered authoritative? Why? How is knowledge validated?
3. What cooperative or empowering relationships exist between the teacher and others (e.g., students, parents, principal, staff)? Why?
4. What evidence of student empowerment can be identified outside of the classroom (e.g., extracurricular activities)?

5. Are students treated as empowered individuals? Are their rights respected?
6. To what degree does the teacher present him or herself as an empowered individual?
7. What justifications are used to support the maintenance of disempowering influences, practices, and beliefs?

Mezirow & Associates (1990) provide additional examples of "Transformative and Emancipatory Learning Activities," whereas Schank (1990) explores the dynamics behind our everyday storytelling in a way which would be useful as a framework for reflection. What emerges from narrative analysis can be the discovery of personal and professional assumptions, expectations, values, commitments, world views, and new insights on life experiences. Individual and institutional agendas become apparent when patterns of behavior and practice are analyzed, and unimagined alternative possibilities emerge as assumptions are reconsidered.

Clandinin & Connelly (1990) have pursued the uses of narrative reconstruction in the experience of learning to teach. Narrative forms of biography, autobiography, and life history are extended to encompass journaling, interviewing, storytelling, letter writing, and other activities. Images emerge from the analysis of narratives which embody the personal and practical knowledge of teaching and guide our future development. Emotional and moral dimensions of teaching and the empowering possibilities of the classroom are captured in these images. For Clandinin and Connelly, narrative is a collaborative research process in which explanations and understandings of events are shared and reconstructed, empowering teachers.

Through the power of narrative, "socio-cultural shells" can be removed and people freed to become who they are. In this process, care must be taken to lessen or avoid psychological trauma by allowing for new and evolving foundations/realities to replace the old. Recognizing empowered individuals or organizations and highlighting their stories as models can emphasize legitimate developmental goals. "The greater the development of each individual, the more able, more effective, and less needy of limiting or restricting others she or he will be" (Miller, 1965, p. 116).

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Narrative and the Development Of Teachers' Thinking

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Narrative is a naturalistic approach basic to understanding human experiences as well as a research methodology. As a method of inquiry it can become "a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). This process, when based on teachers' stories, becomes a lens through which we can view both teacher thinking and teacher education. This article draws on narratives from three separate studies which we individually conducted during the eighties. The stories which emerged from our research support the position that naturalistic inquiry in classrooms provides insight into the social interactions between teachers and children (Tabachnick, 1988). The teachers' narratives reveal aspects of their past and present lives and reflect the social and political contexts which influence who they are and how they teach. We will share the teachers' stories, reflect on the meaning, and briefly describe how the studies influenced changes in our early childhood teacher education programs.

The following narratives reflect experiences of early childhood educators Joy, Molly and Diane. Joy teaches a grade two class of 29 six to eight year olds. Her story has been extracted from a study of three first year, early childhood teachers. The researcher spent one day per week in Joy's classroom from late August through December, followed by less frequent observations and interviews from January through June. Molly, in her second year of teaching, instructs two half-day kindergarten classes. She is one of 14 beginning teachers in a project exploring teacher perspective and decision making. The researcher spent one half day per week observing and interviewing Molly from August through December. The story of Diane is part of a longitudinal study of the professional development of six teachers across four years of teacher education and three years of teaching experience. One week each year the researcher observed in Diane's classroom and conducted interviews. What follows are glimpses into the lives of these three early childhood teachers.

Joy's First Year of Teaching

Joy grew up in a close family who loved doing things together, especially reading and travelling during summer holidays. When Joy graduated from high school she wasn't sure what she wanted to do so she attended a leadership training program at a church college. By the time she started at the university, she had worked with children in a summer program, been a teacher aide, and set up a nursery school program. While Joy's childhood school experiences had not been particularly gratifying, she found that her university experiences were challenging and that her professors really cared about her. These experiences led her to believe that "you don't really carry away anything that's lasting or going to affect your life unless you're interacting with people who seem to have a real interest in you as a person."

Joy was one of the first students to sign a contract, but on September 1 she still didn't know her assign-

ment. Later that day she found that she would be teaching grade two at a new suburban school. She had two days to prepare for her new position, one of which was partially taken up with staff meetings. Some of her comments were:

> There was nothing in my classroom. I even had to scrounge in the storage rooms for furnishings. I got to take what was left over. It sure would have helped to have an inventory of what was available. It took so much time. I'm not very familiar with the grade two curriculum so right now I'm doing a lot of guessing where to start planning. Once I'm familiar with the curriculum I'll be able to concentrate on the children. I think the children are so important.

> I want to provide an active learning environment but I don't know the grade two curriculum well enough to translate it into an activity oriented approach. So although I feel most comfortable working with small groups in centers, it just isn't a feasible alternative right now. I guess I'll have to settle for more large group time and seat work activities.

Joy's focus for the first week was on establishing routines. These became known as "cooperation rules" because everyone needed to cooperate and be considerate of each other to accomplish what they were supposed to. When there was a disturbance Joy would refer to their class rules. She often took children aside individually and spoke quietly to them: "It makes it hard for me to talk to the class when you make so much noise. Is there some way we can work this out, Mel?"

By the end of the first week of school Joy said, "I feel that each day is getting better. I'm trying to focus on routines this week. Perhaps next week there'll be more emphasis on self-management." Even during the first few months she persisted in her method of calmly talking things through, forcing children to think about their behavior, its effect on others, and how they could behave in a more acceptable way. Gradually the children became quieter, more task oriented, and thoughtful of others. By February, Joy's classroom was running more smoothly with the children showing "a lot more cooperativeness" and "now they really know when they've done something that's not appropriate." However, Joy was not comfortable with her approach yet. "I've really been getting the children to do things for outside reinforcement rather than because they wanted to," she said. "At the beginning of the year I was just trying anything that I thought would work."

> In March and April she consciously changed her approach. Now when someone has done something, like finished their work, I'll go to them and ask how they feel about it. They might reply they feel good about it and I'd say I feel good too when I've done something well. This way I'm trying to reinforce their feeling good about their own accomplishments and not just doing things for the teacher's sake.

This approach is consistent with Joy's philosophy about children.

> Young children need time to explore, to create and to solve problems for themselves. Children are individuals who need to be considered as a whole, but with particular needs to be helped, guided, cherished, respected and loved, treated with dignity.

She believed a good teacher is:

> Someone who cares for children, one who is willing to listen to them, find out what is important to them, find out their inner needs. . . . There must be a willingness to respond to children, to invest yourself in them, to allow yourself to be interested in them. I think that's the key.

Much of Joy's frustration in the first few months was related to her inability to do the things she felt were needed for individual children. "If I could only spend five or ten minutes with each child each week, but it just doesn't seem possible." In January she came up with a workable alternative. Two or three times a week the children would write a journal entry about things they had done the night before, something that had upset them or pleased them, etc. Joy felt the journals gave her something like a private time with each child. Sometimes she wrote responses; other times her increased understanding enabled her to respond to a child in a more appropriate manner. She was finally beginning to feel that she was aware of the children's needs and was trying to find ways to meet them.

Over the fall Joy made several changes in focus. Prior to the beginning of school she wanted an activity centered space that would invite children to become involved. She also needed order and control. For several weeks she struggled to find appropriate ways to arrange the physical space so it would contain the students yet enable them to be involved in concrete, experiential activities. By the middle of October she was getting closer to her activity approach, but she was still somewhat cautious.

> I don't want to implement centers and then have disorder. It should be both fun and a good learning experience. So it's important the centers are carefully implemented. . . . I never seem to have enough time. If I work on the centers then I don't get the marking done. If I do the marking, then I don't have time to work on the centers!

By February there was a philosophical note to her reflections. "I've found I can't do everything I want to. It's impossible." By the end of March Joy seemed fairly content with her environment. "The centers are not as complete as I would like to have them, but I think I could live with my room the way it is now till the end of the year if I had to."

In reflecting on the year, she felt that the first few weeks were characterized by exhaustion. There never seemed to be enough time to become familiar with the curriculum, the guides, the manuals; to get to know individual children; to create the kind of environment she wanted; and to grasp the totality of it all so she could do some long-range planning. As well as juggling all of these she felt the need for some balance between her personal and professional life. Near the end of September she commented: "Sometimes I feel really pressured to get all my preparation done and still meet my social responsibilities. My husband's been on his own ever since I got my position."

Before the school year began, Joy had been concerned about how she could get to know 29 students and individualize their programs. However, her calm, caring approach seemed to enable her to connect with individual children under some difficult circumstances. By February, however, she felt that she was really on top of it all. Now she was familiar with the goals and objectives of the grade two curriculum and felt comfortable with her students' progress. Although she still didn't have enough time for all she wanted to do, she had learned to live with limitations. Now that she knew the children and the grade two expectations, she wasn't so upset if she didn't get everything thoroughly planned or the room arranged exactly as she hoped. Both she and the children were more relaxed. They knew and liked each other; they had created a landscape in which they felt comfortable.

Molly's Story

Molly, a second-year teacher, has always felt supported by her family, who encouraged her to pursue her personal interests. "We just had a lot of fun and freedom to do things and to try things out," she said. "My eldest sister was the athletic one; my middle sister was the musical one; I was good at drawing and I liked kids."

Because she "liked kids" Molly gained experience working with children prior to becoming a teacher. She volunteered to work in the Parks and Recreation Program and worked at a residential home. This program put her in touch with children who were wards of the government, from broken homes, living in high risk environments, or abandoned. The children's home environments and early experiences were very different from her own; thus, she learned a great deal about various life styles and alternative living conditions.

Between Molly's second and third year at the university, she spent a year travelling around the world.

> I wasn't ready to take on the responsibility of having a classroom. Student teaching really intimidated me. And I think that I came back a lot maturer after being gone a year. I went into university with a more settled feeling.

All of these experiences seem to have influenced her teaching.

Molly was married just before entering her second year of teaching, and she was attempting to maintain a balance between the personal and professional aspects of her life. Her first step in this process was to move all of her files to school. She said, "It will help me keep my work at school and not be taking it home all the time."

Molly taught kindergarten in a middle and lower-middle-class, multi-ethnic community. She enjoyed teaching in the school and was particularly comfortable with the staff. "It's important to me that I have another kindergarten teacher who makes me 'stop and smell the flowers' now and then. Like, some things I might not have stopped to laugh at."

She also observed that during her first year, she "just lived from week to week to week." As she entered her second year of teaching, her commitment to education grew and she began to freely express her philosophy of education. She maintains that her philosophy grew out of her early childhood coursework at the university. "It (the early childhood program) gave you that onus of responsibility," she said. "It made you stop and really think about your philosophy of education because you have to be convinced of everything you're doing. And I think that emphasis is really good."

One of Molly's basic beliefs is that "children are good." She says this belief has been with her "all of her life" and was reinforced by her university work.

> Every child has potential, but you have to look at it as to where they are. And I think university does that for us. (It helps us see) the good in each child and to

> look at each child as an individual, and I try to do that.

Linked to this view of children is Molly's goal to encourage her students to be "responsible beings." This means helping them become more independent, cooperative learners. "I say, 'You can help your neighbors out' and I'll make children help each other. They'll come and say, 'Where's the paper?' And I'll find someone and say, 'Could you please show them where the paper is.'"

Being responsible is also related to encouraging children to solve their own problems.

> When someone does something you don't like, or you don't think it's right, the first thing you do is tell them to stop. If they don't stop, you can ask a teacher to help you because you tried to solve your own problem and they didn't stop.

Responsibility and independence are linked to trust. "I think children have to be responsible for themselves," Molly says, "especially when they come to school. . . . There are lots of times where I have to trust them." Molly trusts children to go directly to other classrooms if they want to share something. When she steps out of the room for a moment, she trusts that they will continue their activities. Her expectations create an atmosphere of self-directedness.

One of Molly's goals is to help the children make choices about their activities. To do so, they must listen. She will say, "You have to be a good listener when you're in group time because it's very important that you get information about what's going on at the centers so you can go there and work by yourself afterwards." While the children have some choice about their activities during center time, Molly limits the number of children in a center. When asked why she didn't let the children decide if a center was too crowded, she said,

> That's one thing that I don't feel comfortable with, . . . I don't know if I would ever have them limit the number. I think it helps eliminate some frustration for some kids who are ready, and it also gives the ones who aren't ready some constructive guidelines that they can work within.

Molly tries to deal with each child's behavior on an individual basis. A child in the playhouse shouted, "Teacher, Donald's in the house crying. Mary hit him!" Molly explained that their behavior had not been acceptable because Mary didn't follow the rules for solving problems and Donald shouldn't have disrupted her play. She said they had "both been wrong" but that she would give them another chance. About eight minutes later someone said, "Teacher, Donald broke the fridge!" After the second problem arose, Molly told Donald he could not play in the house any more that day. He left, but twenty minutes later a big crash resonated from inside the playhouse. Then Donald whispered, "It fell." Molly took him to the hallway, talked with him for a few minutes, then returned leaving Donald sitting on a chair in the hall so he could "think about his behavior." She maintained that Donald was fully aware of why he had to sit in the hallway and that he tried to "bargain" with her by saying:

> Miss Molly, I really have had enough time over here on this chair. I think that I could be very good." And I said, "I think that you probably could too, Donald." "Well, I'd really like another chance." I said, "Fine, you'll have another chance tomorrow. Tomorrow's a new day. You can come to school and show me, but today you've lost all your choices. This is the only choice you have left.

Molly tries to focus on the positive things Donald does. "I had a few times in the last two days where he's been good at something, and I can get him on that, but he really is out for a lot of attention right now." While Molly has some general rules for everyone, she tries various approaches to meet individual needs.

Most of Molly's professional decisions seem rooted in her philosophy of education. Her classroom arrangement, selection of materials, and view of children as responsible beings are examples of how she has tried to put her philosophy into action.

Diane's Third Year of Teaching

Diane grew up in a large industrial city in England. She has wanted to be a teacher since her elementary school days. She applied for her first teaching post in her home city where she has remained for three years. The school has about 180 children, one-third of whom are of Asian or Afro-Caribbean origin. Some speak English as a second language; in their homes they speak Urdu, Punjabi, or Gudjerati.

Diane settled very happily into her first year of teaching. She spoke of her enjoyment of her work, but she found it hard.

> I think the most difficult thing is knowing where to stop really, because on teaching practice you have to slog right out or you don't learn anything from it. I mean you've only got five weeks [so] you've got to make the most of it. But now you've got to know

where to stop. . . . I found that very difficult at first.

In her second year Diane spoke of an increased level of satisfaction. "Last year it was a struggle to love it [teaching]. I liked it mostly, but some days I didn't. But this year, I really do." At the end of that year, when I asked her about her future plans, she responded,

> Originally when I was in college I used to think I didn't want to stay longer than two years but now everybody is going through such upheaval I think it's going to be better to be staying in the same school.

In her third year, Diane became noticeably more concerned about the implications of the National Curriculum that was being implemented in schools in England and Wales. This development was brought about in a climate of hostility at all levels of the education profession. Diane's views were:

> I'm getting more militant now because I'm getting more aware of what's going on and it's all the politics that's involved with teaching today. . . . When I was having all my problems with my car my brother said he could get me a company car and a job making fifteen thousand pounds next week, and I was tempted for a minute. Then I thought, well, if I'm tempted, and I love teaching and I'm dedicated, then people that have better things to do, they're just going to change jobs and what's going to be left in the end? There's going to be all these "licensed teachers" coming in and . . . I think it's quite frightening.

Diane's militancy has served to make her even more committed to the profession.

Towards the end of Diane's first year of teaching, she told long stories about individual children and the differences among them. Diane continues this practice, describing the difficulties of teaching Kevin, who is highly expressive, and Tara, who is withdrawn.

> In management terms Kevin has got to be the most difficult. I mean he's been away today and the difference in the class when he's not there is amazing. He's into everything all the time, yet he's very bright . . . Whenever children are sharing he'll shout out or if other children are reading in assembly he'll tell everybody what's going to happen next. When you bring his attention to it he's very, very remorseful but then he forgets after five minutes and he does it again. I find you spend so much time with a child like that thinking of ways to keep them motivated.

The other child, Tara, was particularly difficult for Diane. She would read on request but refused to speak.

> She didn't speak at all to the teacher who had her last year. I find I ask questions of her in a totally different way because I know that she's got to answer with a nod or something like that. . . . It's difficult when you want to know how well she understands something. It's only from watching her over a period of time that you know she understands the concepts, whereas if the children can talk about it you know they have all the understanding.

Diane reflected on the requirements of children with learning difficulties or behavior disorders. She contrasted them with well behaved children who were progressing. "When somebody's more difficult you learn more about them in order to find strategies to help them," Diane said. "Yet it seems unfair. You spend so much time with them that the other children sometimes lose out, or at least don't get the amount of time that should be theirs."

The children that Diane has found to be easy to teach are those who thrive on classroom life. "Children like Kristen, Sharon, Sugdeep, Hamza, James, and Emily are always very willing to work," she said. "They really enjoy . . . everything, they're all very enthusiastic."

Diane greatly values contact with parents of the children whom she meets informally in the school yard before and after school.

> In the mornings we go out to the playground to bring the children in. Then we have to stand in the playground at the end of the day and every child has to be met so there's quite a lot of casual talk at that time and I always try to tell them [parents] how they're doing. I try to make contact especially with children where there are a few problems. I always try to tell the parents when they've done something good and I try not to tell them when they haven't.

Diane sees the parents as very important in the process of building relationships with the children and teaching them. When she cannot make contact with the parents she feels it is much more difficult to get to know the child well.

Diane's views of children are reflected in the way she talks about individuals, their behavior, their understanding, their difficulties,

and their strengths. She believes in the power of children's personalities. She sees her own role in bringing out the best in each of them as "getting to know them" as fully as possible so as to meet each child's needs. It is this process that she most enjoys about her work, what she calls the "social side of teaching."

For Diane, one of the most important facilitating factors in children's learning is confidence. "Confidence is a complicated thing," she says. "It's different in different situations, isn't it?" Diane believes that giving the children confidence in their abilities is "worth more than teaching them any particular skills really." She increases the children's confidence by building on their strengths whether it be drawing, singing, or other talents. Diane further explains her philosophy:

> It's the approach they make to their academic work; they have to have the motivation and the confidence to know that they can do anything.

Diane is also pleased to note what gives her confidence in her ability as a teacher: "Della [another teacher] and I did the Christmas play . . . and that was a tremendous achievement. We wrote all the songs for it and that gave me a lot of confidence."

Linking Stories to Teacher Education

Our narrative research has influenced not only our understanding of teacher thinking but has provided "future directions" for our early childhood teacher education program. The themes which have had the greatest impact on our thinking are:

1. experience with children;
2. balance, support, and collaboration; and
3. lifelong learning.

Joy's experiences in working with young children prior to entering the field played an important role in developing her confidence. This need for "real" experiences led us to make involvement with groups of children a prerequisite for entering the early childhood teacher education program, as well as to examine closely what our students were experiencing in their student teaching. Molly, who came into our program after we had made this change, referred to the helpfulness of the experiences she had with children outside of the university.

We consciously drew on our students' previous experiences as starting points for reflection and learning through autobiographical writing and sharing. We find that students' childhood and school experiences affect how they relate to children and see their teaching role. Joy has few memories of her own early schooling and feels this is because the teachers did not care for her in any meaningful way. However, she did have some positive experiences at the university.

We often speak of a caring person, but exactly what is meant? Our research indicates that the caring person takes a particular interest in the individual and makes an effort to provide appropriate encouragement, guidance or whatever is needed. In our university classes we try to provide opportunities for students to get to know each other as individuals with special talents, interests, and needs. As staff we try to facilitate a caring and supportive atmosphere for our students.

The teachers in our studies struggled to balance their personal and professional lives. They often felt tired and stressed. It is at such times that they appreciate the support of others. As Molly says, it is important to have someone who can help you "stop and smell the flowers." We would like to suggest that teacher education programs take a more active role in preparing future teachers for the socialization process they may experience as first-year teachers. One thing we do is invite recent graduates to come in and talk to our classes about the joys and struggles as first-year teachers. We also encourage students to read biographies and case studies which focus on beginning teaching experiences.

The ability to collaborate with others seems to be an important skill for teachers. We try to help students develop this skill by having collaborative projects or assignments which encourage them to work together both during and after class time. Such collaborations seem to stimulate the sharing and cooperation that are integral aspects of most school cultures.

As teacher educators we can help students develop stronger networks and support systems by grouping them together in several courses. We have found that placing students in three of our core courses helps them develop close friendships which continue after they graduate.

One result of our research has been to remind us that teacher preparation is part of a lifelong process of professional development. It is important that we address concerns which are uppermost in students' minds as they begin to develop a professional identity and a critically reflective disposition toward their career of lifelong learning.

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Voyages in Primary Social Studies: A Story-Based Approach

By Gerry Clarke, Alan Sears, Joanne Smyth, and Shirley-Dale Easley

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Sometime during the fifth century A.D. an Irish Christian monk known as Brendan journeyed into the cold Atlantic in a boat made of ox hides. Brendan had heard that somewhere in the west one could find Paradise. Travelers from the west had even provided him proof: the fresh fragrance that lingered on their cloaks could only have come from a land of delight.

Brendan, apparently, was a shrewd, hard-bitten fellow. The measly existence offered to Ireland's earliest Christians denied life to all but the toughest. Having heard about Paradise and wanting to see it for himself, he gathered a small crew and put to sea. Like Egypt's desert anchorite hermits, he trusted God to determine his fate.

We don't know exactly where Brendan went. He later claimed to have found an island inhabited by large sheep; a whale so large that he and his crew landed on its back; an island peopled with giants who blew fire at the helpless holy men; columns of crystal rising from the sea; fog so dense that their sense of direction was lost; and finally, a delightful island of flowers and birds, where an angel told Brendan to return home and tell others about the place.

Brendan's journey lasted seven cold and wet years. Sometime later his story was written down in a Latin text called the Navigatio. For centuries afterward, only the Irish placed much stock in it, claiming that Brendan had "discovered" the New World long before Columbus and even the Vikings. Some thought he had sailed to the Caribbean or Newfoundland. Brendan may have made a series of short trips, landing at various islands in the North Atlantic until he reached Newfoundland. As Jean Fritz (1979) has suggested, even Newfoundland's barren shore can look good after years at sea. For most people, though, the story of Brendan was viewed as an entertaining bit of exaggeration, perhaps the result of religious fanaticism or too much salt air.

The story has wonderful elements: adventure, sea monsters, perseverance, hardship, faith, and finally, success. It enjoys a place among all such epic tales. However, a number of twentieth-century developments have led to a reexamination of Brendan's journey. To begin with, an odd artifact was found on Baffin Island. Archaeologists speculate that the small wooden carving, which may predate known Christian settlements in the area, represents a Christian priest (Sabo & Sabo, 1978).

Tim Severin (1978) made a journey in the mid 1980s which further enhances the possibility that Brendan or some other Irish Christian did indeed reach Newfoundland. Severin is a British historian, adventurer, and author who has made a career of re-enacting legendary events to determine whether they have any basis in fact.

After learning as much as he could about early Irish culture, Severin built a leather curragh and sailed it with a crew of four. His "Brendan Voyage" took him from Ireland north to the Faeroes, Iceland, Greenland, and to Newfoundland. His boat didn't rot in the water, as many had predicted. Severin also connected the events described in the Navigatio with geographical sites encountered on his journey. The island of sheep may well have been the Faeroes. The fire throwing giants may have been imagined during a volcanic eruption in Iceland. The glaciers that threatened Severin's craft resembled columns of crystal, and the fog off Newfoundland is frequently very dense. It may well be that what Brendan described as sea monsters was actually a school of pilot whales being chased by killer whales.

Severin's account is provocative in other ways as well. His descriptions are vivid and give his readers a true sense of what it was like to be days from land in a tiny craft, saturated and shivering, facing massive fields of potentially deadly ice floes, with mouldy packets of food and little hope of finding fish for dinner. No one can read about his voyage without wondering how a small group of fifth century monks would have fared without a radio, life rafts, and Goretex.

The appeal of Brendan's and Severin's voyages is not reserved for adults. Such tales also serve as ideal starting points for teaching history and social studies to young children, which is what we at the University of New Brunswick Faculty of Education are currently trying to do with the aid of local teachers.

Our theoretical plan was first outlined in a *Proposal to Revise the Elementary Social Studies Curriculum* (Clarke et al., 1990) which identified inadequacies in the existing elementary-level social studies curriculum and suggested that a new approach be explored. The recommended program was to be freed of the constraints that too often accompany "expanding horizons" types of studies, and instead venture into content that is distant to children—both spatially and in time. That is, it was suggested that elementary-level children study the lives and times of people in ancient eras and in truly foreign lands. Furthermore, the proposal described how literature—in the form of biography, historical novels, travel accounts, myths and legends, religious stories, poetry, and drama—can provide a focal point for fulfilling the goals of social studies and can make the study of things "long ago and far away" pleasurable.

The defense of early instruction of history and geography is largely based on a critique of the expanding-horizons curriculum design. Recent scholarship (Egan, 1979; Levstik, 1986a) effectively disqualified expanding-horizons for a number of reasons. To begin with, this ideology is woefully behind the times. Educators' definition of "horizons" have remained unchanged for half a century. Thus, despite mass communications, rapid transportation, and an increasingly mobile and versatile workforce, elementary social studies instruction is doggedly modeled around an image of society that is largely rural, isolated, and static. The apparent reluctance with which horizons are broadened leads to the exclusion of fascinating areas of study; too often children are limited to a western, myopic outlook.

Some of the most provocative declarations against expanding-horizons based curricula are founded on consideration of children's imagination and experience. Because the very horizons being broadened are currently measured in strict years and miles, the result is a pragmatic course of study. The mundane and the measurable are thought to be more important than the unpredictable realm of the imagination. However, children derive more lasting and meaningful ideas when their sense of wonder is allowed to guide learning. Expanding horizons-based curricula overlook valuable opportunities in teaching and eventually quash feelings of excitement about social studies.

A final basis for objections to the pedagogy of expanding horizons is the result of a reexamination of Piagetian development theory. In the past, Piaget's theory has been cited as proof that children cannot learn the more abstract aspects of history while at the "concrete operations" stage. Rather than dismissing history instruction all together, teachers should seek more suitable approaches to the subject, given the abilities of the children at that level. This more optimistic use of developmental psychology has been used successfully for decades in Britain (Coltham, 1971), France (Dumas and Lee, 1985), West Germany, and Italy (Springer, 1969). New York and California have recently begun adopting similar interpretations (Bradley Commission Schools, 1988).

Many educators have abandoned the established content and methods of social studies instruction in favor of studies that reflect the dynamism of modern society and the global prospective required therein (Tway and White, 1988). In their search for a pedagogical approach that includes things "long ago and far away" while catering to the children's abilities and interests, they have found that narrative forms of writing are far more evocative for children than expository textbooks. A literature-based social studies curriculum is preferable for many reasons. First, literature can bring to children a depth of understanding that is often unavailable in textbooks. Texts too often take a shallow view of the world: attempts to reflect global complexities result

in sterile and condescending vignettes which too frequently perpetuate existing stereotypes.

Children view the world with a great deal of subjectivity; they ascribe values to everything they encounter. Objectivity—so commonly a goal of the textbook writer—does not satisfy children. Narratives, on the other hand, do. Creative writing is a reflection of humanity. As such, it can be used to fit recognized traits of humanity into social studies.

The narrative form is also germane to history. The earliest historians collected stories; they did not undertake formal analyses of the past. Even today we use anecdotal information about our forebears. We relate stories about immigration and homesteading; our ideas about our ancestors are not classified under such subheadings as "the five factors leading to Irish emigration to the New World." For children, the study of history should commence with anecdotal forms found in creative writing. In this way, history can become associated directly with children's own experiences. It will elicit the same subjectivity and be more consistent with the ways in which children perceive their surroundings. Indeed, some researchers (Levstik, 1986b) have found that exposing children to stories about things distant encourages them to undertake formal historical and geographical studies in the upper grades.

Theory into Practice

To illustrate this new curricular focus, a team of faculty members and teachers in New Brunswick has created and tested a number of units that demonstrate how children can enjoy and learn from stories. To some extent, the search for stories that lend themselves well to elementary-level classes ended up steering the entire project. The stories chosen for the illustrative units had to fulfill certain criteria. They had to be written in a style that young people could appreciate. Few teachers have the time to adapt a tale from a more complex text or to improvise with details when a version seems uninspiring.

Since this project is concerned with more than the literary aspects of a given story, a selection of background materials had to be found to complement each tale. When children read Jean Fritz's *Brendan The Navigator*, the story is embellished with material on Irish Christianity, medieval monasteries, the Celts and Vikings, the North Atlantic, volcanoes, navigation and even the lives of various saints. Since Tim Severin's *Brendan Voyage* provides the most detailed study of the original journey, the children study it also.

The stories were chosen at first with no real thematic link. Originally, such subjects as shelter and reasons for settlement were considered. Soon, though, the appeal of stories that involve journeys became apparent. The classroom appeal of stories of travel is readily understandable. Journeys involve people with drive, purpose and strength; for only such individuals were likely to undertake the hardships of early travel. Journeys are episodic, which makes it possible to describe them in chunks, based on time or geographic details. Journeys have recognizable beginnings and endings and can, therefore, satisfy the need for structure. Journeys also enable children to move in both space and time simultaneously. They can plot events and actually follow travelers from one place to another, sharing imaginatively the sensations of each. Records of journeys describe the joining together of two or more cultures, creating cross-cultural experiences for the reader.

Finally, journeys involve encounters with the unknown. The desire "to boldly go where no man has gone before" is perennial. Furthermore, to a child the description of a voyage can have a special appeal. The world unfolds for a traveler in much the same way that it does for a child. Every mile traversed creates a new awareness. The Western child's knowledge of Asia accumulates as did Marco Polo's. Beginning with vague ideas, pieced together from myths, legends and apocryphal accounts, they gradually sort truth from fiction through direct experience or the traveler's report. For both, the experience is entirely fresh.

In addition to Brendan's voyage, four historic journeys were selected:

1. the legend of Jason's quest for the Golden Fleece,
2. the chronicle of African emperor Mansa Musa's pilgrimage from Mali to Mecca,
3. the tale of Marco Polo's voyage from Venice to China, and
4. the Chinese stories of the Monkey King's journey to India with a Buddhist monk.

Since the time of writing, the project members have developed a number of additional journey stories for classroom use and have printed a 95-page booklist to help teachers in selecting material. This list can be obtained by writing to Joanne Smyth, Education Resource Centre, University of New Brunswick, P.O. Box 7500, Fredericton, N.B., CANADA E3B-5H5 (FAX 506-453-4831).

In the Classrooms

The project organizers felt certain that these stories would capture the children's attention, but it soon became apparent that there was a need to document their appeal. Working with children at nearly all levels of the elementary curriculum and employing widely disparate pedagogical styles, the teachers demonstrated conclusively that stories can carry a wealth of informa-

tion to children. Furthermore, stories make children want to learn more about the people and events that they chronicle.

All of the teachers enjoyed the field-testing segments. They were personally interested in the topics and found little difficulty in sharing their enthusiasm. They reported that the children were more willing to listen and spent more time on work assigned. They felt that the children had a more profound purpose in school work once their interest in the stories had been aroused. The children were also eager to read on with all of the stories and, according to the favorable reports of several parents, repeated them again at home. When visitors witnessed these lessons, they noted the children's excitement and pleasure in learning.

This curricular approach is now being used by other teachers whose students are learning about Celtic England, Yuan China, ancient Egypt and Homeric Greece, all through stories. The New Brunswick Department of Education is slowly warming to the notion of redefining "expanding horizons" and of using narrative to make things long ago and far away more accessible to young children. Other jurisdictions including British Columbia are considering similar initiatives.

A large obstacle to creating such a program is in the acquisition of well-told stories and complementary materials. Our field-testing teachers go into their schools with armloads of books, yet devising more readily usable texts remains a multi-faceted challenge. Publishers are wary of innovation and require a waiting market before making a significant investment. Even if stories and related information are brought together in single texts, we fear that the focus will be on traditional ways of studying history and geography, and that the fantastic elements of stories like *Monkey King* will be lost in yet another stultifying program. The inclusion of such diverse subjects as Monkey King and Mansa Musa is fundamental, as is preserving the diversity of approaches that teachers and their students currently enjoy. One way to overcome these obstacles may be to use desktop publishing technology to create resources "on demand," or to revise continually in an effort to suit the needs and preferences of teachers and children in any given situation.

There is a stimulating alternative to the unsatisfactory way in which social studies is currently treated in elementary schools. Centuries of events occurring in a world of places are all accessible through stories. These stories exist and need only be brought to children for learning to begin.

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Looking-Glass Self

By Melanie McMahon

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The whole day was ruined because of my first-hour sociology class in which our teacher did an experiment to introduce the concept of "looking-glass self." She passed out the same worksheet to every student and gave us all the same directions. The worksheet contained fifteen words which we were to unscramble in about twenty minutes. I unscrambled all but two words. Out of curiosity, I glanced at the paper of the student sitting next to me and saw that he had the same answers that I had.

As the teacher checked our papers, my hands began to sweat because I was nervous and yearning for her approval. The look she gave me when she finished my paper made my heart sink. She seemed to be thinking, "Are you really that stupid?" Aloud, she said, "Melanie, maybe you misunderstood the directions. I think you should try again."

Disappointed, I picked up my pen and stared blankly at my paper. Then as I tuned into the teacher's conversation with the student next to me, I was shocked to hear her approve of his work. Now angry at what I felt was unfairness on her part, I waited anxiously for her explanation. She told us to look at the top right corner of our worksheets. Everyone with the corner cut off had received her disapproval; the others had gotten her approval. She then explained the concept of "looking-glass self:" what others say to or about us shapes our self image. Her experiment had been a demonstration of this theory. Even after her explanation I had a terrible day because I could still feel her stare of disapproval. To this day I remember that painful experience because it made me realize that what other people say to and about me affects how I value myself.

Later that year I found my self image affected by my Advanced Placement (AP) teacher, Mr. Peterson. Many of my peers had warned me that he was a "male chauvinist," but I wanted the challenge of his class. From the beginning it was obvious that what others had told me was true. Although there were only two guys to the eight girls in the class, my teacher centered his attention and approval on the males. Several times we were yelled at for discussing the assignment among ourselves although the guys were allowed to talk. Occasionally, our teacher would sit and have joking sessions with the guys while the girls were supposed to be diligently working. We girls referred to Mr. Peterson as "Fred," his first name, mostly out of disrespect for his chauvinism.

Our semester grade was based solely on weekly writing assignments which we handed in every Friday. I put a lot of thought into what I wrote. My efforts, however, received disapproving remarks and mediocre grades. Everyone in the class was competitive and curious as to what everyone got on these papers. Throughout our "comparison" sessions, we found the negative remarks and mediocre grades to be typical of the females' papers. Fred constantly praised the work of the guys, but several of the girls didn't think that their work was so outstanding. Many times I was in tears after that class because no matter how hard I tried, Fred's remarks made me feel like a failure.

As we were nearing the end of the semester, we began to discuss whether or not to take the Advanced Placement Test. The seventy-dollar test could be well worth the money if we did well enough to get college credit for our class. One day after class I approached Fred. "Mr. Peterson, do you think that I should take the A. P. test?"

He looked at me as if I had asked the dumbest question in the world and said, "Well, Melanie, it's your money and it's up to you to decide. If you think you have some chance of getting credit, take it. I don't know if you'll get credit or not."

Once again I left Mr. Peterson's class feeling the tears well up in my eyes. I thought to myself, "Geez, Fred, why didn't you just say, 'No, don't take the test, Melanie. You're clueless and it would be a waste of money.'" I went to the bathroom and looked at my tear-stained face in the mirror thinking that maybe I shouldn't bother taking the test.

Then I remembered the concept of the looking-glass self. The "failure" image that Fred had created for me battled with another self image that told me I could be successful. If I made my decision according to my "failure" image, I would not take the test and I would leave the tears on my face. But on that day I felt an unusual amount of inner strength. I grabbed a Kleenex and wiped away all trace of frustration. A surge went through me and made me want to prove to Fred that I wasn't a failure.

When the day of the test finally arrived, I felt confident that if I tried my best I would do fine. There were three essay questions and we were allowed a total of three hours to complete them. I sat down, got out my pen, took a deep breath, and went to work. I was the first to finish but I felt good about what I had written. I knew that I had done my best, and I also knew that Fred wouldn't be the one scoring my exam.

I knew I'd receive my score in mid-July, but in June I began checking the mail every day just in case it came early. Finally, during the third week of July, the envelope was in my mailbox. After dropping it twice, I finally got it into the house. I could barely get the envelope open, but when I did I let out a scream. Then, just in case I'd misread it, I looked again at my score: 3 out of a possible 5—enough to give me college credit. I ran around the house for awhile because I was so excited that I couldn't sit still. When I finally calmed down, I called a friend to see how she and the others in my class had done. She had earned college credit, she told me. Then she said something that infuriated me. The guy in my class whose work Fred had always praised had the same score that I had. I wanted to run up to Fred and say, "Look, I am not a failure!" I decided that it wasn't worth a special effort. And besides, I told myself, all that really mattered was that I knew I had succeeded.

Before I was taught the concept of the looking-glass self, I hadn't realized how much other people affected my self image. Even afterwards, I allowed my self image to deteriorate because of Mr. Peterson's low opinion of my writing. Yet my experience in his A.P. English class taught me that I could win the battles against the negative factors that worked against my self image. To succeed, I must continue to believe in myself no matter what other people say about me.

The Pioneer Game

By Kerry Pelz

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Think back to the sixth grade. It was a difficult time of your life, right? You were probably just entering middle school, and you did not really know where you fit into everything. You wanted everyone to know that you were not a little kid anymore, but you just were unsure of how you felt about this middle school thing—no more recess, no more Halloween parties. And on top of that, you had to change classes and keep everything in a locker instead of a desk. Were you ready for these changes?

I think that everyone can remember this feeling. I know that I can. My friends and I no longer wanted to be treated like children, but the thought of real classes frightened us. Luckily, one of our teachers understood how we felt. And although I did not realize it then, she was one of the best teachers that I ever had. She did not treat us like children, but she also did not treat us like adults who could handle anything. She had a way of teaching us things so that we would understand and enjoy them, not just memorize them.

One of the best learning experiences that I had with her was a game called "Pioneers." We were learning about the pioneers that were moving west and the hardships that they encountered. But to our young sixth-grade minds, this was extremely boring. We did not care about those people; we only cared about ourselves. Why waste our time learning about something that occurred so long ago? Our teacher understood us, so she decided to turn our history class into a game. We would learn without even realizing it.

One day she handed each of us a packet of papers and told us that we would not need our books for a few weeks. Needless to say, we were in shock. Then she had us all stand up in the front of the room in four groups, each with seven or eight people, and called each group a "wagon train." Next, we moved all the desks around so that we were sitting in our "wagon trains." Finally, we were ready—but, ready for what?

As all of these rearrangements were taking place, we began to look through the packets of paper that she had given us. The first page had a list of names, occupations and other information similar to this:

Dr. and Mrs. Tom Jones
Doctor
2 sons: eight and twelve
1 daughter: sixteen
1 ox, 2 horses, 1 goat, chickens
$1500

The list had eight names, different occupations, and family sizes. Some had no job or family at all.

The next page had a list of at least two hundred supplies, including food, clothing, medicine, weapons, and many other items. The price of each item was also included. The rest of the packet had maps and pictures, and a lot of other things, but there was no text, nothing to read. So, what were we going to do for the next few weeks?

After we had a little time to look through the packets, our teacher explained that each of our groups, or wagon trains, was made up of the people sitting around us. But we were no longer sixth graders, we were pioneers. Each of us was assigned one of the identities listed on the first page of our packet. And our homework for this first night was to memorize everyone's new names and identities. As of tomorrow, we could no longer call anyone by his or her real name.

This class was the topic of conversation all day. All we heard in the halls was, "Hey! What's your name? How many kids do you have? You're a doctor? Wow! I'm just a farmer." This was exciting. We wanted to know everyone in our wagon trains just to see how we compared to the others. Did we have a gunsmith in ours? Did anyone in our train have a pregnant wife? It was fun getting to know the other people's identities, and before we knew it, our homework was done.

The next day's class was even more exciting. Our teacher explained that we were about ready to leave on our journey westward, but first we had to load up our wagons. We assumed that the list on the second page of our packets told us what we were to take along, but our teacher corrected us. The list simply stated everything that was available at the general store. We had to

choose the supplies that we felt were most important. We had a limited budget, which was listed with our identities. The dollar amount correlated with the profession; thus, a doctor had more money than a farmer. We could only spend this much money on our supplies. Everything on our list seemed too important not to buy. We could not imagine how we were going to get by on the small amount of money we were given because we had to buy food, pans, clothing, guns, ammo, feed for the animals, lanterns, tools. . . . We argued and argued with the teacher that it was impossible to buy all the necessary supplies with the small amount of money that we had. She told us that we had no choice—we had to find a way to get by with what we were given, so we did. This was our first lesson, and we really took it to heart. We worked on those lists all day, changing and re-changing our minds on what we did or did not need. I even brought the list home to show my parents and talk to them about it. Finally, we all made our decisions.

On the first day, we were already completely involved in our new lives. We really cared about what happened to us as pioneers, and wanted to do everything right. Pioneers' decisions about what to bring and what to leave behind were no longer something to read about, they were part of our lives. The things that we thought we did not care about because they had happened so long ago were now happening to us, and we cared about them.

The game continued for weeks. Once we had our supply lists, we took off. But every day there were more problems. And every problem made us that much more determined to make it to where we were heading. Each problem had to be dealt with as a group, and we worked through everything just so we could keep moving. In the process, we discovered who, in our group, could take charge of everyone and get them to work together to overcome problems.

As we went on, days turned colder and there were more problems to deal with, like being delayed because of snow, or having to take on someone else's supplies and family because their wagon got caught in a snowdrift. These problems were very real to us. It was our lives at stake; everything that we lived for was in our wagon train. Dealing with these problems was not always easy. We often found that our peers who had previously received the best grades in the class were not always the best at decision making, and that no one has all of the answers all the time. Every person was just as important to the group as the one next to him. Once we realized these things, the problems that we were dealing with became much easier to handle.

Through all of the activities, we were rarely graded. The one requirement was a fictional journal. Each student was given a name and personality, and every night we would write stories about how the character felt and what he/she was going through. This was a chance for us to really think about how the pioneers must have felt out west all alone, at times filled with joy and anticipation, and at other times depressed and worried. What better way could we have learned about pioneer life than to live it ourselves?

When I think back to playing this game, I still feel the same emotions that I did then. I can still remember how upset I was when the teacher told me that my son was shot by an Indian. I really cared about what happened to him—every event was very real and important.

Our teacher gave us a great understanding of a part of history that we could not have cared less about, and she made us understand it. She also gave us a chance to learn a lot more about ourselves. We began to discover our personal strengths and weaknesses, and we learned to appreciate different qualities in different people. In that transitional period of our lives, our teacher found a way to break through our tough exteriors and get us to learn. As sixth graders, we not only cared about the pioneers who lived one hundred years ago, but we actually wanted to learn about them. And, by doing so, we also reached a level of understanding of these people that we could never have achieved by simply reading a history book. I think that if more teachers used games like this one, if more teachers put themselves in their students' shoes, a lot more could be accomplished in our schools.

What Mary and Lisa Taught Me

By Julie Skaggs

Julie Skaggs is a sophomore at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois. She is studying to be an elementary school teacher.

During my junior year of high school I was given the opportunity to work with two mildly mentally impaired (MMI) students who had been mainstreamed. The three of us were in the same class, Practicum In Early Childhood Education. Early in the semester, my teacher approached me and asked that I lead a three-member teaching team with Mary and Lisa, the mainstreamed students. I would be responsible for the plans, preparation, instruction, and clean up that went into each of our teaching days. If Mary and Lisa were unable to complete their assigned tasks, I would have to pick up the slack so that our day with the children ran smoothly. I would also be available as a tutor if either girl needed help with the assigned reading and homework. After listening to the explanation of my job, I agreed to take the position. I realized the amount of work that I would have to do but I knew that being given this responsibility meant that the teacher trusted me and expected me to make the best of the situation. What I didn't realize was how much I could learn from Mary and Lisa.

The first lesson Mary and Lisa taught me was that communication is the key to teamwork. While we were trying to write our lesson plan, nobody shared their ideas because we were all afraid of being ridiculed by our teammates. I was worried that my ideas were too complex for their abilities, and they felt that their ideas were too simple; so we ended up running in circles for days trying to finish one lesson. As our deadline drew closer we all became tense. One day during class, Lisa broke down and cried. This was a turning point for our group because while helping calm Lisa down we began to talk, and by the end of the hour we were all comfortable with sharing stories or ideas with one another. With this communication barrier down we were able to finish our lesson plans using individual and group- generated ideas.

The next thing I learned was how to delegate responsibilities. Once our lesson plan was done we still had all of the preparation to do: art supplies to be gathered, a snack to be made, and story props to be found. On the morning of our first teaching day I found myself running around the preschool room doing all of these things myself. Lisa was teaching the art project but didn't realize that she would have to prepare for it, so I spent my morning cutting out paper ducks for her. By the time the children arrived I was already exhausted. The day went smoothly but after the children left the classroom, I talked to Mary and Lisa. They agreed that they should have been more involved in the preparation of our activities but they didn't know what they could do to help. In our next lesson plan, we outlined not only who was leading each activity but also who would prepare for each activity and what would be involved in the preparation. This detailed plan saved me from running around crazily on teaching days. It also helped my teammates know exactly what was expected of them.

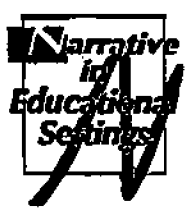
The next lesson that Mary and Lisa taught me was patience. Both girls were calm and caring individuals. When they were with the children the only thing that mattered was the happiness of the children. Mary and Lisa would sit for hours and listen to a child babble an endless story. They never worried about the time they were giving up for this child or the fact that the story had no end. Mary and Lisa also showed a great deal of patience whenever the children were working on an art project. They let each child work at his or her own pace rather than rushing the child to finish like many of the teachers did. I used the patience they taught me to help our planning sessions go more smoothly. Rather than coming into a session and blurting out my ideas, I learned to wait until they had come up with ideas of their own. Then I suggested improvements and added other ideas. Had I told them my ideas right away they wouldn't have thought of their own; they would have accepted mine without question.

Another thing I learned was to give my helpers opportunities rather than to keep them for myself. Many group leaders planned activities so that they were always the center of the children's attention. While planning our lessons I tried to

divide the responsibilities so that we all had our chance in the spotlight, but I found that it was usually much more rewarding to be working behind the scenes. I enjoyed standing back and watching Mary and Lisa work with the children. It was rewarding to see them successfully carry out the lessons we had planned together. My observant role also gave me a chance to help them by telling them the strengths and weaknesses I saw that our teacher may not have seen. However, if either of them needed help I was there to give it without stealing the show. From the back of the room I was able to run the show in a way that made Mary and Lisa the children's favorite teachers.

A fifth lesson that Mary and Lisa taught me was to take pride in my work. A class requirement was that each teacher had to prepare a creative project. This project might include flannel board characters, a children's storybook, a bulletin board, or a showcase display. The average time it would take to finish one of these projects, from formulation of ideas through putting on the finishing touches, was approximately six hours. Mary, Lisa and I chose to make flannel board stories for our remaining lessons with the children. I found a story I liked about ten little dinosaurs so I decided to use it for my project. The weekend before the project was due I bought the grey felt and the moving eyes that I would use to make the dinosaurs. When I was finished I had ten dinosaurs that looked as if they had been cut out by a cookie cutter. They were neat and sturdy, two of the project requirements, but there was nothing special about them. I went to class to turn in my work, and I was ashamed when I saw the work that had gone into Lisa's project. Her story was about farm animals. For her flannel board she had made ten different animals and each one had unique characteristics. She had spent hours working on them while I had spent under one hour on mine. Her project received a lower grade than mine because it didn't meet all of the requirements but that didn't make Lisa any less proud of her work. She had done it herself and she was happy with it. That was all that mattered to her.

When my teacher first introduced me to Mary and Lisa I expected them to be a time-consuming burden that I would have to fit into my busy schedule. As the semester progressed the three of us became very close and I learned a handful of important lessons from them. Probably the most important lesson that Mary and Lisa taught me was to be a friend to everyone. They are two of the most warm and caring people I have ever met, yet many people shy away from them because they're a little different. However, Mary and Lisa treated everyone as equals. To them, everyone they met was a potential friend. Perhaps if everyone had the opportunity to work with people like Mary and Lisa, we could all learn the lessons that they were able to teach me.



A Break in the Routine of Jumping Through the Hoops

By Lee Sterling

Lee Sterling is a senior majoring in nutrition and diatetics at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, Illinois.

With a few exceptions, high school was a seemingly endless series of hoops to jump through — a paint-by-number, color-inside-the-lines sort of experience. These limitations grated on me, prompting me to do *just* the bare minimum to get by and causing me to be angry and frustrated, frustrated at not knowing at whom to direct my anger. Why was I so angry? The problem was difficult to pinpoint, and it wasn't until a couple of years out of that setting that I was able to explain it: The adults around me were failing me, not in the literal sense, but in the sense that they were only providing me with the bare minimum; so much was geared toward mediocrity. Most classes and teachers weren't *bad* so much as they just weren't *good*. The lowest common denominator ruled.

Morris Bruns was the exception. More than any other teacher, he embodied the three traits I associate with good teachers: They know how to teach well, they push students to excel, and they use judicious praise. Because he had these attributes, Mr. Bruns gave my fairly dismal high school years a vitality and sparkle they otherwise lacked.

A small, wiry, elf-like man in his mid-forties, Mr. Bruns had a sharp, dry wit that ranged from sarcasm to high camp and anywhere in between, incongruously funneled through a Texas drawl. He employed humor often, but he didn't hesitate to get tough when he felt the class wasn't doing work at the level he demanded. Even then, his humor came through in sarcasm, so that you sat there laughing even as you felt the sting. He abhorred (a Mr. Bruns' word) bad grammar, both in the written and spoken form, and I remember that when anyone used the word *got* incorrectly (a frequent occurrence), it was an occasion for great amusement.

For example, if someone said, "I got a new car," Mr. Bruns would go into his hick routine, hilarious because of the total dichotomy between the exaggeratedness of the accent he put on and his dapper, well-manicured appearance.

The same hilarity reigned when someone used an unclear pronoun reference. Mr. Bruns was a fanatic on the subject, and if he decided to make an issue of one, a discourse would ensue similar to Abbott and Costello's *Who's On First* routine. (Even today I cringe when I encounter an unclear pronoun reference in my own and others' papers.)

Mr. Bruns won me over early in my high school career. I had always been considered to be a good writer by teachers, but I had never been taught how to diagram sentences and so didn't have a particularly good grasp of the finer points of grammar. When writing, I intuitively used correct grammar, but if you were to ask me what the objective case was, for example, I didn't have a clue.

After struggling through the first quarter of Advanced Freshman English with Mr. Bruns, and feeling thoroughly battered and stupid due to my inability to diagram *anything* correctly, I went to him asking him to drop me down to the regular freshman English class. He encouraged me to stay put, assured me I was capable and that I would pick up what I needed to know.

The second quarter of Advanced Freshman English contained a particularly horrific assignment: We had to write a paper explaining in the most minute detail imaginable how to use a pencil sharpener, assuming our audience had never before seen one and/or was brain dead. Mr. Bruns then took his dreaded red pen to our papers, picking at the tiniest grammatical, spelling, stylistic and structural errors so that in the end, no paper was left unbloodied. *Then* we had to diagram the offending sentences.

As he disgustedly passed back the papers, Mr. Bruns excoriated us, reminding us that we were supposed to be writing better papers than this, etc. He then proceeded to say that one person, although she had made as many errors in her paper as anyone else, was interesting to read, because her writing had *style*. Then he complimented me in front of everyone and said that whatever I wrote, I always had my

own voice. After that, I was his. If this man, who was so picky and unimpressed by most things, thought that I had talent, well then, so I must.

I didn't have Mr. Bruns for a class again until Honors Shakespeare my junior year. He was as tough as ever and our papers reflected this severity, coming back with fat red *F's* on them. He gave out so many *F's* that after awhile I got over that horrible sinking feeling and actually rejoiced when I received a *D*. For a student who was used to getting *A's* or at the least *B's* on everything, Mr. Bruns' class was freeing in a sense, for it was the first time I felt I had permission to fail. I knew from previous experience with Mr. Bruns that *F's* on individual assignments didn't necessarily translate into an *F* for the quarter. For me, what the *F's* did was to shift the usual emphasis from good grades over to the more important idea of improvement. In other words, the *F's* were a great leveler—instead of trying to compare grades with a classmate, I became much more focused on self-improvement. It became a personal challenge to see if I could squeeze a *D*, or maybe even a *C*, out of him.

My senior year I took Honors Grammar, a class whose final assignment was rumored to be an essay in which *every sentence had to be diagrammed!* The rumors turned out to be true, and again, big fat *F's* went out on everyone's papers. Even so, Mr. Bruns did praise papers that were especially well-researched and/or well-written.

Some might read this essay and wonder, What was Mr. Bruns' point in all this. Well, the diagramming forced me to *learn* grammar, not just a semblance of it. I learned to do footnotes and bibliographies correctly. The result was that if some people never quite developed a style or voice of their own, at the very least they learned enough technical skill to write well and clearly, no small feat. Mr. Bruns, with his bullying and humor and red pen, could make a writer out of almost anyone, as evidenced by the measurable improvement I saw and heard over time when my classmates read their papers to the class and their writing was critiqued. Given that a student was willing to really work, Mr. Bruns would meet him or her more than halfway.

I never received anything less than *A's* for final grades in the classes I took with him (despite all the poor grades on individual papers), and though I hated him at times, getting through one of his classes was exhilarating, a real achievement of which I could be proud. I have never had to work so hard in any class since, college coursework notwithstanding. In fact, much of the rationale Mr. Bruns gave us for pushing us so hard was that we would have college work this difficult, and so he made the class relevant to us as mostly college-bound students. The skills I gained from his classes have proved invaluable time and time again, in and out of the classroom.

By employing Shakespeare's plays and other great literature (such as William Carlos William's poem "On Gay Wallpaper") and forcing us to analyze and critique it in the essays we wrote, Mr. Bruns not only made the class interesting but also made these writers more accessible to us as readers—he helped remove the stigma of intimidation they held for many of us.

Any current or future teachers who might read this essay should take particular note, for I want this article not only to pay tribute to Mr. Bruns, but also to stand as a testament to the lasting influence one wonderful teacher can have on a one-time, bored, somewhat lazy, reluctant student.

An American Girl in France

By Colleen Torola

Colleen Torola is a sophomore at the College of Lake County, Grayslake, Illinois. She is preparing to be a high school English teacher.

Between my sophomore and junior years of high school, I spent the summer as an exchange student in France. Memories of the time I spent there and the valuable lessons I learned will probably stay with me for the rest of my life.

I arrived in New York City with 130 other Americans aged 15 to 17. We were complete strangers, yet we had one thing in common, the trip. We played various "get to know each other" games with group leaders and later that night found ourselves bonded by that all-American late-night ritual—ordering out for pizza. We had to find people whose pizza preferences were similar to our own so that we could order and eat with them. This was all a new experience for me since I had known all of my friends since early childhood. Although I could have gone to bed early, I stayed up to chat and learn how others felt about the upcoming trip to France, and how they expected our host families to be. We didn't go to sleep until early in the morning, and before we knew it we were on the plane.

Arriving in Paris, I felt alone even though I was with all the other students. Everyone in the airport was speaking French. The signs were in French. Everything was in French! Though I knew the language, I had never had to speak French spontaneously or even carry on a true conversation. Now I had to speak French to get anything done: to get directions to the bathroom, to talk to the customs agents, to find my luggage. I remained with thirty of the Americans for two weeks while we attended the University of Poitiers, in midwestern France. Fortunately we still had each other to talk to, but unfortunately this delayed our immersion into French culture.

For the first time I realized why foreign-speaking students had accents when they spoke English. It didn't occur to me until I arrived in France that the French people would not understand me unless I pronounced words using the French phonetics my high school French teacher had taught me. I found that when a group of us Americans went to the mall and spoke English to each other, the store patrons and other customers would treat us rudely. I realized that they had no idea what we were talking about, and then I recalled that when I saw foreigners talking and laughing back home, I always wondered if they could be talking about me or my country. By observing how I felt about the new culture and the way the French reacted to me, I was able to empathize with foreigners back home in the States. I determined that when I returned home I would be friendly and helpful to the exchange students at my high school.

After the two weeks in Poitiers, it was mid-July and time for us to settle into French homes. I had to take a bus to Nantes, where my "family" would pick me up for a seven-week stay. They had written to me twice before, and they seemed like the perfect family for me: intellectuals who love to travel with five children. The children who would be living at home during my stay were the two girls, Tiphaine and Guenolee, and one boy, Corentin. I was eager to meet them. However, I found during my stay in Poitiers that in one of my letters to them, I had tried to write that I was excited to meet them. I later learned that in my primitive French, I had written that I was sexually excited to meet them! When I discovered my error, I wanted a new family. What must they think of me! But there was no way out. I had come to France to stay with them, and now I had to meet them.

The few hours I spent on the bus to Nantes was the first time I was completely alone. I enjoyed watching the countryside rolling by with all the sunflower plants in full bloom. I had never seen such a landscape. The fields were alight with six-foot bright golden flowers. They floated dreamily past my window along with the puffy white clouds. Before I knew it I had arrived at the station and had to call my family and tell them I was three hours early. Speaking French over the phone was next to impossible, but they got the idea. I recognized them from the pictures they had sent, and we were soon on our way home. Tiphaine was the girl my age, only nine days older than I. The ride home was rather silent, as I was still

unsure of my French-speaking ability.

The day that I arrived we drove to the ocean almost two hours away. I changed into my bathing suit in the car instead of on the beach, and they must have thought me the most modest person around; everyone else either changed on the beach or didn't wear a full suit. We ate dinner at a friend's and afterwards went for a walk in the woods. The beach had rocky cliffs and crashing waves, and the friends we visited lived on a farm out in the country. The landscape was beautiful. After dinner I went for a walk with the children. My younger "sister" Guenolee loved to tease me so that I would speak. Enjoying the company and peaceful countryside, I felt content in my new surroundings. On this day, I was also introduced to the French custom of kissing each other on the cheek four times as a way of saying hello and goodbye. I was sure that kissing strangers was a joke, but I discovered that it was truly a greeting. And soon I was kissing everybody goodbye along with the rest of them.

France in July is very relaxed. This is when everyone is "on holiday" for about three weeks. We ate breakfast at around ten or eleven o'clock each day. My host family lived in the country, so we played in the fields and went swimming until lunch, which lasted for hours. We had a snack at around five o'clock, and dinner didn't start until eight or nine o'clock. After dinner each night I strolled around the fields with the whole family. I will not forget the first time I made a complete sentence off the top of my head. After dinner one evening, we were walking around the fields taking in the beautiful sunset. Guenolee picked a piece of grass and offered it to me to eat. I told her, "Je ne suis pas un cheval." (I am not a horse.) The whole family was overjoyed!

Almost unknowingly, I was speaking French. Tiphaine, although she knew English, would speak only French to me. When we went shopping, she would tell me, "You are a big girl now. You can ask the shopkeeper a question yourself." As I was becoming more and more immersed in my new life, I began to think in French. I could follow conversations and know what people were talking about. I could answer the questions that people asked me, and I started asking my own questions. I noticed that I was thinking in French one day when I called the AFS headquarters in France to see how much food I could bring back to the States. The man I talked to spoke flawless French and English. When he realized I was an exchange student, he began to speak English. I answered his questions in French! I thought of French words before the English words, and I spelled my name for him using the French alphabet. I was amazed at this transformation, and I loved it.

While I was learning about the French culture and language, I was also learning a lot about myself and other people. My host family had a lot of friends who would come over to visit me during lunch. They asked me all sorts of questions about the U.S.: differences from France, politics, how I liked the food, etc. The questions I enjoyed most were about gangsters. It seems that as soon as people heard I was from Chicago, they pictured Al Capone. I also was asked a lot of questions about racism and American ghettos. It amazed me that these people knew so much about America. Their knowledge of other cultures and their opinions on so many topics were new to me. I didn't even know about some of the things they wanted to discuss. On the interpersonal level, I also learned a lot from my friendship with Tiphaine. We found that cultural and language differences didn't matter; we were both adolescents with the same types of questions and ideas. She and I became great friends by going on late night walks to look at the stars. We often walked in silence, with occasional long discussions on marriage, the world, and life.

One thing was certain, and it was a revelation to me: these people cared about my opinions of them and France in general. They were interested in what I thought. Their interest in me changed the way I looked at myself. I was no longer one body among many. I was an individual with ideas and preferences all my own. And people wanted to know that individual. It was a very good feeling to be surrounded by these people. It also made me think that most of those I knew probably felt the same way, only I had never noticed. I began to look at strangers only as people I hadn't yet had a chance to know. Once I realized this, it changed the way I related to everybody, especially since I knew I would be in France for only a little while.

I began to think that I had to take full advantage of every situation I was in because every situation is unique. I began to ask more questions of people I met. I started stopping people and explaining to them that I was an exchange student. Could I please take their picture, or would they take one for me? This started some nice conversations and I began to lose my shyness. Since I knew I would never be in France again, I also began to be more daring. I remember stopping by a waterfall in the Alps with my French family to watch the sun set over a valley. Before they knew it, I was climbing the rocks to get closer to the water. Then I ran to the car to get into my bathing suit, and I was soon under the falling water! My host mother was worried, but then Guenolee and Corentin were waterfall bathing with me, and there wasn't much she could do to stop us. Other French tourists stopped to watch the sunset, and they stood with my family shaking their heads

and laughing at us. But what a wonderful time we had! Of course, in France it was easy to see that I would never be in each situation again, so I tried to live each moment completely. Now that I am back home, I have to remind myself that each moment is unique, so I mustn't put off what I really want to do.

Of course, not everything in France was perfect. I had to learn to deal effectively with people that I didn't particularly like. For example, I turned sixteen years old while I was in France, and I thought I knew everything. However, my host mother was very protective of me. After the waterfall incident, she thought I was quite crazy. So I had to learn to be patient and considerate of her, while at the same time try to do everything I wanted. Another discomfort I encountered was people who treated me like a child because I could not convey my thoughts perfectly in French. Some people had the idea that since I could not speak French well, I was therefore quite stupid. This angered me, but it also made me speak out more to let people know that I was not stupid. Again, I was reminded of how foreigners to the States must feel and determined not to talk baby-talk to them. Speaking slowly and clearly is the key.

One thing I particularly liked about being an exchange student was that since no one really knew me and my particular habits, I could be whatever I pleased. I enjoyed spending some time alone, walking in the mountains and reflecting on life in France and in the States. Since I was so far away from home, I could get a different perspective on things and decide what I thought was important. I learned to be less shortsighted when it came to dealing with problems and finding solutions. I realized that how others thought of me was in a way a reflection of my actions. I was accustomed to being surrounded by people who had always known me and I hadn't worried about what they thought of me. By observing how French people reacted to me, I also learned about myself. For example, Guenolee's persistent battle was getting me to speak. In my family back home, I have always been talkative. I realized that being the loudest in my family was only relative, and others considered me rather quiet.

In France, I had two recurring dreams of returning to the States. When I actually did come home, I thought I was still dreaming. I wasn't ready to be at home again. I had become a new person in France. Going home was plucking me out of a new life that I had learned to love. Now I was back in my old culture with a whole different viewpoint. Talking to my real family on the way home from O'Hare Airport, I would be telling them stories about things I had done in France, and I was unable to remember the English words for certain objects. I was still thinking in French, and most of me was still living there. Now I was approaching American culture from an outsider's perspective. It seems odd now, but then it was very natural for me to look at America totally differently. I was able to take aspects of both cultures and incorporate them into how I lived.

My trip to France caused me to look into myself to see how I was, where I fit into the world, and where I wanted to fit into it. I could choose what I wanted to do and how I wanted to live with a lot more confidence than ever before. I was a new person.