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A PERSONAL AND COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY OF CHANGE: LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT LEADERSHIP, MENTORING AND MOTIVATION FROM AN EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY'S WORK WITH DONALD GRAVES

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted to the University of New Hampshire in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

September, 2013
This dissertation has been examined and approved.

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June 18, 2013
Date
DEDICATION

For Steve, Sarah, David, and Emily,
who give me the motivation to be the best I can be
and for my parents,
John and Charlotte Plummer,
who taught me to believe in myself
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the Atkinson Academy teachers and principal who made this research project possible. They graciously welcomed me into their lives, answered my endless questions, and challenged my thinking as I journeyed with them into a fascinating world that existed more than 30 years ago. Despite the passage of time, they recreated this world with great clarity and insight. Their eagerness to share this groundbreaking time with me and to help me understand its significance for them both personally and professionally, demonstrates their ongoing commitment to the education of others. As their most recent pupil, I am very grateful.

I particularly appreciate the time I was able to spend with Jean Robbins, the Atkinson principal. Her support of this project from the very beginning and her willingness to provide contact information opened many doors, allowing me to establish a rich data pool from a wide variety of participants. Over the years, conversations with Jean have inspired me to think deeply about my role as an educator and have helped me realize how essential it is to learn from those who have come before while attempting to lead the way for those who will follow.

As my advisor and then my dissertation chair, Ruth Wharton McDonald's patience, guidance and encouragement were greatly appreciated. She had the remarkable ability to see possibilities in my meanderings, to join me in moments of excited discovery and to ask the right questions to move me along. When I needed to meet every few weeks to stay focused and maintain momentum, Ruth was always willing to join me for yet another cup of coffee. It really wasn’t until she suggested that I might be “ready” that I truly believed in my own ability to complete this daunting task.

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I am exceedingly grateful to my parents, Charlotte and John Plummer, who fostered my love of literacy, modeled an insatiable curiosity for life, and encouraged me to follow my dreams. They are both an integral part of who I am and who I am yet to be.

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ABSTRACT

A PERSONAL AND COLLABORATIVE JOURNEY OF CHANGE:
LESSONS LEARNED ABOUT LEADERSHIP, MENTORING AND MOTIVATION
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BARBARA PLUMMER JASINSKI
University of New Hampshire, September, 2013

Change is often expected as the logical outcome of large scale investments in professional development, yet research studies (e.g., Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Lipson, Mosenthal & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Schraw & Olafson, 2002) note wide variations in instructional practice despite such efforts. This qualitative inquiry was designed to understand factors that support or undermine teacher learning and to examine how change in instructional practices took hold for members of one school community exposed to radically different thinking about the teaching of writing. The participants were teachers and an administrator who collaborated with Donald Graves in Atkinson, New Hampshire during his groundbreaking research project on the writing process of young children (1978-1980). This study also explored the evolution and sustainability of instructional practices developed in the classrooms at Atkinson Academy. The research
questions that guided this project addressed how change took hold for teachers in this school community and what factors influenced their professional learning.

Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006) methodology was used for this study as it allows for a focus on individual beliefs, personal motivations and interpretations of experience from the perspective of the participants themselves. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with 10 teachers and the school principal. Information was gathered regarding background, experiences, epistemology, and collaborative interactions. Following extensive coding and analysis of data (Saldana, 2009), three major themes emerged that were found to be significant in the facilitation of change in instructional practice for individual participants: (1) the redefinition of school leadership to facilitate change; (2) the existence of multiple mentor-apprentice relationships; and (3) the development of a stance of inquiry as a vehicle for learning. Three case studies explore social interactions found to be critical in the complex and dynamic process of change.

Though no isolated catalyst was identified, a combination of pivotal experiences, interpersonal supports and differentiated opportunities propelled and sustained this learning community. At the very core of this process was collaboration with a strong school leader and time for teacher learning to take place. Implications for professional development and future research are discussed in relation to the results of this study.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This research study was a qualitative inquiry whose purpose was to understand the process of substantive change in instructional practice within a school community from the perspective of the teachers themselves. By studying an elementary school that was one of the sites for Donald Graves' seminal research on the writing process of young children (Graves, 1975; 1983), I explored the individual and shared experiences of faculty and administration before, during and after the two year period (from 1978-1980) when a cohort of teachers worked directly with Graves and his colleagues. Instructional practices arising from this research went on to be replicated across the country and around the world, evolving into many present-day approaches to the teaching of writing (Calkins, 1986; Atwell, 1987; Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; Fletcher & Portalupi, 2001) yet how these practices emerged, developed and were adopted by individual teachers may have broader implications for understanding how professional development experiences might be designed to support adult learning within a diverse community of teachers.

Having worked as a Literacy Specialist in a variety of school settings at the elementary level, my work has focused not only on children who struggle in the areas of reading and writing but also on supporting teachers and interns in the development of literacy practices to meet broader educational needs. In this role, I have seen administrative calls for change in response to concern over test results, reaction to reports in the popular media and less often, to challenges posed by current research. Yet, in an
effort to facilitate change, professional development models designed to encourage reflection on current teaching practices or to introduce alternative approaches don’t necessarily obtain the desired results. Teachers often do not see the need to change their current practices. If new ideas are being considered, they may be implemented briefly, misinterpreted, hybridized beyond recognition or completely disregarded within the confines of individual classrooms, with instructional practices frequently returning to the status quo (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Even when a school community appears to endorse a particular approach to literacy instruction, research studies have noted variations in interpretation and implementation (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Schraw & Olafson, 2002).

Such outcomes raise a myriad of questions: What is the impact of different individual belief systems about teaching and learning on acceptance of these new ideas? Do teachers perceive themselves as free to make their own decisions about whether to change how they teach and do they believe they are capable of making such changes? What role does shared leadership within a school community (principals, teachers, researchers, etc.) have on the willingness to consider and implement new ideas? Are there elements of school leadership or school culture that support or undermine the learning process of individual teachers and the sustainability of their instructional practice over time? Is it necessary for a school community to have common beliefs about literacy or for members of the community to be at the same point in learning how to implement these practices?

Though it was beyond the scope of this inquiry to investigate a broad array of initiatives in a variety of school settings, I hoped that by exploring the process of change experienced by
the members of one school community it might be possible to find answers to some of these important questions.

In an effort to understand the complex nature of change for individuals within a school setting, my study locus was a community that had been exposed to a dramatically different approach to the teaching of writing. Atkinson Academy during the late 1970s and early 1980s was just such a site. It was one of the locations for Donald Graves’ earliest research. Instructional practices arising from Graves’ groundbreaking work were considered ‘revolutionary’ at the time, differing significantly from more traditional approaches to the teaching of writing. His research proposed a radically different view of writing instruction and a focus on the development of a writing process unique to young children.

During those few short years, this school community was exposed to the potential for considering significant transformation in instructional practice through the shared experience of teachers and their administrator. As a result, this locus provided an opportunity to understand this process of change for individuals within the community. In addition, it allowed me to see more clearly the dynamic interplay between individual experiences and elements of school culture through the perspectives of those who were directly involved in the research project and those members of the school community who were not active participants. The instructional practices arising from this project became the stimulus for major change nationwide yet how they developed, impacted and were impacted by this small New Hampshire school community had never been explored. Not only does this study document the genesis of an important era in educational history from a unique perspective, but it has the potential to help us to understand at a very personal level,
the ability or inclination to adopt new instructional ideas and the elements within a school community that support or undermine this learning process.

I brought to this study the following questions: How did a process of change take hold for individual teachers and for the broader school community? and What factors influenced the evolution of the instructional practices themselves over time? I posed these questions in an effort to understand the complex elements within the teachers themselves and within the school community that impacted individual and collective inclination, ability and/or motivation to change. This connects with a broader research purpose which was to explore how personal belief systems and subsequent decision-making, along with collaborative experiences, supported or undermined the evolution of shared instructional practices. Of interest to me personally is how to facilitate the establishment of a professional development model within an educational community that supports the learning needs, interests and perspectives of individual teachers while promoting the consideration of shared ideas about literacy instruction. It was hoped that by studying the individual and collective experiences of this particular school community exposed to radically different thinking about student learning and instructional practice, lessons might be learned about creating effective models for adult learning, reflective practice and collaboration to support change.
CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL CONTEXT/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Because we are uniquely different beings, with different pasts and different fears, our situations are never identical, no matter how alike they seem from the outside. The choices we make in situations...are never completely free... (Noddings, 2003, p. 40)

Within the current era of accountability in education where the call for "scientifically based research" frequently drives curricular decision-making and demands for pedagogical change, the mandate within many school communities is to abandon previously held beliefs in lieu of the latest prepackaged new and improved model (Salvio & Boldt, 2009). The sad irony is that many of the ideas being cast aside may come from a rich history of educational research and new ideas, whether research-based or not, are often resisted, hybridized or are short-lived. Inspired by the words of Nel Noddings (2003) and supported by a broad base of literature and research, I was interested in exploring how the experiences, beliefs and motivations that individual teachers bring to the decision-making process impact both personal and collective outcomes with regards to instructional practice. This inquiry was conducted in an attempt to understand the complex dynamics present within a school community that influenced whether new ideas were embraced, modified or possibly abandoned over time. I hoped that by studying the process of change experienced by a particular population of teachers and the decisions they made during this process, insight might be gained as to elements that potentially impacted the course of change for individuals as well as for the instructional practices themselves.
Social Cognitive Theory

My inquiry project was initially informed by the literature associated with social learning theory (Rotter, Chance, & Phares, 1972), later expanded into social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986; 1993; 1997) which provides an important perspective on the interaction among the individual, the environment within which the individual is situated, and the behaviors exhibited by that individual, behaviors resulting from a sense of agency (choices that are made) and motivated by a perception of capability to accomplish particular goals and outcomes within the social environment. This theoretical perspective is often used by educators as a framework for creating optimal learning conditions for their students, by encouraging personal autonomy, agency and self-regulation. Ironically, it is less likely to be applied when considering adult learning needs within the same educational institutions. Personal motivation and one's perception of capability to take on new learning are rarely considered in relation to expectations for change associated with instructional practice, yet these elements may indeed be critical to the long-term success of the professional development process.

The interdependence of individual, environment and behavior clearly ebbs and flows within the educational context. Despite the fact that teachers generally operate within separate classrooms, their efforts are anything but isolated as they work collaboratively with other educators to implement curriculum, communicate their accomplishments to the larger community and educate students who move from classroom to classroom. Multiple levels of interaction must therefore be considered when analyzing instructional practices and change, including beliefs held by individual teachers as well as entire faculty collectives that in turn impact whether and how teachers utilize instructional
practices in their classrooms over time. According to Bandura (1986), “a theory that denies that thoughts can regulate actions does not lend itself readily to the explanation of complex human behavior” (p. 15). Social cognitive theory would encourage the viewing of instructional practice and the process of change at Atkinson Academy from such multiple perspectives concurrently, acknowledging the complex nature of human functioning within this educational community.

Individual and Collective Motivation

Of particular interest to me in this inquiry was how individual teachers perceived their own capabilities when presented with new instructional ideas. Researchers (Schunk, 1989; Schunk & Pajares, 2002; Pajares, 2003) have concluded that self-efficacy impacts the inclination or ability to demonstrate this new learning over time and by extension, the activities in which one engages, the effort generated and ultimately the persistence displayed in the learning process itself. Regarding the acquisition and sustainability of new instructional practices in Atkinson, I wondered whether a teacher’s level of self-efficacy influenced his/her willingness to consider learning a new teaching approach, the investment of effort necessary for the learning process to take place and the ability to stay engaged in using these practices over an extended period of time, particularly if positive value were not immediately apparent. It has been proposed (Pajares, 2003) that previous negative experiences associated with instructional change could have bearing on this process, as well. In his study of motivation in young children who have experienced failure, Pajares found that “Once entrenched, negative perceptions of one’s ability are exceedingly resistant to change, and even subsequent academic success, however brought about, often fails to alter these beliefs” (p. 151). As with children who resist change and potentially negative
consequences, I wondered whether a thorough understanding of factors which facilitate the motivation of teachers and teaching communities might inform this discussion.

In many schools, teachers appear to function autonomously within separate classrooms, their teaching decisions integrate them on multiple levels between and across grade levels and within the broader school community. As a result, I wondered if elements of collective-efficacy might need to be considered as well. Collective efficacy, as defined by Bandura (1982) is the self-efficacy of a group which can “influence what people choose to do as a group, how much effort they put into it, and their staying power when group efforts fail to produce results” (p. 143). Since individuals do not function as “social isolates,” he claims that many of the challenges they face are actually connected with group issues rather than personal issues. Thus, in Atkinson, consideration of new instructional practices or sustaining practices already in place, may have required the alignment of “diverse self-interests in support of common goals” (p. 144). Motivation arising from a school faculty that can organize in such a way and embark on a particular course of action has been found to produce a positive effect on students (Goddard, Hoy & Hoy, 2004), clearly a worthy educational goal, but the question remained as to how motivation might arise initially and whether it could be sustained over time as administrators and teachers come and go.

Beliefs about Teaching and Learning

The question of ‘diverse self-interests’ seemed critical to this discussion as teachers’ own belief systems about the formation of knowledge and the learning process of
their students certainly must have had a role in shaping their instructional decision-making. Theories related to epistemology (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997; Hofer, 2001) and studies utilizing these theories (Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Qian & Alverman, 2000; Schraw & Olafson, 2002) have explored the connection between personal epistemology and instructional practice. Hofer (2001) has devoted much of her research to studying the epistemological development of college students. She contends that it is necessary to provide educational opportunities for students to practice “articulating, defending, reexamining, and claiming their points of view within the context of a supportive community” (p. 378) in order to facilitate cognitive development. I suspected that the same experiences might be necessary for educators exposed to, and expected to adopt, radically different ideas about teaching.

Though much of the research on epistemological development and change has focused on high school and college students, a number of studies were considered to be relevant to my inquiry. Of particular interest is the work of Schraw and Olafson (2002) in which researchers discovered that teachers were not always aware of the particular epistemological orientation evident in decisions they made regarding instructional practice. The work of Lipson, et al. (2000) offers additional insight about epistemology and approaches to the teaching of writing. Though this study makes a strong argument for considering a relationship between teacher epistemology and pedagogical decision-making, for me the question remained as to how substantive change in instructional practice might take hold in a school community of individuals with uniquely different experiences, prior knowledge and beliefs about learning. Compounding this question were situations in which conflicting epistemological orientations might block new initiatives or undermine
the ability to sustain practices already in place. Through this inquiry I hoped that I might understand how the process of conceptual change occurred for individuals and what elements of personal and collective experience supported or undermined this process.

**Apprenticeship and Scaffolded Learning**

Barbara Rogoff (1990), whose work was influenced by the research of Piaget (1952) and Vygotsky (1978), challenged many previously held beliefs about the cognitive development of young children when she wrote *Apprenticeship in thinking: Cognitive development in social context*. This theoretical stance strongly informed my thinking as this study progressed, particularly as data collection and analysis began to focus on the relationship between child and adult learning at Atkinson Academy. How change took hold for individual teachers seemed inextricably linked with the change in thinking that was taking place for his/her students and for other members of the educational community.

Rogoff (1990) proposed changing the focus of research from the experience of a solitary individual constructing his/her own reality to the “social context of individual achievement” (p. 4). In her work, children are seen as “apprentices in thinking, active in their efforts to learn from observing and participating with peers and more skilled members of their society” (p. 7). She defines “guided participation” when considering the collaborative process between caregiver and child as “building bridges from children’s present understanding and skills to reach new understanding and skills” (p. 8). Critical to the process of apprenticeship and guided participation is “intersubjectivity” which is a “sharing of focus and purpose between children and their more skilled partners and their challenging and exploring peers” (p. 8). Her ideas align with those of Vygotsky (1987)
when she poses that thinking involves not only other people and active problem-solving but also emotions. According to Vygotsky,

> Thought...is not born of other thoughts. Thought has its origins in the motivating sphere of consciousness, a sphere that includes our inclinations and needs, our interests and impulses, and our affect and emotion...Only here do we find the answer to the final "why" in the analysis of thinking (p. 282).

Thus, according Vygotsky and Rogoff, the process of solving problems inherent in cognitive development can no longer be viewed in isolation but rather it requires consideration of the social context, relationships, motivation and affect.

These ideas have had a significant impact on educators, particularly those at the elementary level. The focus on learning as a social interaction entailing guided practice between apprentice and more capable peer/teacher has transformed instructional practice across a broad array of curricular areas, including early literacy intervention (Clay, 2005). Rather than focusing on the strict unidirectional transmission of information from teacher to student, pedagogy now includes demonstration modeling, guided practice with teacher support, scaffolded small group interactions, collaborative work with peers, and independent application of learning in new situations (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996; 2006). Despite these positive outcomes for children, consideration of similar constructs involving adult learners in the same educational organizations has received far less attention. In addition, the concept of the bidirectional nature of this process and its impact on the teacher as learner is rarely discussed.

When studying the process of change that occurred during the Graves project, the existence of formal or informal elements of apprenticeship, mentoring and guided practice along with how they potentially impacted the learning of all participants involved, seemed critically important to consider. In addition, learning as a collaborative, bidirectional,
multi-layered experience had potential ramifications for future discussions of professional
development models to support adult learning.

The Role of the Principal

A common thread throughout any school community is the role of the principal. As I embarked on this study, I wondered how influential the Atkinson principal had been in creating an environment that supported teacher learning and change. Within the past 30 or 40 years, the principal has been seen as instrumental in setting school policy, evaluating teachers, functioning as a liaison with parents and the larger community, guiding instructional practice aligned with curricular focus and setting annual budgets, all necessary responsibilities to keep a school operational (Cuban, 1993). Donaldson (2006) claims that this interpretation of the role came from literature in the late 1970s and early 1980s on school effectiveness and the use of business models in education, resulting in an emphasis on restructuring schools to function like businesses. These efforts resulted in prescriptive models that prioritized operational tasks and strategies. The concept of principal as leader has been a relatively recent phenomenon in the literature, rarely discussed until the decade following the Graves study (Cunningham, 1990) though the terms principal and leader are now often used synonymously. The definition of leadership is being explored in much of the current literature, challenging and extending the narrow administrative interpretations. As I learned more about the Atkinson principal from participants and from the principal herself, I wondered whether these current interpretations might have some relevance as to how the Atkinson principal perceived her role.

While exploring the personal and professional qualities that defined this school principal, I realized that it was essential to explore the historical context within which she
worked. I needed to understand the era and expectations for administrators at the time of this study. The work of Cuban (1993) and Tyack and Hansot (1982) provided insight into the historical context during which the Graves project took place in Atkinson. Cuban describes the late 1960s as the “new progressive movement” with an emphasis on “child-centeredness and social reform” (p. 151). There were distinct parallels with the earlier progressive movement of the 1920s and early 1930s in this new focus on student-directed learning, independence, open classrooms and learning situations that mirrored authentic life situations. Teaching was flexible in terms of environment and materials. Curriculum was characterized as integrated, instructional formats prioritized small groups or individual work and classrooms were equipped with a wide array of manipulatives to scaffold learning, all characteristic of an educational philosophy fostering self-directed learning (Silberman, 1973).

As the decade of the 1970s came to a close, Tyack and Hansot (1982) write about social and political issues at the time (civil rights, the Vietnam War, Watergate, women’s rights) that significantly affected public education. They describe “violence in classrooms, falling test scores, warring interest groups, tax revolts, and discord within the educational profession itself” (p. 40). Many public educational institutions were challenged in terms of social justice, student achievement, philosophical direction and leadership. Some actually questioned whether leadership was even possible during these tumultuous times. It was unlikely that Atkinson Academy escaped these divisive issues and this cultural context is important to acknowledge when studying leadership within a school community in this era.

In addition to the importance of situating the Academy within its historical context, current research on school leadership informed my inquiry in terms of the principal’s
interpretation of her role and her potential ability to create a climate for change. Michael Fullan's (2001; 2010) work on collaborative efforts to facilitate change within school organizations and Donaldson's (2006) research on shared leadership as "relational not individual" (p. 4), inform my work from a current perspective. In *All Systems Go*, Fullan (2010) explores the synergy of collaborative work and its potential link to conceptual change. He describes the need for working collectively within an organization as this "generates the emotional commitment and the technical expertise that no amount of individual capacity working alone can come close to matching...[and as a result] the speed of effective change increases exponentially" (as cited in Zegarac, 2012, p. 3). Yet others wrote about how such efforts might be undermined by individual group members (Clark, Moss, Goering, Herter, Lamar, Robbins, Russell, Templin & Wascha, 1996; Russell & Flynn, 2000), particularly if they lacked confidence in communicating ideas or felt challenged by voices stronger than their own.

The research of Magolda (2001) provided helpful insight when considering the impact of conflicting views held by members of a group, such as those found in a typical school community. He proposes the need for acknowledging difference and exploring opposing perspectives as a necessary first step toward crossing previously impenetrable "borders" between different perspectives. As Shields (2000) describes, agreement around the adoption of shared practices is not a given within a school community but instead requires "the negotiation of disparate beliefs and values [and the realization that] bonds among members are not assumed, but forged, and boundaries are not imposed but negotiated" (p. 276). At Atkinson Academy, multiple layers of collaboration were expected when Graves and his research assistants worked within particular classrooms but
little is known as to the challenges presented by such a model for the faculty as a whole and how school leadership worked to anticipate or defuse conflict.

Palmer's (1998) slightly different views regarding conflict vs. competition provided additional insight as to how a community and school principal might have coped with such difference. It is Palmer's belief that “competition is the antithesis of community, an acid that can dissolve the fabric of relationships” whereas “conflict is the dynamic by which we test ideas in the open, in a communal effort to stretch each other and make better sense of the world” (p. 103). When certain classrooms were chosen to participate in the Graves research project, the relationship between faculty members and their willingness to take on new ideas may have had an influence on whether they perceived these new ideas from a perspective of conflict or competition. I wondered whether there were ‘borders’ of difference between ideas that needed to be crossed and if so what role the school principal or the researchers themselves play in providing opportunities for negotiating this difference. Such differences might have had the potential to impact the ability to develop a shared understanding of Graves’ research results or in adopting the instructional practices they inspired.

**Research Aim**

In summary, this inquiry project began as an attempt to understand the factors that potentially supported or undermined the process of change in instructional practice for individual teachers at the time of Donald Graves’ research on the writing process of young children at Atkinson Academy. Directly connected with this research aim was an exploration of the collaboration among teachers and with researchers that lead to the
development of the writing process model and subsequently to instructional practices for
the teaching of writing. Little information existed about personal beliefs, motivations or
prior experiences of the individual teachers and how their ideas about the writing process
and instructional practice may have changed as a result of interactions with their students,
other teachers or working directly with Graves as he conducted his groundbreaking
research. In addition, the critical leadership role of the school principal had rarely been
discussed in association with Graves' research but might provide a missing link to
understanding the foundational elements of school culture that made this collaborative
work successful in Atkinson.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to understand the individual and
shared experiences of a school community during a time of groundbreaking research on the
writing process of young children. The central focus for the study was on those who
worked directly with Donald Graves and those on the faculty who were not closely
involved with his research, to study the impact of his work on their beliefs about teaching
and learning. A secondary focus was on how the interaction among teachers,
administrator and researcher supported or undermined the evolution, implementation and
sustainability of instructional practices associated with his research. At this stage in my
inquiry, significant factors were generally defined as individual beliefs about teaching and
learning, individual and collective motivation, school leadership and elements of school
culture contributing to opportunities for professional learning and potential for conceptual
change. These factors were studied through discussion with individuals regarding their
experiences (connecting beliefs with actions) before, during and after the two-year period
during which Graves conducted his original research and exploration of archival
information in the form of documents, artifacts, video clips and research notes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary research question:

- How did a process of change, connected with research being conducted in some
  classrooms and resulting in the emergence of instructional practices, take hold for
  individual teachers in this school community? More specifically, were there
  particular prior experiences, epistemological orientations, motivational elements or
  collaborative interactions that influenced how or whether teachers modified their
  own thinking and instructional practices in association with Graves’ research?

Secondary research question:

- What factors influenced the evolution of these instructional practices for individual
  teachers and for the school community over time?

This sub-question explored the elements of school culture in greater detail and allowed
me to more specifically examine not only the implementation but the sustainability of
instructional practice over time.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH PROCEDURES

My research purposes for this inquiry included a desire to understand decision-making and conceptual change regarding instructional practice in literacy, at an individual and collective level, and to gain insight into what might have been going on within a school community or within an individual to support or undermine the ability to take on new ideas and to sustain practice over time. My practical purposes included wanting to understand how to facilitate professional learning opportunities within a school community that would involve working individually and collectively to support the continuity of instructional practice integrated with the thoughtful consideration of new initiatives, when appropriate, for the benefit of all children.

Rationale for Research Approach

To more clearly delineate my particular stance and how this connected with a research approach, it was helpful to look closely at the interaction among my experience, my concerns and my belief systems. Ontological issues involved understanding the "reality" of this particular setting which was complicated significantly by the fact that I was interested in learning about a narrow time frame of history within a setting. To establish the broadest sense of "reality," data needed to be gathered from multiple perspectives and sources. I assumed that interviewing teachers, administrators and/or researchers who worked in that setting would reflect how things were at the time. The addition of video recordings and written documentation had the potential to add depth to this reflection and provide opportunities for clarifying discussions among participants.
Epistemological issues involved how I might get to know the “world” of Atkinson Academy in that era. Schram (2003) suggests one must “actively observe or engage in the lives of those whose perspective [one seeks]” (p. 32). It was hoped that this could be learned through my observation and engagement with participants as they shared their experiences, as well as examination of writings and video tapes of those who were there at the time. Methodological issues refer “to the theory and analysis of how inquiry does or should proceed” (p. 31). By necessity, my understanding of the “reality” at Atkinson Academy needed to be based on the perspectives of those who ‘lived the experience’. This suggested an approach defined by the following principles: (1) emphasis on the ability to understand a context based on the remembered or shared experiences of individuals who worked in Atkinson at the time; (2) focus on the process this community of educators went through, both individually and collectively, during the implementation of instructional practices associated with Donald Graves’ research; (3) explore individual and collective elements such as epistemology and efficacy that may have had an effect on instructional practice; (4) investigate other elements such as leadership, mentoring, collaboration or professional development models that may have changed over time; and (5) accept the need for reflection, flexibility and review of questions throughout the research process. Such an approach needed to be “grounded” in the data collected and also in the perceptions and interpretations of the participants themselves as they interacted with the interviewer.

To further situate my problem in terms of a research approach, it was beneficial to consider the various paradigms that most informed my inquiry. I believed that a synthesis of interpretive and ecological paradigms most closely aligned with my intent. The interpretive stance connected with my desire to understand the individual and shared
experience of working together before, during and after the time of Graves' research and the personal/collective changes that took place. This was my only way to construct a sense of this experience since it no longer existed in real time. The ecological paradigm aligned with my focus on questions regarding external factors that had an influence on shared and individual experiences. The theoretical contexts that appeared to connect with this inquiry involve mentor-apprenticeships as scaffolds for learning, epistemology, social-cognitive theory and self-/collective-efficacy, and theories about leadership.

As can be seen by the process delineated thus far, the methodology chosen for this particular inquiry and these research questions needed to allow me to focus on the community of the school and complex personal experiences compounded by the passage of time. It required me to look closely at individual beliefs, motivations and interpretations of experience concurrently with shared beliefs, collective motivation and cultural factors working to support or undermine instruction within this community.

**Grounded Theory – General Description**

Grounded theory (GT) presented as a logical choice given the characteristics of the inquiry, the research questions derived and the defining characteristics of the methodology. According to Creswell (2003), “the researcher [in grounded theory] attempts to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the view of participants in the study” (p. 14). Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory was extremely systematic in terms of data collection, coding and analysis. Variations of this approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) designed a less rigid framework, with an emphasis on theory emerging from data. Schram (2003) describes a further derivation in the work of Charmaz, whose grounded theory design is characterized by a “more
subjective emphasis on the feelings, assumptions, and meaning making of study participants” (p. 73). I concluded that Charmaz’s (2006) flexible use of grounded theory strategies, her emphasis on the meaning developed by participants themselves, and her understanding of process as having a “degree of indeterminacy” (p. 10) aligned well with my guiding questions. In addition, her description of the researcher as being an undeniable part of the world being studied resonated with me, both personally and professionally, particularly when she states that “We construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 10).

Grounded Theory and Research Activities

My particular interest in the sustainability of instructional practice led me to wonder about personal, collective or cultural factors that potentially supported or undermined the ability to take on and maintain new instructional practices in this situation. Since Atkinson Academy was not only an elementary school but also a research site, the impact of the research being conducted and Graves, as the primary researcher, needed to be considered. With this in mind, I realized the risk of being captivated by this particular locus because of its historical significance. It was chosen specifically because it presented as a unique setting where instructional practices may have changed dramatically in a short period of time, and I believed that it would provide me with the unusual opportunity to consider multiple layers of experience concurrently during this process of change. Grounded theory allowed me to theorize about the interplay among personal beliefs, personal and collective motivations and actions associated with instructional decision-making with the hope of gaining new understandings about adult learning and change in an educational setting.
Charmaz's constructivist approach to grounded theory provided the appropriate methodology to help me consider just such emergent themes, with the flexibility to reexamine data from new perspectives as they arose. Gathering data through the coding of transcribed personal interviews, individual viewing of Graves' original research video tapes and examination of research notes as well as articles written at the time, provided me with multiple opportunities to consider tentative conceptual categories (rather than the more rigid or predetermined categories associated with Strauss and Corbin) for analysis, refining them as needed. Yet with the multiple layers of complexity typically found within a school community, such a wide range of data sources and inconsistencies associated with remembering experiences after almost four decades, I considered it likely that the recursive practice of memo writing and reflection would contribute to the continual refining and distilling of conceptual decisions throughout the process.

Constructivist grounded theory had the potential to provide the following types of information: understanding of the process of change over time from the perspective of participants (when new instructional practices were introduced within a school); learning about the impact of embedded research (how a researcher working within a school influenced teacher beliefs about instructional practice); or how seemingly unrelated factors within a complex, multi-layered culture affected experience (how elements such as leadership, collaborative teaming, larger community opinion or professional development opportunities influenced individual or collective ideas and motivation around instructional change). Data collection could involve the cognitive as well as the emotional domain of shared experience, including the feelings and personal perspectives of individual participants embedded within the social experience. In addition, this methodology
recognized and valued how the experience of the researcher herself contributed to meaning and the development of emergent theory. Therefore, it was my belief that Charmaz’s model of grounded theory aligned well with the inquiry being conducted.

Description of Setting

Atkinson Academy, a rural elementary school in the town of Atkinson, New Hampshire during the period from approximately 1977 through 1982 (one year before and two years after the Graves project), was the setting for this research study. This particular site was chosen because it was uniquely situated as a research location for Donald Graves’ early study of the writing process in young children which led to the development and implementation of radically different instructional practices in Atkinson classrooms and beyond. Many members of the teaching faculty during this time period were directly involved with the development of these practices through their daily interactions with Graves and his research team but I suspected that this work most likely touched all members of the faculty in some way throughout this two year period. My research was specific to this particular site because I wanted to understand the process of change from the unique perspective of the individuals involved directly or tangentially with Graves’ research. Since my interest was to focus on the process of change experienced personally and collectively, it was my hope that this setting and particular group of participants would provide the opportunity to view this process from multiple and unique perspectives.

Selection of Cases

This study was divided into two stages with the selection of cases determined by the intent of each stage.

Stage I: According to Maxwell (2005), a purposeful sample is obtained when
“...particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). Such a sampling is chosen because it is determined to be the best representation of potential participants for the questions being posed. For this inquiry, a purposeful sample of ten teachers (six who worked directly with the research team and four who were not directly involved) and one administrator (who was the principal at the time), were interviewed in an effort to understand the meaning they made of Graves’ original research, how their ideas about teaching and learning may have changed as a result of this new experience, and their perception of factors that supported or undermined their ability to implement the instructional practices associated with Graves’ research over time.

Of the original teachers working directly with Graves during the two year study, I was able to meet with six of the seven original teachers. Repeated attempts were made to contact all teaching faculty working at Atkinson Academy at the time. Lack of availability and/or personal circumstances prevented me from accessing a complete representation of faculty members. Given the more than 30-year time frame since the original study was conducted, I concluded that this was a strong representation. It was more difficult to find participants who taught during this period and who were not part of the original research group but four teachers (two who taught during the study and two who began teaching in 1980, just following its completion) who were in Atkinson during or just following the research study were willing and able to be interviewed. The total teaching faculty representing grades Readiness (there was no Kindergarten) through fourth grade (the span of the study) was thirteen during the period between 1978-1980 and the participants for this
study therefore represented 77% of the R-4 faculty (See Table 1 for overview of participants).

A focus group discussion was initially considered as a follow-up to the individual interviews, particularly if I discovered that the passage of time since the implementation of Graves' initial work had compromised individual memories regarding their experiences and factors associated with school culture. Such a focus group might have involved the viewing of some of the original video footage recorded at Atkinson Academy and the posing of questions regarding how their thinking was changed by and contributed to Graves' research, experiences at the time of implementation, and perceptions of how this model changed over time. I rejected this plan following the preliminary interview stage since I found that individual memories had not been compromised by the passage of time. Instead, recall seemed quite clear for most participants. They were able to access this information quite easily and their particular experiences were described in great detail. The years of the Graves project seemed to have been crystallized in the memories of many participants. In addition, their descriptions and anecdotes revealed the significant impact this experience had on their professional and personal lives from that point forward.
Table 1

*Overview of Participants*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Year 1</th>
<th>Year 2</th>
<th>Didn’t participate</th>
<th>Hired later</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lyn Kutzelman</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Ellen Giacobbe**</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judy Egan</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Gaydos</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pat Howard</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carolyn Currier</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Horn**</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Readiness</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JoAn Claveau</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine Malesky</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean Robbins**</td>
<td>Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Participation defined as having recording equipment and/or researchers in a teacher’s classroom or being involved in the study administratively

** Used for Case Study described in Chapter 4
I considered including research assistants in the interview process during the data collection phase but since the research questions very specifically focused on how the process of change took hold for individual teachers, I determined that the views of researchers, though interesting, would not offer helpful insight for this particular inquiry. Access information was obtained and will be saved with the other data in case future related studies make such information relevant.

**Stage II:** This phase of the project involved my acquisition and analysis of archival information obtained from video footage of Graves' work in Atkinson as well as his research accounts, professional writings, the writing of research participants and student writing, when available. The use of documents and archival data for research purposes differs significantly from the process of gathering and analyzing interview data (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Rather than the generation of data driven by the inquiry, it requires a researcher to analytically filter information already in existence in association with the particular questions being posed. The choices I made between what to include and what to eliminate were made deliberately, being careful that they did not "mischaracterize" the setting or the participants. Though documents are generally seen as secondary data, offering a description of or comment about a particular event, I considered the videos and personal/professional writings chosen for this inquiry to be primary data because they were created by research participants, students or by Graves himself.

**Relationship with Study Participants**

A study that involves the collection of data from personal interviews must be carefully considered to ensure the protection of all participants. Prior to embarking on Stage I, this study and its associated protocols were approved by The Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) of the University of New Hampshire (IRB #4939). All participants, except one, provided written permission to be identified by name. I decided that confidentiality could be provided for that one participant by identifying her as an “unnamed teacher” and eliminating other descriptors such as grade and specific background information. This allowed for historical documentation of the Atkinson study and acknowledgment of the teachers and administrators who participated in this groundbreaking research without compromising the rights of the unnamed teacher.

Regarding the archiving of interview recordings, I clearly stated that individual audiotapes would be destroyed if explicit consent were not obtained or if consent were revoked following the interview, but this was not necessary due to the 100% positive response regarding permission to audiotape. Also, participants were notified that any personal or sensitive information revealed during an interview would be beyond the scope of this study and would not be included in data collection. This information was presented in writing and explained prior to each interview (see Appendix A). Written and transcribed data as well as audiotapes were stored at my home and access was limited to my own use. I declared that the transcriptions and tapes would be destroyed when they were no longer needed for this or future research projects directly connected with the topic of inquiry.

Potential for Research Bias

I considered the potential for research bias based on personal beliefs and experiences related to this area of inquiry throughout the research process. Working as a literacy specialist in the New Hampshire seacoast (currently at a school where Graves conducted research during the 1980s), I received an M.Ed. in Reading from the University
of New Hampshire and I am currently in the doctoral program at this same institution. Donald Graves was an esteemed professor in the Department of Education at UNH from 1973 until his retirement in 1992 and was also the founder of the UNH Writing Process Laboratory. In addition, my thoughts regarding the current tendency towards “quick fix” educational decision-making, the use of ineffective professional development models to support these decisions and the lack of concern regarding sustaining instructional practice, have fueled my desire for understanding the process of individual and collective change, but possible bias could have prevented me from clearly seeing what the data presented. Such predisposition is not uncommon in research and it was concluded that explicit acknowledgement of this potential and continual awareness throughout the inquiry was critical in order to prevent the compromising of data collection and analysis as my research progressed.

**Pilot Study**

My methodological decisions were informed by a pilot study I conducted prior to the beginning of this research project, during July/August 2010. It involved an in-depth interview with an administrator (the Atkinson principal) who worked with Donald Graves in his earliest research phase. This exploratory study introduced me to the very practical aspects of seeking out and contacting potential participants as well as conducting the interview itself. It allowed me to practice interviewing strategies, comparing a modified version of the phenomenological open-ended approach proposed by Seidman (2006) with a more focused, semi-structured approach described by Charmaz (2006).

The interview had segments reflecting these different strategies. The modified version of Seidman’s approach involved combining his recommended series of three
interviews into one interview segment. The open-ended questions covered life history (prior to working with Graves), current experiences (experiences at the time of Graves’ research) and reflection on meaning (thoughts regarding personal involvement with Graves’ work in Atkinson). The semi-structured approach more aligned with Charmaz consisted of posing a series of questions associated with my overarching research goals.

I received feedback and suggestions following the interview and discussed possible leads for additional participants to be considered for this study. Based on the actual interview experience and the follow-up discussion, I determined that semi-structured questions were the most appropriate for collecting rich and focused data within a limited time frame. Open-ended questioning similar to the Seidman approach made it difficult to stay focused on the narrow time frame of Graves’ research in Atkinson and seemed to excessively lengthen that portion of the interview. Following the formal interview session, I was provided with a list of possible participants and their contact information was provided. This list included teachers, parents and former students. I found this pilot study to be invaluable for making appropriate revisions before embarking on the formal research study itself.

Gathering of Interview Data

By conducting this exploratory phase, I was able to ascertain the optimal interviewing approach to use and the most beneficial questions to ask while beginning to test my own assumptions in the process. Charmaz (2006) describes a combination of “flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing” (p. 29) that allows the interviewer to develop a series of questions that are “sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and elaborate the participant’s specific
experience” (p. 29). Questions posed during the Introduction of this document form the very core and coherence of the inquiry. They were developed into guiding topical questions that provide an essential bridge between research questions and the specific questions chosen for the interview process. The question categories included: Orienting Questions (e.g., school culture, Graves research), Longitudinal Questions (e.g., long-term personal/professional impact) and General Closing Questions (e.g., thoughts, suggestions for this research project). This hierarchy of questioning appears in Table 2 on the following page, demonstrating how these topical questions might lead to possible interview questions. For a more detailed listing of sample interview questions, see the Preliminary Interview Guide in the Appendix.

Despite generating this list of sample questions, it was not my intention that these questions would be used in a particular order or even be covered in their entirety, but would instead be a resource from which to choose, if appropriate. Charmaz (2006) advises that an interviewer not take an extensive list of questions into the interview itself since over-reliance on a list may lead the interviewer into an interrogation role and may undermine one’s ability to flexibly follow the lead of the participant’s responses.
Table 2 – Question Categories

**Primary Research Question:**
How did a process of change, connected with research being conducted in some classrooms and resulting in the emergence of instructional practices, take hold for individual teachers in this school community?

**Topical Questions:**
1. What was the impact of different individual belief systems about teaching and learning on acceptance of these new ideas?
   **Possible Interview Questions:**
   - How did you teach writing before Graves came to Atkinson?
   - To what extent and in what way were your ideas shared by your colleagues at Atkinson Academy?
   - How did you view your own approach to teaching writing as compared with the instructional practices arising from Graves’ research?

2. How did individual teachers perceive their ability to make decisions about whether to change their instructional practices and their ability to actually make such changes?
   **Possible Interview Questions:**
   - What kinds of decisions were you able to make about your instructional practices?
   - How did you feel about your ability to change?

3. What role did shared leadership within the school community (principals, teachers, researchers, etc.) have on the willingness to consider and implement new ideas?
   **Possible Interview Questions:**
   - Were there factors within the school culture that supported or undermined your ability to change your approach to teaching writing?
   - Who were considered to be leaders within your school at the time? How would you describe their leadership qualities?
   - How do you think the personal characteristics of Graves himself impacted the acceptability of his research and associated practices?

**Secondary Research Question:**
What factors influenced the evolution of these instructional practices for individual teachers and for the school community over time?

**Topical Questions:**
4. Were there elements of school leadership or school culture that supported or undermined the learning process of individual teachers and the sustainability of their instructional practice over time?
   **Possible Interview Questions:**
   - What factors do you think impact the sustainability of instructional practices such as those associated with the writing process approach?
   - How have your own ideas about instructional practice in the teaching of writing changed over time? What has influenced this change?

5. Was it necessary for the school community to have common beliefs about literacy or for members of the community to be at the same point in learning how to implement these practices?
   **Possible Interview Questions:**
   - How would you describe the teaching of writing throughout Atkinson Academy before, during and after Graves conducted his research there?
   - What advice would you give to someone interested in supporting the development of a common belief system around the teaching of writing?
Interview Process

The interviews took place during a 4 month period between June and September 2012, at locations chosen by the participants themselves. Nine interviews were conducted at participants’ homes and two were conducted at their places of work. The interviews were audio-taped using a handheld digital recorder, with back-up audiotapes recorded using Audionote on an iPad. The recording devices did not seem intrusive and the participants appeared relaxed, with some actually unaware that the recordings had taken place until after the interviews were completed. I therefore concluded that the interview data was obtained in an optimal fashion despite the use of recording devices. The average length of interviews was approximately two hours with the actual range between one and three hours for all subjects. Participant Consent Forms were signed prior to conducting the interviews.

Analysis of Interview Data

According to Charmaz (2006), grounded theory data is coded during two phases, the Initial Coding Phase consisting of “studying fragments of data—words, lines, segments, and incidents—closely for their analytic import” (p. 42) and the Focused Coding Phase during which a researcher “collects what seem to be the most useful initial codes and test them against extensive data’ (p. 42). By creating categories, the resulting codes allow the researcher to see connections between various data elements and to summarize these connections according to over-arching themes supporting the analysis of the information as it relates to the broader research question.
Initial Coding Phase of Interview Analysis

In the preliminary stage of data analysis, I personally transcribed all the interviews. This process was an essential first step in activating reflective thinking and consideration of whether there were holes in the existing data, pointing to the need for deeper or broader collection prior to analysis. The experience not only embedded the voice of each participant in my own memory but it facilitated the search for emerging patterns and ways the data might be categorized. It also forced me to remain vigilant regarding the challenges presented when going from oral to written text. I transcribed oral versions verbatim while concurrently attempting to capture the cadence, expression, intonation and moments of real emotion in the resulting texts. Repeated listening was necessary in order to record these subtle yet meaningful components of oral expression.

At this preliminary stage of data analysis, an interest in detecting common elements within an extensive data set led me to explore the use of computer-based software. I entered the transcribed interviews into a PC database using NVivo and initial coding was accomplished using the following nodes: Adult Learning, Artifacts, Collaborative Learning, Collaborative Subgroups, Disconnect with Research, Early Role Models, Epistemology, Flexible Thinking, Graves, Leadership, Mentors (Principal, Researcher, Teacher), Self-efficacy/motivation (risk-taking), Respect/Trust (for principal, teachers, students), Small Changes are Life Changing, Sustainability, Teachers as Writers, Time, and Trust in Me as a Researcher. What was interesting about this initial coding process was that I intentionally chose the nodes without much deliberation (a procedure recommended by Saldana, 2009) but following this selection procedure, I found them to be somewhat sterile and minimally helpful. Their static nature had the effect of neutralizing the dynamic
and rich lived experiences being described by participants. This result forced me to re-evaluate the process being used thus far and to consider whether to revisit the data and redefine the terms or to pursue a somewhat different line of thinking.

Concurrent with the process of coding using NVivo, I found it necessary to develop a timeline of participant experiences before, during and after the two year period of the Graves project (September 1978 to June 1980). This one timeline became a composite of information from each of the interviews and helped me develop a temporal understanding of professional and personal experiences and their potential impact on individuals prior to, during and after their work in Atkinson. Despite extensive research at the Atkinson Historical Society, the Atkinson Public Library historical reference room, and through conversations with staff members at Atkinson Academy and the SAU 55 office in Plaistow, NH, I was able to find only limited information regarding members of the teaching faculty and the grades they taught during this period. The single record that I obtained regarding staffing during this period was a town document found by a member of the Atkinson Historical Society listing members of the teaching faculty employed in Atkinson during the 1978-79 school year (without designation by grade), which provided confirmation that the teachers listed on the timeline were indeed teaching in Atkinson that particular year. Due to this limited historical documentation, it became even more important to cross-check the information provided by each participant as a means of triangulating the data regarding chronology which was collected during the interviews and to compile it into this centralized timeline.

In addition to the initial coding in NVivo and the development of a central timeline, case study notes and memos were kept on each participant. This started as an attempt to
keep track of background information and general information but it developed into a series of sections with emerging commonalities and their associated quotes. This process helped keep the unique story of each individual in the foreground, in contrast to the static categorical nodes initially assigned to the transcription data. The case study notes became critically important as common themes found in personal stories began to emerge from the data.

Discussion with colleagues and committee members at this crucial time supported my inclination to step back from the preliminary labeling of data in order to notice what people were actually saying and how they were describing their own actions and decisions. The danger that this earlier process had revealed but hadn’t been easy to articulate was that designating categories too early in data analysis can have the tendency to lead one’s thinking prematurely and to limit the flexibility of thought necessary to see data from different perspectives. Committee members noted that the categories chosen were indeed static and sterile because they were primarily nouns and adjectives, not action verbs. It was suggested that creation of an “incident board” structured by the following questions might be helpful: What am I seeing? How can I connect the dots? Why does ___ keep popping up? Another suggestion was to consider coding for different types of verbs (e.g., becoming aware, changing practice, talking to others) and to find evidence of things people said that indicated what helped them to make a change (Did social interaction support change or a different way of seeing? How did change take hold for that person?) This final suggestion was found to be critically important in helping refocus the analysis on qualitative research as social action and move my work into a focused coding phase.

Focused Coding Phase of Interview Analysis
According to Charmaz (2006), the focused coding phase involves analysis of the most useful codes, with notation of emerging themes regarding common elements revealed by participants. At this point, I found it helpful to return to the actual transcripts, not the distilled case study notes taken earlier in the process, in order to facilitate viewing the broadest possible field of data. Specifically, I was hoping to see how and why people said things that appeared to be particularly significant. The focus became directed toward actions teachers took or opted not to take, decisions they made or avoided making and how they made meaning of these choices.

Initially, I decided that examining a few interviews, looking for the most useful action categories and clearly developing thematic connections, would be the most effective process. A few participants were chosen who had been found to be particularly reflective and articulate regarding their personal experiences. The process involved reading through their entire transcripts (and in some cases listening to their interviews again) and isolating particular quotes that seemed representative of actions taken, choices made and evidence noted of significant change taking place. These quotes were then recorded in text boxes and organized chronologically with significant dates/occurrences delineated in order to create the social context from which these quotes were drawn. By reviewing the final array of personal quotes against a loose structure of time, an oral history of personal change began to emerge and clear themes were more easily noted.

Following this work, I met again with members of my dissertation committee who advised consideration of whether time needed to be a driving force in this process. It was suggested that the linear nature of the current approach to data analysis, though possibly helpful, might have the potential to narrow the lens and mask the discoveries. Considering
key experiences or turning points for individual participants, regardless of their chronology, allowed the opportunity to more clearly notice patterns of these events for certain participants and the words that they themselves used to describe their thinking and experiences at the time. The emotion-laden stories they chose to tell about social interactions with colleagues and students seemed pivotal to their own recollections of the Graves project and gained significance in my own quest for understanding regarding the personal process of change. Exploration of how they made meaning of these stories and how these social interactions supported change or a different way of seeing became the driving force behind my data analysis as I was led repeatedly back to my research question regarding how the process of change took hold for these individual teachers.

The approach to interview data described above was repeated for all the participant transcripts using the most useful codes discovered thus far. It ultimately concluded when additional data could "no longer spark new theoretical insights nor reveal new properties of these core theoretical categories." (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). It seemed particularly noteworthy that when significant excerpts were being drawn from the principal’s interview transcript and categorized according to emerging themes, the quotes chosen for Leadership kept appearing under the category of Change and vice versa. As this phase of data collection concluded, the notion that leadership was inextricably connected to the process of change at Atkinson Academy seemed to rise out of the data pool itself.

Analysis of Archival Data

Graves’ original grant application, articles written as the research was being conducted and a book written following completion of the Atkinson project (Graves, 1983), were studied in an attempt to understand how Graves himself viewed the collaboration with
teachers at this research site and their impact on the evolution of his own ideas. To gather information about additional perceptions of Graves’ research project, the Graves archival data was supplemented by analysis of other relevant artifacts including observations/articles written by research participants at the time, newspaper articles written about the project, children’s writing samples saved by participants and video tapes filmed at Atkinson Academy and other locations during this research period. These video tapes were being archived for a collection being developed at the University of New Hampshire’s Dimond Library.

As previously stated, the videos were originally intended for use in generating data by prompting the memories of participants. I assumed that they would be particularly important given the passage of time and the potential for sentimentality associated with this particular era to influence recall. As valuable as video footage can be for recording observations of instructional practice, it is important to be aware that they can be limited by the point of view from which they are taken and the audience for whom they were originally intended (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Videos and other documents were used to triangulate the data collection (see the section on Credibility and Trustworthiness and Appendix B) by providing multiple perspectives of the research setting and the ‘lived experience’ as well as a context for understanding the whole picture but they proved to be less beneficial in sparking the memory of individual participants. The medium of film by its very nature had the potential to help focus participant discussion on visible actions (their own and others’) rather than on perceptions of what may have transpired. Yet in this circumstance, they became more of a hindrance than a help during the first few interviews. Participants were distracted by identifying students they may have had and wanting to see
themselves teaching at the time rather than viewing another teacher's work as a way of exploring instructional decision-making as a representation of beliefs about teaching and learning. As a result, I decided that the videos would instead be used as a data source, as a means of triangulating the information about instructional strategies gleaned from interviews with observations of actual classroom interactions. In addition, interviews with Graves himself and recorded news reports about the project were used to cross-check information obtained from other sources.

Archival Data Analysis

Archival data analysis was accomplished using a two stage approach similar to the process used in the analysis of interview data (Charmaz, 2006). The Initial Coding Phase was used to examine the documents and video data looking for relevance to the research questions guiding this inquiry. This was followed by the Focused Coding Phase during which the categories and themes that were found to have analytic relevance were compared against the results emerging from the interview data analysis.

Initial Coding Phase of Archival Data

I developed a list of general questions (Gibson & Brown, 2009, p. 71) to assist in the examination and comparison of these data (see Appendix B). The questions were focused on: when the documents were produced; information on author(s), purpose, and particular audience; their relation to other documents; their ownership; and whether they had been altered in any way. Individual record sheets were created and maintained for all documents (including video footage). They contained answers to general questions which
would apply to all documents, specific questions that applied to a particular document and any action or new questions that were generated as a result of their examination. Initial coding categories were determined based on the preliminary data.

Focused Coding Phase of Archival Data

The overarching coding categories and themes that emerged from the archival data were compared with those found to be most relevant in the interview data analysis process.

Overall Data Management and Analysis

The connection between data collection and the development of theoretical constructs is critical in grounded theory. According to Charmaz (2006), “Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means” (p. 46). Being an inductive process, the emergence of theoretical statements is grounded in an evolution of understanding of human experience.

Data collection was accomplished through extensive interviews conducted with people who worked in Atkinson during the Graves project and through studying writings and videos from that era. The data management process involved: transcription of these data; the use of initial coding to determine “fit and relevance;” the application of focused coding techniques to prioritize, categorize and synthesize the data; and theoretical coding as a means of integrating focused codes into a coherent whole to move the “analytic story in a theoretical direction” (p. 63). Through this lengthy process, a deeper understanding was gained as to how a change in instructional practice beliefs about teaching and learning and a change in actions in terms of instructional practices, took place in one teaching community.
Along with the progressive coding of data, I used memo-writing as an analytical process, throughout this research study. It was particularly useful when bridging data collection and analysis while facilitating the flexibility, reflection and abstraction necessary for a process that fosters critical thinking. I found it intriguing to note that the use of quickly drafted memos as a means of supporting analytical and inductive thinking around data collection seemed to be grounded in the ideas of Peter Elbow (1973) who discussed writing as a cognitive process during the era that Graves was studying the writing process in young children. As I engaged in the study of conceptual change associated with the writing process, I found myself experiencing critical components of the process itself as I used the spontaneity of memo-writing to challenge, reflect on, diverge from, revise and ultimately expand my own thinking. Charmaz (2006) writes about the essential need for uncertainty and the danger of preconceived ideas guiding the research process. “Researchers who write from an outline with a predictable beginning, middle and end may move right into reporting and miss the discovery, exploratory phase of writing” (p. 85). This rigid, product oriented approach is precisely what the writing process movement sought to challenge more than 30 years ago in the teaching of writing. Such parallels with the work of Donald Graves were particularly thought-provoking as I traveled this journey of inquiry.

**Credibility and Trustworthiness**

According to Maxwell (2005) “Methods and procedures do not guarantee validity, they are nonetheless essential to the process of ruling out validity threats and increasing the credibility of your conclusions” (p. 109). A number of strategies described by Maxwell
were utilized in an attempt to rule out threats to the credibility of my conclusions and to establish a level of awareness that would hopefully reduce the potential for researcher bias.

As an experienced Literacy Specialist, I entered this research with preconceived ideas about the writing process. I had studied the writing workshop model which has its roots in the writing process approach and had worked with teachers within my school to implement these instructional practices in their classrooms. I had concerns regarding short-term approaches to professional development and the sustainability of instructional practice with the current emphasis on data collection, accountability, student outcomes, high stakes assessments and their impact on the diminishing element of time within the school day. It was my intent to design open-ended interview questions that would not betray this bias and to carefully examine my own responses (through the use of tape recorded transcripts) for any evidence of potential bias. In addition, decisions regarding the coding of data, recognition of common themes and conclusions drawn were discussed with members of my Dissertation Committee on a regular basis in order to identify any potential impact of researcher bias on the various phases of this study.

Reactivity was not a concern in this research study since my impact on the setting and the participants seemed negligible. The people being interviewed had extensive experience in the field of writing research and instruction. Interview questions were open-ended, with the approach designed to follow the lead of the participants. To ensure an unbiased view of this period in educational history, I chose a purposeful sampling of teachers and administrators from the original Atkinson teaching faculty, representing a range of perspectives. Participants were not just teachers who worked directly with Graves
at the time, though the availability of other faculty members was somewhat self-limited (through illness, disinterest in participation or geographical distance).

I suspected that the topic itself might have had more of an influence on the interviewees than my own impact as a researcher. Given the fact that Donald Graves' research began 30-40 years ago, a significant threat to validity might have been not only inaccurate memory but the sentimentalizing of the research era and the participants' involvement in such a ground-breaking experience. As stated previously, in order to counteract this potential threat to validity, it was important to seek out the experiences of those teachers/administrators who worked at the research site but were not directly engaged in the research itself. These people provided discrepant evidence as to the uniformity of opinion regarding implementation of the Graves research agenda.

In addition to the strategies listed above, the triangulation of data accomplished by studying the actual video footage from the research project (which included classroom observations as well as some interviews at the time), analyzing Graves' original research writings, and interviewing a broad sampling of participants reduced the risk for validity threats as much as possible. Despite these efforts, Maxwell (2005) cautions the researcher that "validity threats are ruled out by evidence, not methods" (p. 112). With this in mind, the most critical factor concerning the issue of validity was an awareness of potential for bias and the design of efforts to minimize this possibility.

SIGNIFICANCE AND IMPLICATIONS

This research project has relevance not only as an in-depth study of how ideas and teaching practices may have changed in association with the research of Donald Graves but also as an exemplar of how elements within the broader school culture such as leadership,
collaboration and motivation support or undermine this process of change. The value of studying a site where Graves conducted his original work and developing a clear understanding of its impact on individual teachers lies in its ability to remind those of us involved with professional development and the sustainability of instructional practice that at the very core of these initiatives remains a unique set of individuals fueled by different experiences, motivations and goals. Through this study, it is hoped that the reader will gain a deeper understanding of and respect for the complexities associated with the process of change for individuals within an educational setting.

Qualitative research using grounded theory methodology for data collection and analysis provided an opportunity to approach this project without preconceived ideas and to develop theories inductively throughout the research process itself. The interviews provided a social-cognitive lens through which to view the complex interactions that took place concurrently within a school community. Analysis of these interview conversations and associated archival materials allowed the consideration of change from multiple perspectives without straying from the point that change takes place one person at a time no matter how pervasive the efforts or how broad the mandate. Districts which pride themselves in mission statements prioritizing the engagement of every learner often fail to consider that the adults at the very core of their educational communities are learners as well. I hoped that through this inquiry, understanding would be gained as to how to support and engage the individual learning needs of adults as well as children within an educational community for the benefit of all.

In the next chapters, I will describe the results of this research study. Specific themes will be delineated as the findings are reported and these themes will be analyzed in
terms of the process of change experienced by individuals participating in my study. Their perceptions and memories are the cornerstone of this project and their stories will be told from this personal perspective. The reader's ability and inclination to understand the individual lives of those who worked in Atkinson, New Hampshire more than thirty years ago requires a willingness to journey along, to become fellow travelers, guided by the words of those who were there and my own attempts to represent and analyze their experiences. In so doing, we have the potential to truly understand the process of change.
CHAPTER 4
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The intent of this dissertation study was to understand how the process of change took hold for different individuals working within an educational community participating in a groundbreaking research project. Initially, this inquiry was further broken down to explore whether experience, beliefs about teaching and learning, and/or motivation influenced an individual’s inclination or ability to change and whether leadership within the school had an impact. The cyclical nature of data collection, coding, analysis and reflection using grounded theory methodology contributed to the emergence of multidimensional themes characteristic of a process based on social interactions within a dynamic community.

This chapter will begin with an exploration of the Preliminary Factors originally posed as potentially significant in determining individual likelihood for change, looking for commonalities and citing specific examples using the words of participants themselves. These Preliminary Factors include Prior Experiences and Epistemological Orientation, Self-efficacy and Leadership. Following this initial section, three Emerging Themes that highlight the critical role of social interactions around the process of change will be identified. The chapter will conclude with a series of three Case Studies focusing on the Emerging Themes and their interconnectedness with individual and collaborative journeys of change.
PRELIMINARY FACTORS

Prior Experiences

The cohort of participants (ten teachers and one principal) interviewed for this research study presented with a wide variety of educational backgrounds and previous professional experiences. The majority of participants teaching at Atkinson Academy received their professional training and certification at the undergraduate level though there were a few exceptions. Before joining the Atkinson faculty, one teacher served in the Peace Corps before obtaining an M.A. in Education and two others completed the UNH Early Childhood Master’s program. Prior to 1978 when the Graves research began at Atkinson Academy, all participants had taught at least two years, with an average of five years experience and a range of two to eight years in public educational settings. Two participants each taught for two years at the primary level, left teaching to raise young children for five to ten years and then joined the Atkinson Academy faculty at the third and first grades, respectively. Two other participants taught at the middle school level for two to three years and were then moved by the principal to second and third grade teaching positions to participate in the project. The rest of the teachers continued to teach at either the primary or intermediate levels their entire careers prior to, during, and after the Graves study.

The variety of previous professional experiences and years of teaching gleaned initially from this cohort of teachers provided little evidence of similarities regarding training or preparation that might distinguish them from any other typical population of teachers at the time. Yet further analysis of interview transcripts revealed commonalities, particularly when teachers were asked to describe themselves as learners and when they
were asked to discuss their instructional practice. Some described themselves as problem solvers. Mary Ellen Giacobbe described having the confidence to “figure things out,” even when presented with particularly challenging teaching situations and John Gaydos saw himself as a “problem-solver” for other people, a person peers would approach for advice about teaching practices. Others characterized themselves as hard workers, perpetual learners and good observers. JoAn Claveau expanded on this when describing the importance of learning from her students during the Graves project, “All I can remember is seeing it [writing process] working. Looking at it and seeing it working and trying it with the kids...They wanted to write. They weren’t afraid to write.” This ability to watch and reflect on teaching practice based on such observations was common among this cohort of teachers.

The attribute of being interested in new ideas was also mentioned frequently by participants. According to JoAn, “I’ve always been kind of willing to try. If we can find something that will work better, let’s try it. If it doesn’t work, we’ll try something else.” Carolyn Currier concurred with this thinking when she described her reaction to new ideas as, “If there’s another way, let’s do it.” Even a classroom teacher in this study who didn’t directly participate in the Graves project described being proactive in terms of her own learning as she described the number of credits she accumulated during a lifetime of teaching whenever she felt her training was “lacking.” At first glance, this solution appears deceptively simple. One might wonder though, whether the process of learning and change for this teacher was quite so easily accomplished. She described her teaching philosophy as a “traditional approach to education,” and spoke of prioritizing grammar and penmanship in her writing instruction. When she detected a need for additional learning
and sought out professional development experiences, she may have viewed and potentially assimilated new information through the lens of her particular teaching philosophy, one to which she was unwaveringly dedicated. From this description, it was suspected that a mismatch with philosophy had the potential to discount the value of new learning. This discovery led to a closer examination of teacher epistemology.

**Epistemological Orientation – Beliefs about teaching and learning**

Despite the passage of over three decades, the participants were able to clearly articulate beliefs about their instructional practices at the time and their ideas about student learning. These included a focus on child development and individual student learning with an emphasis on personal responsibility and active involvement. In addition, following the lead of the student in the learning process and creating environments that facilitated optimal conditions for learning were essential to the majority of these teachers.

**Student-centered and Activity-based Classrooms**

Most of teachers directly involved in the Graves research project described their classrooms as being student-centered and activity-based. It is important to note that in the 1970s this philosophy may have been sporadically represented across New Hampshire schools (Tyack & Hansot, 1982; Cuban, 1993), found more commonly in those associated with institutions such as the University of New Hampshire. Innovative instructional practices involving a workshop approach and the use of centers were being introduced across many areas of the curriculum. One participant, Judy Egan, linked these changes to the work of Mary Stewart Gile in New Hampshire and her ideas about the British Infant School approach to education. In math, for example, a number of the participants described giving/attending workshops on Math Their Way, an approach to mathematics
that involved the use of manipulatives, individualized learning and collaborative activities in the teaching of math concepts. Also, workshops on child development, school readiness models and Gesell readiness testing were described as typical professional development experiences at the time.

**Child Development**

The work being done at the University of New Hampshire, particularly in the English, Education and Early Childhood departments, may also have played a role in encouraging consideration of some of these approaches to pedagogy. Interestingly, Graves began his work at UNH associated with the Early Childhood department. As mentioned previously, two participants had each just completed the Masters in Early Childhood program at UNH prior to the Atkinson study and had the opportunity to work with Graves during this time. This program was characterized by Judy as “…all about Piaget and doing all those wonderful things…[it was also] involved in Gesell developmental work and really looking at kids from a developmental perspective.” She went on to describe its impact on her teaching as “life changing, just like the writing project.” JoAn, who worked with Judy at the time in Derry, NH, enrolled in the same Masters program and shared a classroom with her. She described this educational era and this new thinking about writing as the “impetus to get myself back to school for my Masters degree because change was happening and I wasn’t there yet…There was change in the wind.”

This change was not only impacting pedagogy but also support models for children transitioning into 1st grade (Kindergarten was not mandated in New Hampshire schools). Atkinson and nearby school districts began readiness programs for children who didn’t appear “ready” for 1st grade based on academic and developmental testing. Two
participants and the school principal had been trained to administer readiness testing and
two other participants as well as the principal had previously taught readiness classes.

As mentioned previously, Graves himself taught in the Early Childhood department
at the University of New Hampshire. He initially had a strong orientation toward child
development and suspected that individual learning took place along a continuum or
sequential process. According to Newkirk and Kittle (2013), Graves began his study in
Atkinson “as a Piagetian” by expecting to find “invariable sequences—in spelling, revision,
use of conventions—that could be placed on a continuum, much as Piaget defined stages of
children’s thinking” (p. 4) but his work in Atkinson challenged the rigidity of this
perspective, forcing him to acknowledge significant variability in individual learning.
Graves’ report to the NIE (Graves, 1981), the funding organization for the Atkinson
research, refers to this change in thinking. In it he states:

“Many similarities were seen in the children when they wrote, but as the
study progressed, individual exception to the data increased in dominance.
In short, every child had behavioral characteristics in the writing process
that applied to that child alone” (p. 29).

Responsive Practice—Following the Child. By the conclusion of his research in
Atkinson, Graves clearly no longer supported his original contention that writing
development was the same for every child. Instead, he proposed that individual learning
demanded “a waiting, responsive type of teaching” (Newkirk & Kittle, 2013, p. 29), an
approach being explored in Atkinson classrooms connected with the Project (and in some
beyond the Project). Participants describing their personal philosophies often talked of this
responsive approach both in their pedagogy as well as in the environments they created.

John Gaydos described his philosophy as being oriented toward metacognition. He
wanted his students to be reflective, involved with self-discovery and his role was to help
them guide their own learning. To facilitate this he would often pose questions that Graves modeled for him, “Why are you doing what you are doing and what’s going on in your head?” John further described his approach to the teaching of writing at the time as “...you know the content you need to cover but you don’t need to use a textbook to cover it. You can make it come alive and do things in other ways.” This instructional approach involved not only scaffolding through talk but also creating a classroom conducive to self-directed learning and opportunities for collaborative work. With much of his prior experience at the intermediate and middle school levels, John needed to learn how to create this type of classroom at the primary level. Jean Robbins, the principal, encouraged him to observe in Mary Ellen Giacobbe’s classroom to gain this information.

*Classroom environment.* In her interview, Mary Ellen described the care with which she created and organized the classroom environment for optimal learning including opportunities for mini-lessons, student-directed writing, choice, peer collaboration, and sharing.

I worked hard up front to have a beautiful classroom because I didn’t want to sit there all day long and have it awful...I wanted it to be inviting to children and I wanted it to be inviting for me. I did it in such a way that the basic part was there and then the kids did the rest. So when they came in it was kind of empty and then it would begin to fill up...I believe that all kids like some structure. The structure allows for freedom. I expected the kids to be responsible. I expected them to take on certain things.

Following a series of observations in Mary Ellen’s class, John’s comments provide an interesting outsider’s perspective on how this concern about classroom environment and student responsibility might look. “What she was doing was phenomenal...I was just impressed with how organized her classroom was and how involved the kids were. They
all seemed to be really invested in whatever they were doing.” This really helped John to create a similar environment and organizational structure in his own classroom.

Martha Horn, a beginning teacher who spent a great deal of time observing in Mary Ellen’s classroom prior to joining the Atkinson Academy faculty, describes how the focus on environment and organization sends a very powerful message to students, one of respect.

I knew that already but I learned it in a different way. I learned that they [the children] even deserved all this beautiful stuff...that they even deserved to be able to make these choices and do what their minds were so able and ready to do. She took it beyond...because she put this organizing structure around it[the writing process] that allowed it to happen in this little space...how else do you respect children by saying I want to learn about you...and I’m going to use what you have to say and what’s important to you, to teach you.

For Mary Ellen and the teachers who observed in her classroom, the way the learning space was designed and organized contributed not only to having a wonderful place to learn but more importantly, it revealed this teacher’s underlying belief system, her philosophy of teaching and learning.

Judy Egan, a teacher who left Atkinson to start her own private school, lovingly described the physical structure of her current school before our interview took place in much the same way that Mary Ellen and Martha talked of the classrooms at Atkinson Academy. Judy has remained true to a philosophy that started before Atkinson, was confirmed and strengthened during her work with Graves and flourished on her own. She describes her epistemology while still teaching at the Academy as:

...definitely activity-oriented, moving around, John Dewey-like and kids were made to be responsible for their own work. Everybody wasn’t doing the same thing at the same time, although we could be...and really, my classroom in Atkinson didn’t look quite so different during the school day than it looks now.
Two participants, who were not as directly involved in the project, appeared to be less aligned with the majority. One teacher taught in a readiness classroom and though she described working with Judy and others on integrated thematic curriculum models, she expressed that the needs of her students limited some of the options she could pursue. She said that this prevented her from taking full advantage of the writing process instructional practices arising from the Graves project. Yet when she went on to establish her own private school in the area which serviced a more homogeneous and less needy population, her writing curriculum still did not appear to closely resemble the work coming out of the writing process research. The other teacher described her teaching as being much more "traditional" than her peers. Writing instruction was explicitly guided by the teacher, with choice limited to subcategories within a broad teacher-chosen theme and an emphasis on grammatical and spelling accuracy during every phase of the process. She acknowledged that children benefited from "getting their ideas down on paper" but she encouraged this within a more rigid structure of expectations.

Therefore, when considering epistemology, there were distinct similarities between eight of the ten teacher participants in this study, six who were directly involved with the Graves project. They described the importance of activity-based, collaborative, and student-directed learning; the importance of considering individual needs, child development and readiness to learn; and the emphasis on reflective thinking for both student and teacher. This was described by many participants as their perception of the trend in education at the time and concurs with the writing of Cuban (1993) and Shannon (1990) and their descriptions of educational philosophy in many classrooms in the late 1970s.
Additional Contextal Factors

*The Timberlane Teachers Strike.* Despite similarities to other schools in the early 1970s, the experience at Atkinson Academy differed in one major way from many of the other public schools nationwide. Due to the impact of the Timberlane teachers' strike which began in February of 1974, many of the teachers at Atkinson Academy who went out on strike were dismissed. Jean Robbins, the principal who started at the Academy in September of 1974, had to contend with the animosity resulting from teacher, parent and student beliefs about the strike. According to a teacher who was hired as a substitute during the strike before Jean started as principal, there was conflict between community members with some supporting the teachers and others supporting the school board.

Following the strike, Jean had the unique opportunity to assemble much of her own faculty when contracts were not renewed and vacant positions needed to be filled. Though Jean described the strike as “earth-shaking in terms of New Hampshire education,” John Gaydos commented that it allowed Jean to have “a tabula rasa to pick out her own staff and she managed fairly well to placate the town and get the staff she wanted, too. She put together a phenomenal group of teachers.” So despite the shifts in educational thinking going on across the country, in the little microcosm of Atkinson there was the opportunity for an educational community to be more philosophically aligned than might be considered typical for the times.

*Writing Instruction Prior to Graves* Despite similarities in terms of teaching philosophy, according to the participants themselves, none of them felt confident as writing teachers and they freely admitted that their writing instruction consisted at best of a language experience approach and at worst, nothing more than a way to learn mechanics.
such as spelling or grammar. According to Mary Ellen Giacobbe: "They [her students] were doing the writing but I would prompt it...we would go to the apple orchard and then we would write a list of apple orchard words...but some kids would just copy this and it wouldn't make sense." JoAn Claveau described her writing instruction prior to the Graves study as being limited to mechanics, editing or response to reading. "It wasn't much. It would have looked like spelling words...basically what they were working on was spelling or vocabulary in reading, it wasn't expressing themselves." Pat Howard offered that she didn't understand what writing instruction could actually look like.

I really did not realize kids needed to write about something through their own experience so it was just a novel thing to me to learn all this. Before [Graves] I was probably much more concerned about grammar than I was with the content.

So all the participants directly involved with Graves' work faced the challenge of welcoming researchers into their classrooms to observe their students as writers while not necessarily seeing themselves as teachers of writing. This presented a challenge to even the most confident of teachers and these individuals were asked to take a leap of faith as they laid bare their instructional practice. This raised the question of motivation and efficacy both for individual teachers and for the cohort of research participants as a whole.

Self-efficacy and Taking Risks

The personal qualities mentioned in conjunction with learning style, such as problem-solving, working hard and thinking flexibly when encountering challenging or unfamiliar tasks have close ties to motivation. Efficacious individuals see themselves as capable in novel situations and they often display perseverance when others might slack off or abort (Schunk, 1983; Schunk & Pajares, 2002). Having UNH researchers observing students in one's classroom four days a week for an entire school year (and in Mary Ellen
Giacobbe’s case for two school years) would appear to present a challenge, even for a teacher who demonstrates unusually high levels self-efficacy. When uncertainty about one’s ability to teach writing is added to the equation, it isn’t surprising to find initial evidence of uncertainty and doubt.

Mary Ellen found it reassuring that, “It wasn’t a study of teachers, it was a study of kids and I really did not know how to teach writing... I was just OK at figuring things out. I could work at it.” This self-deprecating attitude and the confidence to problem solve served her well as she and Graves together watched and learned from the children. Others at the Academy saw Mary Ellen’s classroom as the ideal place to start the research study. “Mary Ellen was the perfect person to choose. She was lively... already a great teacher, she would be flexible, spontaneous, open to having other people in her classroom and she wouldn’t be intimidated by it all.” But Mary Ellen was not alone. Many of the other teachers described themselves as being risk-takers throughout their lives but particularly when new ideas might benefit their students.

JoAn Claveau viewed taking chances and trying new things in terms of her own level of comfort, stating “I never had a problem getting outside my comfort zone” and she attributed this personal quality to the encouragement of her father. Similarly, Carolyn Currier credits her mother with instilling in her a willingness to take on new challenges throughout her life. Pat Howard was initially quite concerned about having the research team in her classroom. “I think I was scared. I felt like I was on the spot and that everything I said and did was going to be criticized,” though this turned out not to be the case as the project ran its course. Despite this initial reaction, Pat went on to provide
evidence as to why she was able to overcome this initial anxiety and welcome the research team into her classroom for the year,

I always like taking on a new challenge. I've done it my whole life. It's the way I am, it's just me. I'm not afraid to try new things...I think I needed for myself, I needed to learn how to be a better teacher and you're never afraid to do that.

Once again, initial trepidation was overcome when it came to self-improvement and helping students.

The ability to take risks was clearly a personal quality found to be consistent across the cohort of participants in this study, yet the willingness to take risks within this school community appeared to depend not only on an individual’s capability but also the support and encouragement provided by the school leader, the principal. The leadership qualities and support created by this remarkable principal allowed these teachers to stretch well beyond their “comfort zones” without the fear of negative repercussions.

Leadership – Guiding and Encouraging

The Graves research came to Atkinson because of the school’s principal, Jean Robbins. Graves himself wrote about this in a letter of recommendation for Jean in which he stated,

Early in 1978 I surveyed five elementary schools as research sites for my National Institute of Education study of children’s writing. Highest on the list of criteria for site selection was a strong building principal. Research simply cannot be conducted in a building where a principal is not respected by staff, central administration and community.

D.H. Graves (personal communication, March 29, 1982)

Graves saw Jean as a respected, highly skilled decision maker. Mary Ellen concurred with this opinion when she stated that “The study never would have taken place without her and he felt that if he had a good strong leader than everything else would fall into place.” Jean
was not only the principal of a school that was ideal for Graves' research project but according to every single teacher interviewed for this project, she represented so much more for each of them individually. The Graves work was just one small indicator of the role she played in the halls of Atkinson Academy.

*Trust and Respect.* According to Judy Egan, the principal sets the tone for a school, by who she hires, by what she values, and by the beliefs she espouses in her daily interactions with all members of the community.

It comes down to the person at the helm. That administrator makes the difference. Jean was hired by a superintendent who valued what she did and then she hired teachers who also valued what she did, what she believed in...I guess it's what you believe in that creates the philosophy of the school, whatever it happens to be.

Jean consistently conducted herself by demonstrating trust in and respect for her colleagues. Parallels between principal-teacher and teacher-student interactions were common across the interviews. JoAn Claveau explained that “she encouraged you to take risks... [which is] exactly what encourages in turn getting kids to take risks.” She went on to say that Jean “was an innovator. She was a risk-taker herself, and she tended to hire people with those qualities. “All those people [teachers working with Graves] were risk-takers. They were all willing to go out on the limb for something they believed in.” Jean herself talked about this essential need to trust within a school community and how the model one sets as an administrator is mirrored throughout the school.

“Trust the teachers that they will then trust the children. Trust the children to do the best that they can at any time and if they’re not giving you what you consider to be their best, you need to find out why...TRUST...that's the biggest word of all in education. That isn't there very often these days. Make it in capital letters.”

*Support of Risk-taking*
For some, the Graves project presented not only as an exciting opportunity but potentially a significant challenge, well beyond the risks teachers were used to taking. Carolyn Currier reflected on this when she was describing Jean’s concurrent encouragement to embrace new ideas with the support provided if one were to encounter difficulties.

“I think it was Jean [who made risk-taking possible for me] because I felt like if anything would come up, I could go to her, although I didn’t feel the need to do that...she would have my back.”

Carolyn went on to describe how she was asked by Jean to be a head teacher in a summer professional development model, Project Write, following her participation in the Graves research the previous year. Carolyn didn’t feel “compelled to do it,” when asked but why she took this on reveals a great deal about the relationship between principal and teacher. “I saw it as a challenge and I had so much respect for Jean, I guess, I just wanted to just have that challenge.” The positive effect of this personal relationship between teacher and principal was critical for many other participants as well, particularly those who were initially anxious about the UNH researchers coming into their classrooms, something often seen in classrooms when children take risks but trust the teacher will scaffold their early attempts. Pat Howard described Jean’s role in a similar way.

Maybe I wouldn’t have been amenable to having somebody in my classroom. Maybe not but I think with Jean I did it, partly because of Jean because I think I felt that confidence that she had in me that I could do it. She exuded that. It was the kind of person she was.

As with students, the scaffolding of adult learning was prevalent in Atkinson thanks to the standard set from the top down.
**High expectations.** For some participants, trust involved the expectation that they would each work a little harder and demand a little more of themselves. Jean was seen as an administrator who frequently suggested opportunities to take advantage of and professional development to pursue based on individual needs. Lists of after school professional development opportunities were frequently available and when people attended conferences they were encouraged to come back and share what they learned at staff meetings. She was described as setting high expectations for her teachers, but also for being fair. John Gaydos described how teachers were encouraged to see what other people were doing in their classrooms which developed a sense of collegiality. Yet along with these high standards there was apparently an extremely positive atmosphere that pervaded the Atkinson Academy campus according to Elaine Malesky, a parent and later a teacher at the Academy.

It was an exciting time. Kids were enthusiastic, they wanted to learn. The whole school atmosphere was like that. You couldn’t miss it when you walked in and you could feel that warm welcoming feeling that you didn’t feel in other schools. Leadership set the tone as well as the standard for learning as a life-long pursuit for all members of the Atkinson community.

To summarize, this Initial Data collection clearly revealed commonalities between participants in terms of qualities they personally brought to their participation in the Graves project or for teachers who were not direct participants, qualities they brought to their willingness or inclination to take on the instructional practices developed out of this research project. Most teachers considered themselves to have the capability to solve problems, take risks and persevere when challenged. They possessed a strong sense of self-efficacy when exposed to novel situations, particularly when they saw these as
opportunities for self-improvement or of benefit to their students. There was some variation in beliefs about teaching and learning, though the majority of classroom teachers with whom Graves worked encouraged collaboration and activity-based learning in their classrooms and none of the teachers believed themselves to be strong teachers of writing. Finally, every participant spoke of the critical role the school principal played in supporting them in new learning, encouraging them to take risks and trusting them to be the best they could possibly be.

*Change took hold in very different ways.* Despite the commonalities revealed in this preliminary analysis of data, change took hold in very different ways and to varying degrees depending on the individual being interviewed. Instructional practices developed through the interaction of teachers and researchers as they studied the writing process of their students. These new practices, as described by many of the participants, included: organizing classrooms to allow children to make choices about writing topics and materials to use; providing opportunities for collaboration and sharing; teachers modeling their own writing processes; providing regular, uninterrupted times for writing every day; and conferring individually with students to help teachers understand and support their individual needs as writers. Some participants were instrumental in developing these practices with their own students while others learned from observing/interacting with these colleagues and principal, reflecting on their personal experiences as writers, or from talking with and observing researchers embedded in their classrooms.

What remained constant for all participants was the distinct need for time—time to notice a need for change; time for watching, listening to and talking with others who were a bit further along the journey; time to try out new ideas and watch their impact on student
learning; and time to integrate this new thinking into instructional practice. For Mary Ellen Giacobbe, the first seven months of the work being done by researchers in her classroom was a mystery. Change took hold slowly. Time spent talking and reflecting with Graves and his research assistants over a two year period along with some pivotal experiences away from the Atkinson campus (that will be described in Case Study section to follow), helped to delineate for her what was being learned and how her own instructional practices might align with this evolving view of children as writers.

Carolyn Currier spoke of learning extensively from one of the research assistants (Lucy Calkins) who was assigned to her classroom for an entire year, through reflective talk and modeling. Her learning was generalized when she and Judy Egan were asked to be head teachers in the Project Write summer program, where they taught other teachers about the writing process of young children and the instructional practices that were developed from the Graves research. They both claim that this was a powerful learning experience for them and found that teaching other teachers solidified their ideas about instructional practice associated with the writing process.

Elaine Malesky and Martha Horn had both been “students” in this program, learning about writing instruction from fellow teachers and developing their capabilities as writers themselves. Prior to this, Martha had spent a considerable amount of time observing in Mary Ellen’s classroom and talking about new ideas with her (see Case Study below) but these visits took place over a two year period prior to joining the Atkinson faculty. Once again the element of an extended period of time was critical for Martha’s learning process as she shared that she could only take on small bits of new learning each time she visited Mary Ellen’s classroom.
In some cases, the lack of time and the inability to participate in opportunities to watch, listen and talk had its impact as well. Lyn Ketzelman’s readiness classroom contained many students with learning challenges and she struggled with their multiple needs, questioning whether writing should be as much of a priority as developing social skills and a basic academic foundation. The researchers filmed in Lyn’s room for the first year of the project but rarely interacted with her in terms of debriefing or reflective discussion about what they were observing or ideas about instructional practice that they were learning. It’s difficult to know whether this was because Lyn did not seek this input, the focus was really on students at other grade levels or the researchers wanted to study more typically developing students; however, the result seemed to be a teacher for whom change did not take hold and this lack of apparent change seemed significant.

Clearly the commonalities of educational preparation and experience, epistemology, self-efficacy and school leadership were important for teachers to be open to having embedded research in their classrooms. Yet they do little to explain the wide variation of interactions that participants claimed were pivotal for their own particular learning processes and their ability to take on change in instructional practice. The case studies that follow will allow for closer analysis of how the process of change took hold for three individuals within the Atkinson community. This approach to data analysis was chosen because it provides an opportunity to examine individual experiences and the social interactions that these participants found to be particularly important for their own learning. In addition, they exemplify the emerging themes around change arising from the data on all the participants.
Emerging Themes

Significant broad themes emerged from the analysis of extensive participant interview data gathered for this study. Close analysis of these data reveals the critical role of social interactions around the process of change. These include: developing apprenticeship or mentoring relationships within the school community characterized by modeling, observing, and reflective talking between participants with concurrent bidirectional learning; developing a stance of inquiry as a vehicle for studying student learning characterized by learning about teaching by watching, reflecting with others (the community of learners) and talking with the students themselves about their learning; and redefining school leadership to facilitate change by mentoring, collaborating, modeling and motivating based on the needs of the individual teacher/learner.

Social interactions around learning and change are complex, dynamic, and interpreted differently depending on one’s perspective or viewing lens. The relationships themselves involve change since the participants evolve as a function of their interactions. As a result, the case studies will be used to analyze the process of change reported by the individuals in each case as well as the perspectives of the various people with whom they interacted (other case study subjects as well as additional participants). This will allow my best attempt at creating a multidimensional view of experiences that took place more than three decades ago as the process of change took hold. Ironically, the passage of time appears to be less of a factor than one would assume in such circumstances. The individuals chosen for these case studies (and most of the other participants interviewed for this research project) remember their experiences with exceptional clarity, a tribute to the
significance with which they viewed this two year period in their professional and personal lives. As Jean so aptly stated, “It was a real turning point in our lives.”

The three case studies that follow will focus on the themes that emerged when analyzing the results of the extensive interview process: Redefining School Leadership: Creating Optimal Conditions for Change (Jean Robbins); Developing Mentor/Apprenticeship Relationships: Providing a Scaffold for Adult Learning (Mary Ellen Giacobbe); and Developing a Stance of Inquiry: Self-directed Learning and the Element of Time (Martha Horn). The case studies will begin with brief biographical information for the individuals highlighted, followed by data to support thematic orientations. These cases were chosen not only because the participants’ experiences strongly exemplify certain themes but also because thematic inter-relationships were prevalent throughout their interviews. It is not the separation of themes but rather their dynamic interconnectivity that seems to provide the most clarity in terms of how change took hold for these individuals.
CASE STUDY #1: JEAN ROBBINS (Atkinson principal)

Redefining School Leadership: Creating Optimal Conditions for Change

This inquiry began with a focus on beliefs and personal qualities brought to the learning process by participants which might have created ideal potential for change, but analysis of interview data encouraged looking beyond such a simplistic conclusion. It was found that individual qualities were important but not singularly necessary for change. Instead, pivotal experiences and relationships were most frequently associated with times of significant learning and change for participants. Key among these interpersonal experiences were each teacher's connection with the school principal, a leader who defined her role in terms of the relationships she had with her faculty.

Background

Prior to being a principal at Atkinson Academy, Jean had been a 1st grade teacher for three years and then a readiness teacher (a model created in districts that didn’t have Kindergarten classrooms) for three years in southern New Hampshire. While a readiness teacher, she was also responsible for preschool testing for her entire district. She used the Gesell test, an assessment tool which continues to be used today for the observation and documentation of child development, as well as speech and language and fine motor assessments to evaluate student learning needs. When asked how she taught at the time, she said:

I really felt that I could tune in to each child individually and listen to them and respond to them so the classroom was set up as an activity centered classroom with all sorts of constraints but the kids took care of the room themselves.
Jean shared that she did some writing with the kids even though “I didn’t know much about writing at that point.” Words from a word wall were often used to prompt individual writing and they were also used in the editing process as models for correct spelling.

Before the start of her third year teaching readiness, 1973-74, Jean was approached by the assistant superintendent of her cooperative district (which included Atkinson) and asked if she would be interested in the principal’s position at Atkinson Academy, but she turned him down. As it turned out, the Atkinson principal stayed one more year and the assistant superintendent asked her once again the following year, at which time she agreed to take the position since he promised to support her throughout the process. “He was more than supportive. He would either call or was at the school every day. He was wonderful. I couldn’t have done it without him.” It’s important to note that this assistant superintendent demonstrated a level of trust and respect that Jean would in turn incorporate into her own role as an elementary school principal under his guidance.

Jean began her tenure at the Academy in September of 1974 and remained there through 1982. In 1974, the district was attempting to recover from the Timberlane Teachers’ Strike (described earlier), a year of turmoil, particularly in Atkinson where many teachers were fired. Jean was able to hire a number of new teachers which she admits was an advantage as she began her tenure in Atkinson. She described this opportunity as “philosophically picking someone who meets your needs” with the caveat that “you have a loyalty from those people.” When Judy Egan described the Academy as a place where many innovative things were taking place, even before the Graves research and Project Write, she attributed this to Jean and the hiring choices she made. By being able to hire so many new teachers,
...she could then have her teachers reflect what she believed about education which was great, having been a teacher herself. Jean had that background with young children. She really ‘got’ how kids learn and how they think and how they are developmentally, which unfortunately is kind of a unique situation.

**Mentoring through the evaluation process**

Jean’s background as a classroom teacher and her prior interactions with administrators continued to impact her evolution as a school principal. This was made perfectly clear during her interview when she read from two very different evaluations of her own teaching that she had saved for more than forty years! *Excerpt #1:* “The children coming into the room were very noisy. They were all noisy for a few minutes after arriving. I think this could have been done in a more orderly fashion” *Excerpt #2:* “I watched an artist working today. Through your enthusiasm, the children were eager to work and this is what education is all about.” After reading both evaluation excerpts, Jean referred to Excerpt #1 by saying, “That’s the kind of evaluation that makes you want to improve, isn’t it?” She realized how critical it was to find opportunities to acknowledge the positive elements in the learning process, whether dealing with adults or children.

Carolyn Currier shared her own perspective of Jean as an evaluator of her teachers at the Academy. She saw Jean as wanting to help teachers improve and that her evaluation process was never punitive.

Some principals are intimidating and some make you feel more relaxed, that they are there to help you. They make you grow. She [Jean] made you feel that we all need to grow and she was growing at the same time. I’m sure she was. She took chances.

The ability to know what each individual teacher needs for her or his own professional growth and development is a remarkable skill, but to deliver this information in such a way
that these teachers respond so positively more than three decades later is a tribute to the person and the role Jean developed over time.

Knowing and Accepting Teachers as Individual Learners—Trust and Respect

Jean spoke passionately about a principal’s need to know her teachers and trust that they are aware of their own learning needs. She talked of accepting the individual needs of teachers, being able to detect when some were on “the brink, the cusp” of being comfortable and were ready to take on new challenges and knowing when others needed to stay where they were for a while due to personal demands or recent professional growth that needed to be firmed up before additional change. She shared her belief that:

Teachers know what they need to do. You know what you need to do to grow and you know if you need to stay were you are, plateau for a while and get it a little more solid. I think that’s very important.

It is interesting to note the parallels between Jean’s beliefs about the necessary conditions for teacher change and her beliefs about student engagement and responsibility in their own learning process from her classroom teaching experience.

Jean was seen by her faculty as fair and accepting of difference. Elaine Malesky shared that: “We all didn’t teach the same way and she could appreciate different styles. She would have an idea where a child would do best, in whoever’s classroom and match them up.” This wasn’t always an easy process under the best of conditions but Jean felt that her decisions were rarely questioned by parents or teachers. Respecting teacher difference was closely linked to respecting individual differences between children. Jean talked of how she tried to help teachers grow and learn, “you take them where they are and help them move,” while maintaining the element of trust. She trusted her teachers to use what they had within them to do what was best for the children in their classes. She
believed that top-down mandates for teachers could be interpreted as “We don’t trust you. You’re not professionals” That ‘we’ know better and this ran counter to the way Jean operated as a principal.

Despite these firm beliefs, Jean acknowledged that facilitating the learning of teachers and students was not an easy process. It required the principal to be in classrooms a lot, to be a good observer and listener and to be available.

You just have to be there and listen and I think you don’t tell teachers what they need to improve. You ask them what they think they want to do next to make changes to improve or to stay where they are. What can I do to help you grow as a teacher? Because to me what you want to develop in children is a love of learning and if the teacher doesn’t have that, if you kill that on the teacher, you’ve killed the model. Those teachers you are talking to [in my research study], they love to learn themselves.

Jean clearly hired teachers who possessed the essential quality of having a genuine love of learning but she exemplified this quality as well.

**Developing a stance of inquiry – Watching and listening**

Jean described how important it was to be a learner herself. She was frequently in classrooms, not to evaluate teachers, but to learn from them and about them. She talked of watching, listening and picking up intentional or unintentional cues from such visits. She needed to know when to intervene but equally important, when to back off or when to say, “I need to learn how you’re doing this.” She described teachers as being naturally reluctant to teach other teachers and she tried to encourage this through her own modeling and by facilitating teachers visiting other teachers’ classrooms on a regular basis.

Martha Horn described Jean as concurrently a learner and a teacher when she would visit Martha’s classroom. She would come into the room and immediately engage with the students.
...she was a participant in what was going on in the room and so she was learning about me by talking with the kids, she was watching and maybe even teaching me in the way that she was interacting with the kids.

Martha saw a real respect in this type of interaction. Jean wasn’t “present in an authoritative way” but rather as a fellow learner, in a community of learners.

Teaching through Modeling

The work Jean did in classrooms such as Martha’s revealed how important modeling was for Jean, whether she was modeling instructional practice, a way of talking with children or a respect and trust of her teachers. She shared a letter from a teacher during her interview who worked with Jean after her years in Atkinson. He sent her the letter after submitting it to NPR’s Storycorps, an organization committed to publishing ‘the important stories from peoples’ lives. This teacher stated “You were my teacher...you helped me understand that each moment was a journey.” Jean said that she appreciated the compliment and acknowledged that teaching is one role that principals can take on, but she cautioned that one can’t just go into a classroom and tell a teacher what to do. Instead, “you go in and kind of watch and model because I think modeling is one of the strongest things you can do as a teacher.” Jean clearly did acknowledge her role as a teacher but she also understood the complexities associated with that role, the need for subtlety, respect, demonstration, engagement and motivation. This was never more critical than when the Graves research project came to Atkinson in 1978.

Graves’ Research

Graves approached Jean about his research study toward the end of the 1977-78 school year while she was taking a course with him at UNH. He was interested in
conducting his research in Atkinson and asked if she thought the staff would be willing to participate. Jean talked with her staff and then invited him to the Academy in the spring of 1978 to discuss the project. As she recalls

> There were teachers who just didn’t buy into this and avoided it completely but most of the staff, even if they weren’t part of the study group themselves...listened and tried to learn and use some of the things that Don was proposing.

The research team observed in a number of Atkinson classrooms to choose research sites for the following year. They chose Mary Ellen Giacobbe’s classroom as their first grade site and Pat Howard’s as one of their third grade sites (the other third grade teacher was not available to be interviewed for this study). They also observed in Lyn Kutzelman’s readiness class that year. The following year, they continued to observe in Mary Ellen’s first grade but followed the children to John Gaydos’ and Judy Egan’s second grades and Carolyn Currier’s fourth grade. Jean helped Graves choose the classrooms in which to be based. She recommended teachers who “would listen and [be open to] change,” stating that “sometimes you’re ready for change and sometimes you’re not.” The children to be observed by Graves and his colleagues were chosen by how they might be characterized as learners. Jean described the groups of students who were being followed as “students having a hard time learning, students who were somewhere in the middle or students who were excelling” (one to two students from each ability level were chosen per class).

Jean stressed that Graves did not intentionally create conditions for teacher change when he came to Atkinson. He was available if people were interested in talking with him but he didn’t intend to impact the teaching practices at the Academy. Change in thinking about the writing process of young children and instructional practices arising from this
new thinking evolved from a community of learners working together across many classrooms, not as an expected outcome of the research itself.

Project Write

Project Write was a professional development model developed by Jean that allowed for the dissemination of these new ideas about writing instruction. It began during the summer of 1980, funded by a Title IVc grant and ran for three consecutive summers, ending in 1982. It was based on Jean’s prior experience with a similar model used by the New Hampshire Association of Readiness Teachers (NHART) where teachers came together to study intensively for a few weeks, working during the day and continuing their conversations at night since they were all housed together. The Project Write model had similarities to the current New Hampshire Literacy Institutes which was originally established in 1982 by Tom Newkirk and the English Department at the University of New Hampshire and has been offered every summer since then.

Three teachers ran Project Write in Atkinson classrooms during the three summers it was in operation. Jean directed the’ behind the scenes’ organization, including paperwork for applicants, locating instructional space and arranging for food and housing Monday through Friday for each two week period. The mornings were spent with participants writing themselves and conferring with each other. According to Judy Egan, “That was the whole point of Project Write. How can we understand what it’s like to be a child writer if we haven’t gone through the same process ourselves, so we decided to do it.” In the afternoons, participants were exposed to instructional practices developed from the writing process research. Carolyn Currier and Judy were chosen by Jean to conduct Project
Write and another teacher outside of Atkinson worked with them. Judy found this to be a very powerful experience.

It had its own rhythm...every year 20-30 teachers convened in Atkinson, lived there for 2 weeks and wrote...that was one of the strengths of not just Project Write but it was one of the strengths of the Graves model because primarily they were looking at how the child was learning but they also needed to be looking at how the teacher was learning and moving along and what kinds of prompts the teacher gave that actually allowed the child to move to whatever place was the right place for that child [as a writer].

In addition to the summer work, participants were supported throughout the following school year. Jean and Judy made school visits, conferring with and supporting participants in their own classrooms, a model that Judy found particularly effective for providing ongoing support, particularly for those participants in schools where other teachers’ or the principals’ beliefs conflicted with or undermined these new ideas.

Carolyn was pleased to be asked to teach in Project Write. Being one of the older teachers in Atkinson at the time, she believed that being a role model as an experienced teacher who could be flexible and try new things was very important. She shared that Jean’s having faith in her made a great difference in terms of her ability to take on the challenge of teaching in the summer workshop and the writing she did there became the foundation of a lifetime of writing. During her interview, Carolyn proudly shared an autobiography that she wrote when she turned 75 which contained highlights of her life, including her work with Graves and her experience teaching in Project Write. “This meant a lot to me or I never would have put it in here...” and she went on to describe the profound connections she has made between the writing process and her life’s work as a painter. Clearly the experience with Project Write and the encouragement to become writers themselves were pivotal for Carolyn and also for Judy. They had learned about
new instructional practices through their involvement with Graves and his research assistants but the significance of mentoring other teachers and the ability to apply these ideas in their own writing loomed large in their own personal journeys of change.

Once again, the ways in which change took hold for these teachers were somewhat different than for other participants in this study, yet they were all positively influenced by the opportunity to work with a principal who was redefining her own role as school leader. Jean had learned to prioritize the importance of mentoring, collaborating, modeling and motivating her teaching faculty, allowing her to create optimal conditions of support and encouragement. As Jean so aptly observed, change requires not only the willingness and inclination to take risks but also the conditions of trust and respect provided by school leadership. In addition, teachers need to be at a point in their professional and personal lives to embrace change and they need the opportunity to learn from and work collaboratively with others.

We definitely took risks. You have to be willing to take risks to have researchers in your school, number one, and the teachers certainly had to take a risk to try new things and that's another thing about change. You have to be willing to take a risk if you're going to change as a teacher, if you're going to take on something new and untried to you. That's a certain type of personality and point in your life, isn't it?

The next two case studies delineate how different this process of change can be despite a willingness and ability to make change.
CASE STUDY # 2: MARY ELLEN GIACOBBE (1st grade teacher)

Developing Mentor/Apprenticeship Relationships: Finding a Scaffold for Adult Learning

The roles of mentor and apprentice were found to be dynamic relationships in Atkinson. The teachers in this study were encouraged by their principal to work collaboratively and learn from their peers. She also created opportunities for particular teachers to become mentors within the Academy or beyond, through informal arrangements or more formally through Project Write, making presentations at national conferences or by submitting articles for publication. This expectation sent the clear message that learning was valued, that taking risks would be supported, and that teacher knowledge needed to be shared. The same teacher might gravitate toward the role as mentor in one situation and toward the role of apprentice in another, depending on the particular circumstance and individual needs. This fluidity of roles extended to the principal herself as a member of the learning community, at times assuming the mentor position and at other times learning from her teachers, their students or from Graves himself. Another participant in this study, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, was chosen for Case Study #2 because she exemplified this ability to take on either the mentor or the apprentice role as she learned about the writing process of young children. The Case Study will begin with a brief section on Mary Ellen’s background prior to her work in Atkinson and will then explore her experiences with mentor-apprentice relationships.

Background

Mary Ellen taught in a number of different Kindergarten settings around New Hampshire prior to being hired by Jean as a first grade teacher. She was particularly influenced by her teaching situation just prior to Atkinson when she was employed as a
long-term substitute for a teacher in Concord. Mary Ellen recalled this experience in great
detail and characterized it as being pivotal in terms of her development as a teacher. She
described going to the school in December to meet the teacher she would be replacing and
to see the classroom prior to starting her substitute teaching position. According to Mary
Ellen, the classroom had an organizational structure Mary Ellen had been striving toward
but hadn't yet been able to develop. It was set up in centers for activity-based learning and
there were many exciting new materials. After the holiday break, Mary Ellen arrived at the
school to discover that the entire classroom and the surrounding hallway had been flooded
from a burst pipe. Many of the materials and furniture had been destroyed. After the initial
shock, Mary Ellen's problem-solving skills quickly surfaced and she created a classroom
environment similar to what she remembered from her December visit, integrated with
many of her own ideas. This ability to build on a prior foundation and to synthesize this
with her own ideas was very important for her own learning. Mary Ellen's claims that this
was a significant learning experience for her, a time of profound change.

Learning from her [the Kindergarten teacher], seeing it, figuring out and saying
'OK' this is what I want for kids. I'm going to do this...I did a lot of things
differently than she did but it was really like that vision, like how that room could
look, what would be there, what kids would be doing. That was really a big time
for me.

This teacher provided Mary Ellen with a view of what was possible and a means to
organize a classroom in order to teach in a certain way. For Mary Ellen, seeing and then
problem-solving on her own was a very important part of the process of change that would
become a continuing pattern throughout her professional life.

She was hired by Jean the following year. Partially because she would be teaching
in a first grade with a principal that she hadn't yet learned to trust, and partially because she
“didn’t have that vision for first grade yet,” she didn’t set up her room in centers that first year. As she learned that Jean trusted her teachers and encouraged them to explore new ideas, Mary Ellen’s instructional practices and classroom environment began to change. From the beginning, she found Jean to be very supportive. When Mary Ellen shared a new idea that she was considering, Jean’s response would consistently be, “Why don’t you try it and how can I help you?” at which point Mary Ellen decided, “OK, I can take some more risks here…” Jean’s encouragement and support of her teachers connected strongly with Mary Ellen’s own views about encouraging and valuing the unique qualities of each of her students.

I’ve always thought that my biggest job as a teacher in some ways is making sure that I’m finding whatever I can find in each child that I can value and make them feel that they are smart and good and I think that that’s the principal’s job, too.

This was critical groundwork to have in place as the Graves project came to Atkinson. Mary Ellen found that though many of the ideas coming out of the Graves work on writing were revolutionary for the times, they were compatible with her beliefs about teaching and learning. A well-developed classroom organizational structure, the expectation that students would have an active role in their learning and an ability to know her students and their needs as learners, all made it possible for Mary Ellen to consider these new ideas about the writing process of young children.

Pivotal Moments Associated with Change

Despite being a risk-taker, being interested in new ideas and having a classroom structure that could support a very different approach to the teaching of writing, this new learning took time. Initially, there were limited discussions about what the researchers were learning in the Atkinson classrooms during the first months of the project. This may
have been due in part to the change of research focus described by Newkirk and Kittle (2013). According to Mary Ellen, the researchers left Atkinson for Thanksgiving break and came back with a very different research direction. Whatever the reason, very little discussion took place until after that time. As mentioned previously, Mary Ellen described a feeling of being totally unaware of what the researchers were thinking until March of that first year!

I knew that they were looking at kids but I didn’t know what they were doing with what they found. I knew he [Graves] was going off and talking about it but I couldn’t figure out what he might be saying.

It wasn’t until she went to a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) conference in March of 1979 with Lucy Calkins that she realized what had been going on in her own classroom, what the researchers had been discovering and writing about. “There was just an energy...everyone was just so thrilled and so excited about all this.” Mary Ellen now understood the important role she and her students were playing in this groundbreaking work. She needed to get away from her classroom in order to see what the rest of the world was discovering about the work being done in Atkinson, New Hampshire. She was also encouraged to start presenting her own workshops around that time because people were clamoring to hear from the teachers as well as the researchers.

In addition to the NCTE conference, Mary Ellen described a number of “Aha” moments for her that occurred earlier that same year. They all involved learning from others who were thinking about the writing process of young children from slightly different perspectives. These mentoring or apprenticeship relationships and opportunities to view the same topic through a different lens seem inextricably linked to Mary Ellen’s learning process. Throughout Mary Ellen’s professional life, she has had the opportunity to
move in and out of the role of mentor or apprentice depending on the situation, and to learn profoundly in either role.

At the suggestion of Susan Sowers, one of the Graves researchers, Mary Ellen read an article by Carol Cholmsky (1974) on the connection between writing (particularly children’s ‘invented spellings’) and reading development. Mary Ellen realized that, like many teachers at the time, “I was making those awful word banks for kids and I was getting awful stuff, so I read the article.” This had a profound impact on her understanding of how children might take charge of their own writing and how this writing might connect with the process of learning to read.

Eager to see this process in action, Mary Ellen visited a teacher, Jeanette Amidon, in Belmont, Massachusetts, who was actively engaged in doing this work with her students. She observed the use of invented spelling in progress and was astounded at the amount of writing the children were doing. They could read what they wrote because they were able to represent the sounds in their words and link these with their own oral language. Ironically when she took these ideas back to her own classroom of first graders along with some sample books the Belmont children had ‘published,’ her own students were somewhat incensed that she thought other first grade writers were doing such amazing things. They proceeded to show her how “sinchy” that way of writing really was. From that point on, her class became prolific first grade writers and her teaching practices began changing dramatically.

The experience in Belmont, Massachusetts, was critical for Mary Ellen because it happened at a time when she herself was reaching out for new ideas. She was frustrated by the work her own students were producing which was limited, in her opinion, by her own
instructional practice. Also, it allowed Mary Ellen once again to observe a process in action (as she did with the Kindergarten teacher in Concord) and then to synthesize it with the work she was already doing to make it her own, being able to see and then do.

Another significant experience for Mary Ellen that first year of the project was being able to talk with Glenda Bissex, a frequent visitor to Atkinson during the Graves project. Bissex was writing her dissertation on early writing at the time which later became an important book, *GNS AT WRK* (Bissex, 1980) in the writing process movement, a case study analyzing the writing development of Bissex's own son. According to Mary Ellen,

> I just always learned so much from her [Bissex] because she saw so much with different eyes than Don. They have the same way of looking, the same belief in kids but she just saw some things differently and I can't tell you what they were but I just knew that...when she left, I always had a lot to think about and consider.

The importance of talk to move her thinking forward was a common theme throughout my interview with Mary Ellen and many other participants. She considered her time with Graves and the other researchers invaluable in this regard. She described how people would often say how lucky she must have felt with Graves doing workshops in Atkinson while he was there. Ironically, there never really were workshops presented at the school during the research project, but having Graves in her classroom for two years was like having “a private workshop all the time.”

**Mentoring and Apprenticeship – Interchangeable Roles**

In preparation for our interview, Mary Ellen was surprised not to find more written reflections and personal journal entries in her collection of artifacts but then she realized that the conversations she had with the researchers, as a valued member of the research team, were what facilitated her own learning.
I had Don, Lucy and Susan to talk to every single day. They came in, in the morning. I could talk to them. I could talk to them at recess time. They would stay for part of the lunch time. I talked to them every single day...at least one of them and most days all three of them. They didn’t give me answers…and I really realized later…I don’t think they [always] knew the answers.

This give and take among members of the broader research team allowed a fluid interchange of roles while maintaining a constant focus of attention on the children and the writing, an unusual opportunity for all members of the learning community. “You were part of the professional development you were experiencing.” The University researchers were not considered to be ‘all knowing’ and the teachers were not considered to be the apprentices during this two year period. This may have been due to the personalities of the researchers themselves and also how they interpreted their roles in the research setting. As Mary Ellen described the experience, they would never model instruction. Instead they would turn questions back for reflection. “Why do you think that happened? What do you think you will do next?” Teachers were encouraged to do their own thinking and take risks with instructional practice that was developing concurrently with the research.

Watching and Listening

When asked where she believes she learned the most from the researchers during the two year-project, Mary Ellen thought she learned the most from reading transcripts, watching the video tapes and most importantly listening to “how they [the researchers] talked to kids.” Once again, that listening and watching… “I learned to confer because I listened to Don.” When asked about the sense of endless time that seems so prevalent throughout the video tapes of Mary Ellen and Graves talking with students about their writing, that waiting for the kids to do the thinking they apparently needed to do on their
own, Mary Ellen responded with such a wonderful sense of honesty and self-deprecating humor.

You'll be so disappointed in my answer. I didn't know what to say...There are times when I just wouldn't know what to say and so I would just wait. And what I learned over time was if I waited, usually something interesting came about or I would then have something to say.

From such a response, one gains a true understanding of what it must have been like to be teaching at a time when ideas about the writing process of young children were changing so dramatically yet the instructional practices associated with these new ideas were forming moment by moment. This required the teachers in Atkinson to teach while concurrently learning, to take risks on a daily basis because so little was already known, and then to demonstrate newly evolving pedagogy when the ink wasn’t even quite dry.

As Mary Ellen has continued to learn and teach after her years in Atkinson, her ideas contain many of the same themes so prevalent in her work of the late 1970s and early 1980s. She now provides professional development workshops in Atkinson and across the country. She and Martha Horn (see Case Study #3) recently completed a 7 year study of Kindergarten teachers and their students in Boston, MA, and compiled their data into a book, *Talking, Drawing and Writing* (2007). After many years of work as a teacher and mentor, she has come to the realization that some people who take her workshops learn about writing, some learn about organization and structure in a classroom and some just learn how to talk to kids and she says she’s OK with that. She understands that the learning continuum is as different for her current “students” as it was for her class of first graders back at the Academy, but her goal remains the same - to meet her students where they are and to help move them along on their journey.
I really help teachers to think about how they want to be with kids and how they want to talk to them...how they want to honor and respect them and all the different ways that they can do that.

CASE STUDY #3: MARTHA HORN (Readiness Teacher)

Developing a Stance of Inquiry: Apprenticeship, Self-directed Learning and the Critical Element of Time

By creating optimal conditions for risk-taking and providing the scaffold of a trusted mentor, a strong school leader and a willing faculty member can work collaboratively to welcome an apprentice into the learning community. The resulting relationship encourages the active engagement of all participants in the process of knowledge acquisition. This dynamic relationship is rarely studied from the perspective of the apprentice, particularly because young children are traditionally seen as occupying this role in research studies. Yet many apprentice relationships were evident among the adults involved with the Atkinson project and for some participants, these relationships proved to be pivotal experiences. Interviews with these individuals offer a rare opportunity to see the process of change as it was actually taking hold for the apprentice. Case Study #3 will focus on one of these participants, Martha Horn, a novice teacher at the time of the Graves project. The case study will begin with a brief discussion of her background information and will be followed by Martha’s perspective of the learning that took place as she worked with Mary Ellen over a series of years during and after the Graves project took place in Atkinson.
Background before Atkinson

Martha began her teaching career in Bartlett, New Hampshire, in 1978, teaching in a first grade classroom after spending all of her pre-service experiences in Kindergarten settings. Martha initially struggled to bring her beliefs about activity-based learning to this new grade level. In October of her first year, the teacher Martha had replaced returned for a visit and saw what Martha was trying to accomplish in her classroom. This teacher told her about a school she should visit, first grade teacher, I think you would like.” She helped Martha arrange to visit the school almost immediately. The school was Atkinson, the principal was Jean and the teacher was Mary Ellen. This serendipitous connection began a lifetime of professional collaboration.

When Martha arrived in Atkinson that October, Mary Ellen was going on a field trip so Martha was only able to see her room very briefly. Remarkably, this experience still made a huge impression on her. “I stood at the door of that room and I thought...this is what I’m trying to do.” Martha spent that day observing in other classrooms but when Mary Ellen’s class returned from their field trip, she was able to spend a bit more time in that important space. For Martha, this was a turning point in her own thinking about classroom environment and organizational structure, the critical elements she needed next in her learning about teaching.

I know that day...I know how that day went so clearly because it was so huge to me, not about writing...I’m probably the one person who went to Atkinson at first not to learn about writing.

What she saw “made so much sense.” She watched the children and talked with Mary Ellen. The classroom structure allowed the children to be independent and it allowed Martha to think of the possibilities for her own classroom. Martha returned to Bartlett the
next day thinking only about structure and organization, “I did the same things in my room...that external stuff.” It’s interesting to note that Martha’s first visit to Mary Ellen was in the fall of 1978 which coincidently was the beginning of the Graves project in Atkinson, he had been in Mary Ellen’s classroom for a month. Despite hearing from Mary Ellen that her students were doing “some nice things in writing,” Martha was only able to take in what she needed to learn at that point in time. That learning didn’t yet involve her own instructional practice or the teaching of writing but Mary Ellen’s classroom environment and organization provided a way in, not only for Martha but also possibly for Graves. Martha reflected on the importance of having a structure not only for children but also for adults.

This would never be the study it was without that room [Mary Ellen’s]. I would never...we would never have learned what we’re learned because of this other thing that is not writing...about the environment...you know we all know about the environment but I’m talking about something that made me be able to learn in my classroom in a way that I never knew how to do.

Apprenticeship – Time for Watching, Listening and Talking

That was the first of many visits Martha made to the Academy during the next two years, culminating in her joining the faculty in the fall of 1980. Martha felt that despite being strongly influenced by what she was learning in Mary Ellen’s classroom, she didn’t really broadly apply this new learning until her second year in Bartlett. Looking back, the time to process this new information and synthesize it with what she believed about teaching and learning was important to Martha. She had the opportunity to find a way to consider new ideas, time to think about them, a chance to try a few new things after each visit and then the next year, she was able to change her classroom environment dramatically.
Mary Ellen provided the model and the talk at a pace that Martha could handle. Mary Ellen was a gifted teacher who had moved into the role of mentor. According to Martha, "she [Mary Ellen] just knew...there was something she must have seen...that I wanted to learn from her." Martha was not only excited about these new ideas but after each visit, she left Atkinson feeling empowered, thinking, "I can do that...I just have to go back to what I know, that sense about kids and what's right for kids." She described herself as 'different' after getting the 'vision' of what her teaching could be, not unlike Mary Ellen's experience of getting the 'vision' from the Kindergarten teacher in Concord. Martha described herself as being more confident in her work after this. These new ideas appeared to fill a need in her instructional practice and they confirmed what she seemed to sense deep down, they aligned with her beliefs.

Becoming a Member of the Community—Developing a Stance of Inquiry

Despite teaching in Bartlett during the two years of the Graves project, Martha felt connected with the research community, not only through her visits with Mary Ellen but also through reading drafts of research articles distributed by the UNH Writing Lab that would later be published in *Language Arts*. "I'd send $10 in an envelope for printing or whatever and these are the ones I have [she has kept all of the original drafts for over three decades]." Martha reflected that she had never seen herself as a good student through her college years and rarely sought out research articles for professional reading prior to this time, but these articles were different.

I remember thinking this is nothing like the research I read as an undergrad and that was huge for me because it was like research articles and reading and love. I knew those kids. I saw them in the classroom. Their real names were used. It was just huge for me as a learner.
Martha remembered writing to the lab asking if they had any other articles and when the next one might be published. She would look forward to each new installment, feeling part of the team, having time to process the new information as the team produced the work.

Martha compared this experience to a model (mentioned previously) created by Parker Palmer in his book, *The Courage to Teach* (1998) called “the community of truth” (p. 111). She felt welcomed into this community as an equal member, along with the teachers, principal, researchers and students at the Academy. During the Graves project the “subject,” the writing process of young children, was placed at the center of the communal circle at all times and was known through its relationship with the members of the community. There were no experts in this community and it was “far from linear and static and hierarchical; it [was] circular, interactive, and dynamic” (p. 103). All members of the research community were engaged in watching the students and each other, listening to the language of interactions, reflecting on what was being seen and heard and discussing ideas as they evolved. Inquiry was built into the school culture for these participants and for many, it became inextricably linked to their instructional practice from that point forward.

**Learning through Talk**

Martha felt strongly that talk was a critically important part of the learning process for her during those early years and for others at the Academy. She remembers watching a presentation Mary Ellen gave at a workshop through the NHART in April of 1979 and how “the talk just flowed from her, she was seeing...” She talked about what the kids were doing in her class and her own learning that was going on concurrently.
Look at what Mary Ellen did. She spent two years with [Graves], talking it through...what she was learning...and by March she was understanding...and the next year she went out and talked with other people which continued the learning.

Seeing Mary Ellen being able to “talk in the process of her learning” to Graves, to Martha, to other teachers, to the children she was teaching, had such a profound effect on Martha’s own thinking that it became the focus of her dissertation almost two decades later, *Portraits of Three Elementary School Teachers Reflecting on Their Early Years of Writing Instruction: A Longitudinal Study* (1999).

During her early visits to Atkinson, Martha gradually synthesized this new learning about classroom organization and structure, creating environments for kids to be responsible, independent and self-directed learners. Gradually she was able to notice and understand other aspects of teaching from watching and talking with Mary Ellen.

She [Mary Ellen] paid close attention to the child and to the work, engaging not in a way that was for the benefit of the adult audience watching but truly engaging in a way that involved learning, she really wanted to find out [about her student]. She was really engaging writer to writer as well as teacher to teacher and learner to learner.

Mary Ellen was teaching Martha to be a researcher, to take children seriously, to really listen, and to look at student work in order to determine where to go next with her instruction. She modeled how to observe students and how to gather authentic assessment information about the serious work that was going on in her classroom on a daily basis.

When Martha joined the Atkinson faculty in September of 1980, she was not only interested in being a part of the exciting work going on in Atkinson but she was eager to have the opportunity to join a school community with Jean Robbins at the helm.

She believed in children and she trusted children and she honored children’s thinking. She honored the intellect of children and she trusted teachers in the same way that they were able to trust children.
As with other members of her teaching faculty, Jean encouraged Martha to take the risks she needed to take in order to grow as a teacher, trusting her professional aspirations, providing support when needed and facilitating collaborative relationships within the Atkinson school community.

**After Atkinson—Mentoring and Learning Continue**

Martha left Atkinson in 1983 and moved to New York City in 1984. She worked with Lucy Calkins, one of Graves’ original research assistants, at Columbia University’s Teachers College in their fledgling Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP). Martha stayed at TCRWP for a number of years, mentoring other teachers in the teaching of writing. She got her Masters at Teachers College, a Ph.D. at Harvard and is currently an Associate Professor of Elementary Education at Rhode Island College. As she mentors a new generation of teachers, she continues to think a great deal about the power of talk, the importance of having an organizational structure, the need for creating a beautiful learning environment and the necessity of having time for the learning process to take place. She sees many parallels today with the experience she had so many years ago in the hills of New Hampshire. “It’s funny. I feel like I keep doing this work...I’m working with this same place...it’s like I’m going to keep doing this work because it matters. I’m thinking Mary Ellen has stayed with it, too, keeping the child as the focus.”

Throughout her professional life, Martha’s journey as a learner has stayed tethered to her experiences in Atkinson. She describes this era as a “Camelot time,” one that was at the very “core of how you live out your professional life.” The process of change was gradual for Martha, at a pace she could handle, supported by the guidance of gifted mentors within a community of “knowers.” She was encouraged to take risks and try new ideas as
she was able to take them on. Through observing, talking and listening, change clearly took hold. Martha learned and maintained new instructional practices in the teaching of writing embedded in a classroom environment and structure that worked for her and for her students.

I have a picture of myself as the kid outside the window looking in...because I didn't have years of teaching behind me to know what they were doing, to do what they were doing, and yet I entered in. I was invited to come along and so therefore witnessed the figuring out. Those conversations in Mary Ellen’s room with Don...Seeing that kind of learning, adults learning in the classroom together, right in the beginning...there was something important about the not knowing and getting those articles. I was watching...I was part of the whole, article by article. They have been at it longer than I have and they are giving me what they’re finding. Then I can turn around and do it and I can say “Yes, I’m with you. I’m coming.”

THEMATIC SUMMARY

Social Interactions Associated with the Process of Change

Despite their many similarities, the teachers who participated in this study represent a diverse group of learners with individual needs and challenges. Through the support of a school leader dedicated to providing optimal learning conditions for adults as well as children, participation in dynamic and interchangeable mentor/apprentice relationships and a community focus on inquiry, change took hold for many of the participants. There were “different paths to common outcomes” (Clay, 2005), with the pace of learning, the degree of change and the process itself determined by individual needs.

Many of the participants could have been used for case studies to demonstrate emerging themes and the importance of social interactions around the process of change. Yet, the individuals highlighted in the three Case Studies were chosen because their stories connected personally as well as professionally and their roles as leader, mentor and
apprentice were not entirely fixed. They moved flexibly between these roles depending on the circumstances, the needs of others and their own learning needs.

The dynamic interplay between roles and the bi-directional learning that took place during social interactions was common for these participants. In addition, they each had the unusual ability to think deeply about their past and a willingness to share this thinking with others. This capability allowed me to enter the world of Atkinson, New Hampshire, in the late 1970s through their shared perceptions and to travel along as they recreated their lived experiences.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine how change took hold for individual teachers in a school community during the two-year time frame when a team of researchers were studying the writing process of young children within many of their classrooms. It was also designed to investigate the development of instructional practices arising from this embedded research and to explore the factors that potentially supported their adoption and sustainability over time.

This chapter will revisit the major themes, discuss their relevance and implications for current practice, investigate potential weaknesses of this study and explore future research. I will begin by revisiting the primary and secondary research questions, examining significant factors that were found to facilitate change and to impact the sustainability of teaching practices over time. This will be followed by a focus on policy implications regarding adult learning and professional development within school communities and ramifications for school leadership. Finally, the chapter will conclude with limitations of this study and recommendations for future research. For clarity, it will be divided into the following sections:

1. Research findings and their relevance to current practice
2. Implications for professional development within a school community
3. Limitations of this study
4. Recommendations for future research
5. Conclusion
Research Findings and their Relevance to Current Practice

The individual stories of the participants themselves represent the very foundation of this study and contribute in a profound way to a change in my own thinking about current practice. Through their experiences, it was discovered that change could not be mandated, nor was it guaranteed by providing what might be considered optimal learning conditions for individuals who possessed the interest, willingness and capability to acquire new ways of teaching. From the participants in this study, I learned that there wasn’t a single catalyst for change. Instead, there was a series of sparks, pivotal experiences and interpersonal supports represented by the major themes of this study which propelled and sustained individual learning over time. At the very core of this process was collaboration with a strong school leader and an inspirational team of researchers. These themes and catalysts will now be explored in relation to current practice.

Developing a Stance of Inquiry: Teachers as Researchers and the Development of Collective Efficacy

The researchers and school principal opened the door to this opportunity but the teachers gradually became significant members of the inquiry itself as they brought to the discussion their own ideas about instructional practice. According to Newkirk and Kittle (2013), “With major contributions from the classroom teachers, they [the researchers] evolved a practice, a demonstrably effective way of teaching...[which was] the most significant contribution of the study” (p. 8). The researchers and the school leader introduced this teaching faculty to the possibility of learning a new way of looking at student writing development but when the teachers joined this inquiry, their essential contributions provided the “lasting legacy of the study” (p. 8).
This involvement would not have been possible without the encouragement of the research team. Mary Ellen shared her thoughts at the time,

I never would have done what I did if they hadn’t been there. They were looking at writing and I felt as though I had to pay attention to writing...that’s what they wanted to see, so I needed to figure out what to do.

Teachers were welcomed into the investigation, observing the writers and the writing, listening to researchers confer with their students, talking with researchers and each other about their students and their own pedagogy, forming mentor-apprentice relationships both within and beyond the Academy and becoming writers themselves. Teachers brought to this community their own beliefs about learning and varying levels of confidence in themselves as risk-takers but they were provided with opportunities to talk about their ideas, a safe environment in which to take risks and time to learn.

Being members of a larger community allowed a sense of collective efficacy to develop. This cohort of teachers and researchers were committed to learning together and taking risks with their instructional practice. As a collaborative community, they may also have benefited from increased motivation and perseverance despite the challenging conditions of being continually videotaped and observed, not only by researchers but also by a constant stream of visitors from all over the country. According to Mary Ellen,

I did not know who any of these people were. I had not a clue who Frank Smith was when he came to my room. I had not a clue who the Goodmans were. Then all these teachers came and so the teachers would come and they’d either question you to death when you were trying to work with kids or they’d stand in the corner and look all so critical.

This was not an easy task for even the most confident of teachers yet they persevered and rose to the challenge together!
As members of this literacy world outside Atkinson learned of their work, teachers were asked to present at conferences and consult with school districts interested in the teaching practices they were developing. They were also frequently encouraged to write articles about their experiences. This writing was published in national journals such as the NCTE journal *Language Arts* and included in books written by Graves and many others at the time. These invitations confirmed their importance as members of the research team and helped sustain the instructional practices they were developing through these collaborative efforts.

Graves established an effective standard for embedded research in the Atkinson project. He valued teacher input and problem-solving as his ideas about the writing process of young children developed yet he was never directive and always respectful of teachers as well as students. According to John Gaydos,

> Don's way of teaching was always searching to make you introspective. He'd always turn it around on you first and ask you what you thought and that was literally what the basis of the writing process was all about... There was Don Graves the person and Don Graves the researcher... he wouldn't break the researcher mold for anything. You'd plead with him, "Tell me what I can do to fix this.." [but] he'd seldom give a definitive answer to a question.

The unique qualities Graves brought to his research had an influence not only the evolution of the project in Atkinson, but created a model for collaboration between researchers and teachers in the field.

The question might be raised as to how common it is nowadays for researchers to devote the time and money to develop and implement such a model in today's schools. With the public clamoring for the latest quick fix to perceived problems in our nation's schools, would extended time spent observing and talking with students and teachers seem ill spent? I would suggest that until teachers are welcomed into this community once again
and researchers are encouraged to embed themselves in the world that they study, the role of the teacher will continue to be devalued and research solutions may be unrealistic and short-lived. Jean Robbins certainly understood the value of welcoming all parties to the table to talk no matter what the issue. “I always felt that it was very important to have a round table to sit at...there was a real conversation, not a lecture and not questions from an audience that was not even facing each other.” Real conversations about real issues producing viable solutions, an optimal goal for any research venture.

Developing a Stance of Inquiry: Teachers as Learners

As educators, we spend a great deal of time considering the learning needs of our students and attempting to create ideal conditions for this important work to take place. What background knowledge do our students bring to the learning process? Are they engaged and motivated to learn? Do they feel supported so that a fear of failure or uncertainty about the unknown does not inhibit a willingness to try? Do we pace our instruction in such a way that they are not rushed and have time to make connections? Has there been a gradual release of responsibility (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) from teacher to learner, with appropriate time for modeling, guided practice and collaborative experiences before they are asked to work independently and generalize learning in new situations? These questions are posed on a daily basis in many K-12 classrooms nationwide, yet when adults are given opportunities to learn and change, it is doubtful that these questions come to mind. The data presented in this research study provide evidence that at one point in time, more than thirty years ago in Atkinson, NH, one small community of learners had needs not unlike the students they taught. Through the support of an unusually gifted leader (the principal), the guidance and mentoring of a dedicated community of learners,
the opportunity for talk and the gift of time, change took hold and was sustained for many years. Though the experience chronicled in this research study could never again be replicated, this does not diminish its potential to inform much of the work we do today.

I propose that professional development experiences need to be redesigned to reflect our knowledge of adult learners and their individualized needs if the process of growth and change is to be facilitated for all. Thousands and thousands of dollars are spent each year in school districts across the country to bring in experts on topics such as Response to Intervention, Differentiated Instruction, Data Collection, Curriculum Mapping, the Common Core or Increasing Technology in the Classroom. Taken individually these topics are clearly important and the information presented is often critical for school faculty members to learn, yet the pace at which new initiatives flourish within the educational world and the stress associated with trying to keep up while falling continually farther behind should give one pause. Does the “initiative of the year” mindset and the subsequent abandonment of practices already in place really foster sustainable practice and learning over time? As an elementary literacy specialist and a doctoral student, I have one foot in the world of public education and one foot in the research community. From this dual perspective, I suggest the need for balance and a long-term view of professional development. There exist concurrent needs for understanding broad topics such as developing a school-wide RTI model to support struggling learners or implementing the state-mandated Common Core Standards, while also acknowledging that teachers can and should have their own ideas, professional interests and learning needs. As Jean so wisely explained, there is a need for balance and trust.

The basics have to stay there. The beliefs. And it’s that trust once again. You have to have that basic trust that this is the way to do it but the methodologies can
change and the fringes can change but the basic trust has to be there, the trust of
the teacher.

This unusually intuitive principal understood this need more than thirty years ago but the
topic remains just as relevant today. Professional development approaches must consider
the needs of individuals as well as the organization as a whole and in so doing, the children
will be the ultimate beneficiaries.

Teaching Partnerships and Collaborative Learning

The results of this inquiry point to the significance of creating opportunities for
mentor-apprentice relationships within school communities that allow for participants to
learn from watching, listening and reflective talk. As with any partnership, the social
interactions themselves become the medium for learning. For some this might be
formalized coaching relationships such as Professional Learning Communities (DuFour,
DuFour, Eaker & Many, 2006) but for others this may be having the time and opportunity
to visit colleagues regularly and to talk informally about instructional practice. The type of
scaffolding may depend on the particular questions being asked, the time available and the
individuals involved but the establishment of such relationships frequently requires the
intervention of a school leader who knows the professional and personal learning needs of
individual teachers and ensures that time will be available for this process to take place.

It is important to note that these types of relationships are not easy to establish or
maintain but the outcome was certainly worth the effort in Atkinson. At the time,
interactions varied from observing classroom organization and structure to instructing other
teachers in Project Write, from watching a principal or researcher interact with their
students in presenting workshops across the country. Each experience met the particular
needs of the participants involved and maintained a learning momentum that was essential
over time. It is interesting to note the necessity of reflective talk associated with many of these apprenticeship-mentor relationships. Observation rarely took place in a vacuum. Collaborative talk flourished when Martha visited Mary Ellen’s classroom, when Graves and Mary Ellen conferred after a long day of teaching or when Jean spent time in a teacher’s classroom. Conversations were rarely characterized as direct transmissions of information (e.g., “This is the way you should teach”) or unequivocal answers to questions (e.g., “I know the answer and here it is”). Instead they were described as thoughtful reflections between learners about what was observed and why, how instruction might be changed, and if so, what might the impact be on student learning.

As stated previously, the experience of one participant, Lyn, was quite different, demonstrating the negative impact of working without the opportunity for discussion, outside the community of learners. Lyn had the readiness classroom at the Academy. She described being videotaped and detailed her concerns regarding the extreme learning needs of some of her students but there was little mention of working directly with any researchers or having the opportunity to discuss the project with anyone. Graves was rarely in her classroom and the other research assistants maintained a very low profile.

“It was all the time that they had video going. They were just taking raw footage. I never saw any of it... All I remember thinking was that I wish they weren’t there today. It just isn’t a good day for that child.” This teacher left the Academy shortly after the project ended and went on to establish a flourishing private school in a nearby town, yet her discussion of the writing curriculum she established at this new school bears little resemblance to the workshop model that developed out of the Graves project. In fact, she shared that “I can’t say I knew what the principles of the writing process were. I just used my own ideas and what I was doing.” This was clearly a teacher who, for whatever reason, didn’t have the opportunity
or didn’t take advantage of the opportunity to be an active participant in the learning process associated with the Graves project. It’s difficult to know what factors undermined her engagement or whether a conflict of epistemology or self-efficacy were at play but whatever the cause, it was apparent that change, in terms of writing process pedagogy, did not take hold.

School Leadership and Sustainability of Instructional Practice

My secondary research question addressed the issue of sustainability of instructional practice or the ability of the Atkinson community to continue using the pedagogy developed from the collaboration between Graves and the teachers participating in his project. Clearly the significant factors mentioned thus far-active membership in a community of learners and having multiple opportunities for ongoing mentor-apprentice experiences-were particularly influential in teachers’ ability to maintain instructional practices over time. But the role of a strong leader at the helm cannot be underestimated. Every single participant credited the respect, fairness, trust, kindness, expectations, support and/or mentoring provided by Jean Robbins for their own personal ability to take on change.

Jean left Atkinson in 1982, after eight years. Though she never shared her reasons for moving on, one teacher interviewed for this study suggested she left because of issues around teacher evaluation. “She left when merit pay came in. She took a stand. That was a big loss to the Academy.” This same teacher, Elaine Malesky stayed on at the Academy for quite a few years and she felt that instructional practices associated with the Graves project were sustained in many classrooms due to an enthusiasm among the teachers themselves since administrative support was less available. Elaine also noted that Mary
Ellen continued to do workshops in the district which was extremely important to those still teaching in Atkinson. “Mary Ellen stayed with us. She’s still with us. She’s still enthusiastic in doing new things and still sharing with her workshops.” In this capacity, Mary Ellen’s mentor role has extended to teachers who weren’t in Atkinson at the time of the Graves project, extending the writing process ideas to new generations of teachers.

Since retiring, Elaine has been back at the Academy as a substitute teacher and is distraught about the current situation there. A core reading program has been adopted by the district and she observed that, “You have to teach ‘whatever’ at the same time in the whole district, that’s four elementary schools...they have a little bit of time, maybe a half hour for writing and that’s just not enough.” Quite a few of the original cohort of teachers either left Atkinson around the time that Jean left or they moved to different grade levels. Pat Howard shared that when Jean left, things were not the same in Atkinson. “She left and I left a couple of years later...she had such an influence on everybody. She just was a special person and it’s too bad that when she left it just wasn’t the same.” For some teachers that leadership role was critical, and for others alternative support models helped them sustain until higher level administrative decision-making undermined their work by robbing them of the element of time.

**Looking to the Past to Inform the Future**

Throughout this study, I have asked myself if it is constructive to compare the experiences in Atkinson, New Hampshire, to the world of education more than three decades later. Certainly curricular demands and technological innovations have placed challenges on today’s classroom teachers and principals that couldn’t possibly be conceived of in the late 1970s. Yet I would suggest that the need for strong leadership and
an understanding of adult learners is more important today than ever before. These are the lessons we can learn from Atkinson.

The qualities of leadership that Jean demonstrated in her tenure at the Academy are very similar to those proposed by Michael Fullan in his book, Leading in a Culture of Change (2001). Fullan states that today’s leaders face the challenge of trying to “cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex, rapid change” (p. xi). He proposes a framework for leadership with the following components: moral purpose or “acting with the intention of making a positive difference;” understanding change and the challenges presented by the complexity of the process itself; relationship building- “fostering purposeful interaction and problem solving” while being “wary of easy consensus;” knowledge creation and sharing—acknowledging the social process of sharing knowledge and its connection with the previous three themes; and coherence making-detecting “valuable patterns worth retaining” (p. 4-7). He goes on to describe a group of personal characteristics necessary for effective leaders that he calls the “energy-enthusiasm-hopefulness constellation” (p. 7) which functions in a reciprocal nature with the previous components, providing a means of “checks and balances.” Fullan’s research has focused on leadership and change associated with broad school reform movements around the globe yet his concept of leadership might seem quite familiar to those immersed in the world of Atkinson Academy in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Today’s administrators might do well to spend some time learning from someone like Jean, a truly remarkable leader.

Barth (2001) has written about the establishment of a “community of leaders” within a school rather than reliance on a single authority figure for leadership. This notion is further developed in the work of Gordon Donaldson. In his book Cultivating Leadership
in Schools (2006) he proposes the concept of informal teacher leaders vs. formally appointed teacher leaders to help establish essential relationships within a large school community. These informal leaders "naturally emerge among their colleagues as trusted and respected catalysts" (p. 80) and are able to support peers through the establishment of strong collegial bonds without the negative association of being members of the administrative team. This model has similarities to the apprenticeship-mentor relationships established informally in Atkinson and Elaine's recollection that the writing process approach to instructional practice was sustained over time, not because of administrative support but because the teachers themselves believed in it and they saw the positive results in their students every day.

I find it troubling that Donaldson's ideas about informal leadership seem to arise from a concern that "formal" leaders within schools are negatively associated with teacher evaluation and are no longer seen as learners, collaborators or mentors within their own schools. National concerns over student achievement in this country have led many to the simplistic conclusion that teachers and defective instructional practice have created this situation. The reaction in many districts across the country has been to dramatically increase standardized testing in an effort to monitor student achievement more closely and to use these results to measure teacher effectiveness. This misguided effort has resulted in an abundance of data (often requiring increased computer resources and personnel to manage the results), significantly less time for instruction, and the dangerous potential for developing a myopic view of teaching and learning, relying on narrow measures of student achievement to evaluate the complex work going on in classrooms every day. At a point when it is even more critical than ever to work collaboratively in response to the challenges
facing today’s educators, the relationship between administrators and teachers has become
adversarial in many school communities, requiring “informal leaders” to fill the void.

The principal in Atkinson redefined her role to facilitate change. Jean knew and
respected her teachers. She learned how to motivate them, how to teach them and how to
challenge them. She provided opportunities for growth and support for taking risks. Jean
was seen as a risk-taker and learner herself, expecting from her teachers what she expected
from herself.

Implications for Professional Development within a School Community

Studying the lived experience of participants who taught during the Graves research
project in Atkinson has informed my own thinking regarding implications for professional
development approaches. I return to social-cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986, and Schunk,
1989) and guided apprenticeship (Vygotsky, 1978, and Rogoff, 1990), when considering
the critical elements and processes for developing an effective approach to professional
development. The reciprocal relationship between personal factors, environmental factors
and behavior in social cognitive theory when aligned with a focus on the social interactions
embedded in guided apprenticeship have powerful implications for designing professional
development opportunities that build on the synergy of these processes.

The strategic design of such a plan would be broadly focused on exploring self-beliefs and habitual ways of thinking (personal factors), instructional skills and teaching
decisions/actions (behavior) and support structures involving social scaffolding
(environmental factors). The approach would specifically include: developing a common
knowledge base for instructional practice; providing opportunities for personal inquiry
projects, reflective practice, mentor-apprenticeship relationships and collaboration between
members of the school community; and leadership focused on optimal scheduling, creating
time for collaboration/inquiry, and empowerment of the teaching staff. These three broad
components will now be discussed extensively in relation to my own study and tied to a
solid base of research.

Developing a common knowledge base for instructional practice

The unique opportunity to hire the majority of her teachers allowed Jean to develop
a teaching faculty with very similar beliefs about instructional practice and student
learning. Since this situation is rarely replicated in most educational venues, the first
challenge is to create opportunities to regularly discuss teaching practices and beliefs. The
research of Lipson, et al. (2000) suggests that in their study of writing instruction, there
appeared to be a need for a common foundation of instructional practice so that critical
elements of the writing process approach were not "lost in translation." It was reported that
many teachers stated that they valued the writing process and a workshop approach yet
their instructional practice varied considerably. Without ongoing professional development
focusing on modeling, discussing and reflecting, sustainability of practice or the adoption
of new ideas can be undermined by a tendency to institute only superficial changes
(Elmore, et al., 1996), to hybridize the initiative beyond recognition or to just close the
classroom door and maintain the status quo (Tyack & Cuban, 1995).

As stated earlier in this discussion, it is my opinion that any successful professional
development plan, whether focused on sustainability of practice or change, should be built
on a "gradual release of responsibility" model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983), originally
designed to support the teaching of reading comprehension strategies. This would involve
the following: modeling of instruction; peer teaming to practice instruction together;
guided practice with a coach, mentor or collaborative partner providing feedback and
debriefing opportunities; independent practice with a chance to explore questions or
concerns; and generative discussion of how these practices might apply in new situations.
This focus on instructional practice would continue over a long period of time and would
be adapted to the needs of individual teachers. As in Vygotsky’s (1978) study of learning
in young children and Rogoff’s (1990) model of guided apprenticeship, I would suggest
that work with teachers must include coaching and peer support within each teacher’s zone
of proximal development.

At the center of the Graves project was the writing process of young children.
Teachers and researchers learned from this focus on individual student writers and as
instructional practices evolved, their impact was studied in terms of how student writing
and writers developed. I would propose that professional development plans could benefit
from creating opportunities for teachers to pursue personal inquiry projects, particularly
those with a focus on their own work with individual students. In a study of literacy
teachers engaged in a long-term tutoring project, Stephens, Boldt, Clark, Gaffney, Shelton,
Story and Weinzierl (2000) found that “substantive change occurred...because they [the
teachers] experimented with new ideas and practices and because they focused on the skills
and strategies of individual students” (p. 532).

The research of Broaddus and Bloodgood (1999) found similar results in their study
of change in instructional practice and philosophy. When classroom teachers were able to
participate in their school’s intervention program for struggling readers and reflect on these
experiences over time, they described the acquisition of powerful new knowledge about the
learning process and reported high levels of self-efficacy when they could directly observe
the results of their teaching. A professional development approach which prioritizes personal inquiry projects focused on the learning of individual students would require flexible scheduling, collaborative support and strong leadership but the benefits to individual adult learners and the school community as a whole, might outweigh the challenges, as it did in Atkinson, New Hampshire.

Reflective practice and collaboration between members of the school community

Clearly time for reflective talk and the development of mentor-apprentice relationships facilitated the learning process of Atkinson teachers. Yet, the current frenetic pace of daily life in a school community offers little time for reflection or collaboration. As mentioned previously, some schools are opting for more structured models such as Professional Learning Communities (Dufour, et al., 2006) which follow specific protocols and required structures for talk. My proposal is framed more flexibly since I believe that reflective practice and collaboration may look different depending on the needs of the community, individual involved, or the ideas being introduced.

As referenced earlier, Magolda (2001) cautions that there are no “quick fixes” in the development of effective collaboration, particularly since he has observed that teachers frequently talk about the value of collaboration “yet they act as segregationists in the classroom” (p. 348). He goes on to suggest that teachers prefer to work with like-minded people. They are rarely prepared for the discomfort they experience when presented with conflicting opinions, and are required to “move beyond their borders or outside their comfort zones” (p. 353) yet it can be these very experiences that facilitate rich dialogue, self-reflection, learning and change. Such opportunities, when embedded in a professional development approach, must be strategically focused and carefully facilitated to minimize
conflict and resistant behaviors. Though these practices have the potential to become “habits of mind,” it has been my experience that group discussions are easily derailed without thoughtful planning. I would propose regular, guided discussions about instructional practice over the course of the professional development plan.

Collaborative teaming in the learning of instructional practices, mentioned above, may benefit from the addition of a coaching model. Woodside-Jiron and Gehsmann (2009) studied school reform over a six year period in a high poverty, urban school district. In addition to the critical elements of “creating context-based solutions” and developing “curricular coherence,” one of the most essential components to successful reform was providing “consistent, responsive coaching” (p. 66). Coaching roles can be filled by reading specialists who are already members of the teaching faculty or they can be outside consultants hired for the purpose. The coaching role allows for more individualized learning support within the gradual release of responsibility model mentioned above.

Leadership

Leadership within an educational community can take many forms. Traditionally, the principal is considered to be the leader, yet larger schools often develop a layered leadership model similar to that described by Donaldson (2006) and Barth (2001) involving formal leaders (assistant principals or department heads) or informal leaders (teachers willing and able to take on leadership roles) who function in this capacity for smaller groups of staff. Since my research study has focused on a small elementary school community, this discussion and professional development plan will assume a single principal model. The principal’s role is critical in terms of decision-making regarding many of the professional development components previously mentioned: scheduling flexibility,
providing time for reflective practice, prioritizing on-going collaboration during and after professional development work, encouraging inquiry projects for individual learning and valuing teacher participation in the decision-making process.

Teacher empowerment, through shared decision-making and involvement in the design of school and individual professional development plans, has the potential for creating self- and collective-efficacy around the introduction and sustaining of new initiatives. Yet, it is important to acknowledge that the processes associated with empowerment may not directly lead to collaboration, particularly if individual and collective goals conflict. In their study of 24 schools involved with restructuring and reform, Marks and Louis (1997) found that "empowerment appears to be an important but not sufficient condition of obtaining real changes in teachers’ ways of working and their instructional practice" (p. 245). They also discovered that shared decision-making in some schools privileged a small group over a disempowered majority. This is important to keep in mind when encouraging teacher involvement in the development of school-wide professional development. Broad and flexible representation appears critical to the success of such a venture.

In conclusion, the professional development approach that I propose would contain all of the elements described above: developing a common knowledge of instructional practice, embedding reflective practice and collaboration within every component of the plan and ensuring that the principal and members of the teaching faculty are directly involved in leadership decisions that support implementation and empowerment. In this process, it is important to be mindful that:
School reform is not simply about systems, materials, and accountability measures; it is a broader, more complicated process that involves both the will and skill of its actors. (Woodside-Jiron & Gehsmann, 2009, p. 66-67)

**Limitations of this Study**

What actually took place more than 30 years ago mattered, but the primary factor that may have limited this study was the passage of time and the inability to interview all members of the project cohort as well as other teachers working at Atkinson Academy at the time. It was reassuring to find memories of this time in participants’ professional lives to be remarkably clear. I began this study assuming that triangulation of interview data was critical in order to verify individual participant reports, but I was surprised to learn that what people remembered as significant and the stories they chose to tell about this era revealed more about the value of particular experiences and their personal journeys of change than a strict retelling of events and dates ever could. Consistency of descriptions, level of detail, examples provided and artifacts shared during each interview suggest accuracy of perceptions, yet I will never know unequivocally if they reflect each person’s experience at the time.

It appeared that what participants remembered had a strong connection to what they felt was important. This viewpoint is once again potentially limited by the passage of time. Current ideas are inextricably linked to all that these participants have experienced and learned since that time: about themselves as teachers of writing, about their understanding of the importance of Graves’ work in Atkinson, about the work that Graves continued to do following his groundbreaking research in Atkinson and their ideas about what is currently happening in the world of education. As Mary Ellen stated when she attended the NCTE conference and realized how excited the literacy world was about the work being done in
the classrooms of Atkinson, “It’s just what I do.” Sometimes one needs to get away to be
able to see with clarity. Since it would be impossible to undo the influence of the
intervening thirty years for these participants or for anyone being asked to reflect on
previous experiences, the passage of time may present limitations, though it also may allow
a more objective view of what transpired.

I was initially concerned about the impact of Graves himself and whether people
could reflect objectively. Would viewpoints be romanticized by the opportunity to
participate in this groundbreaking research project? What I found was that the image of
Graves did loom large in peoples’ memories and their personal involvement in the study
had a strong impact on self-efficacy. People were proud of the work they were able to do.
As my own research progressed, the results were less about the Graves project and more
about the individual experiences people had peripherally to the project itself. Change took
hold for people who worked directly with Graves but also for people who barely interacted
with him at all. For each person, the change agent could be quite different and the learning
process quite individual.

A final limitation might be the uniqueness of the setting itself. Teachers were hired
by the principal following the Timberlane strike, resulting in a staff characterized by
alignment of epistemology and high levels of self-efficacy. There developed a collective
efficacy among the teachers chosen to participate in the Graves project and the group as a
whole had a preference for change. It seems unlikely to find these characteristics in such
proportion anywhere else.

**Future Research**

A Comparison of Subsequent Research Sites with the Atkinson Experience
Expanding this project to include the study of teacher change at schools where Graves conducted research after his work in Atkinson could allow an extended study of teacher change while keeping the historical context and embedded research models similar. One might explore whether teachers were as open to change, possessed similar levels of self-efficacy or were as homogeneous in terms of epistemology in schools that had not been through such a radical staffing change, had not been the first research site, and had already developed an awareness of Graves' work.

Pivotal Experiences that Indicate Change

The results of this research study indicate that there were often pivotal experiences that participants acknowledged when considering their own process of change. It would be interesting to study when such experiences occur and how individual teachers identify them as being important. Does this awareness happen at the moment of occurrence or upon reflection? Are they dependent on a need for change based on a level of dissonance around instructional practice, exposure to new ideas or is their occurrence merely serendipitous? I am interested to know whether there were necessary conditions or leadership qualities that could facilitate such experiences.

Mentor-Apprenticeship Relationships

The opportunity to mentor or be mentored was important for many of the participants in this study, whether these relationships were short-term or extended, over a period of years. The experiences themselves were dynamic and flexible, apparently varying according to the needs of the participants. One group of teachers worked with a
research assistant who assumed a directive role around classroom practice; another group learned primarily through inquiry (observing their students and talking reflectively with others); and another shifting group functioned at times as mentors and at other times as apprentices. Studying mentor-apprentice relationships in current schools, whether formally or informally established, would be an important next step for future research. The question might be posed as whether these different interpretations of the mentor-apprentice role arise and fluctuate in response to the needs of the individuals involved or are imposed externally by school leadership, professional development approach, or by the constraints of time. A comparison of mentor-apprentice relationships and more formalized Professional Learning Communities would be informative, as well.

**Inquiry as a Form of Assessment**

Establishing a stance of inquiry (the ability to watch, listen and reflect) proved to be significant for the Atkinson teachers and principal as they studied the writing process of young children and developed instructional practices associated with this new learning. Future research could benefit from exploring whether teachers who develop the capability to carefully observe their students and are given time to share and reflect with colleagues about this learning would be able to assess their students with a deeper level of understanding and adjust instructional practice more effectively. It would be possible to study teachers at later research sites associated with Graves to gather data while keeping historical context and research exposure somewhat constant, or it would be interesting to study current educational settings that are using various forms of assessment to evaluate student learning.

**Leadership in Schools Associated with Graves Research**
Since leadership emerged as an important theme in teacher change, a study of leadership qualities demonstrated by school principals in Graves’ subsequent research would be an important direction for future research. It would be allow exploration of whether the characteristics demonstrated by Jean at Atkinson Academy were found in the principals at these other research sites as well, and if so, why? Did Graves seek sites with similar strong leaders, did leaders evolve during the research itself or were these types of leaders typical of schools associated with or influenced by UNH during this period in history?

**Leadership and Risk-taking**

The ability to take risks was very important to the teachers in Atkinson. Their ability to consider new learning and to try new ideas in their classrooms was contingent upon the support and trust of their principal. Future research needs to explore the relationship between leadership, trust and willingness to “risk” the consideration of new ideas in schools today. As was learned in Atkinson, a personal willingness and perceived ability to take risks around instructional practice were essential prerequisites for considering change. At that time, teachers and principals weren’t being evaluated by student test scores. Core curricular programs weren’t being mandated because they were logical, sequential and “teacher proof.” It would be important to explore self- and collective-efficacy as prerequisites to teacher change given these current conditions.

**Conclusion**

This inquiry began as an attempt to understand how change took hold for teachers within a school community as they collaborated with Donald Graves and his research assistants during their seminal research on the writing process of young children. The
pedagogy that developed out of this work evolved into the writing workshop model still being used in many classrooms across the country. The process of change was found to be complex, multi-layered and often a uniquely individual experience despite the commonalities of experience, epistemology and self-efficacy found in this population of participants. Analysis of interview data revealed the importance of social interactions around the process of change with pivotal experiences associated with collaborative partnerships, individually paced learning experiences, as well as leadership focused on both student and adult learning.

Despite the passage of more than three decades, there are many lessons to be learned from the teachers and principal of Atkinson Academy. Through their sharing of personal and collaborative experiences, as mentors to my role as apprentice, they helped facilitate a change in my own thinking about adult learning within a school community—specifically the significance of social interactions to facilitate change, the need for redefining school leadership and the importance of having time-time for inquiry, time for reflection and time for talk. Steinar Kvale (1996) describes this experience of the qualitative interviewer as a “traveler” on a journey of discovery.

The journey may not only lead to new knowledge; the traveler might change as well. The journey might instigate a process of reflection that leads the interviewer to new ways of self-understanding, as well as uncovering previously taken-for-granted values and customs in the traveler’s home country (p. 4).

As a researcher and “informal leader” within my school, my understanding of my own role in the facilitation of teacher change was profoundly impacted by my interactions with members of this unique community. I have learned how critically important it is to: really listen to and observe the teachers with whom I work; focus on their needs as learners, realizing that the ability to take on new learning can be influenced by many factors; be less
directive and more reflective in my talk with teachers; and provide time for the learning
process to take place. Yet, the single most important lesson I learned from this study is the
value of looking to our past as a means of informing our future. The teachers and principal
of Atkinson, New Hampshire, have a lot to teach the educators of today.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: IRB Application and Approval Letters

University of New Hampshire
Research Integrity Services, Service Building
51 College Road, Durham, NH 03824-3585
Fax: 603-862-3564

06-Aug-2012

Jasinski, Barbara
Education, Morrill Hall
16 Williams Way
Durham, NH 03824

IRB #: 4939
Study: The Life Story of a Research Agenda: The Evolution and Sustainability of the Writing Process as Seen Through the Research of Donald Graves
Review Level: Expedited
Approval Expiration Date: 05-Aug-2013

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved your request for time extension for this study. Approval for this study expires on the date indicated above. At the end of the approval period you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects. If your study is still active, you may apply for extension of IRB approval through this office.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. This document is available at http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources or from me.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
Wharton-McDonald, Ruth
09-Aug-2011

Jasinski, Barbara
Education, Morrill Hall
16 Williams Way
Durham, NH 03824

IRB #: 4939
Study: The Life Story of a Research Agenda: The Evolution and Sustainability of the Writing
Process as Seen Through the Research of Donald Graves
Review Level: Expedited
Approval Expiration Date: 05-Aug-2012

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document is available at http://unh.edu/research/irb-application-resources or from me.

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at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence
related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Director

cc: File
Middleton, Michael
Wharton-McDonald, Ruth
06-Aug-2010

Jasinski, Barbara
Education, Morrill Hall
16 Williams Way
Durham, NH 03824

IRB #: 4939
Study: The Life Story of a Research Agenda: The Evolution and Sustainability of the Writing Process as Seen Through the Research of Donald Graves
Approval Date: 05-Aug-2010

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research (IRB) has reviewed and approved the protocol for your study as Expedited as described in Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 46, Subsection 110.

Approval is granted to conduct your study as described in your protocol for one year from the approval date above. At the end of the approval period, you will be asked to submit a report with regard to the involvement of human subjects in this study. If your study is still active, you may request an extension of IRB approval.

Researchers who conduct studies involving human subjects have responsibilities as outlined in the attached document, Responsibilities of Directors of Research Studies Involving Human Subjects. (This document is also available at http://www.unh.edu/osr/compliance/irb.html.) Please read this document carefully before commencing your work involving human subjects.

If you have questions or concerns about your study or this approval, please feel free to contact me at 603-862-2003 or Julie.simpson@unh.edu. Please refer to the IRB # above in all correspondence related to this study. The IRB wishes you success with your research.

For the IRB,

Julie F. Simpson
Manager

cc: File
Middleton, Michael
INTRODUCTION:
The purpose of this study is to understand the process of substantive change in instructional practice within a school community from the unique perspective of the teachers themselves. By studying an elementary school that was one of the sites for Donald Graves' seminal research on the writing process of young children, I will explore the individual and shared experiences of faculty and administration before, during and after the three year period (from 1978-1981) when a cohort of teachers worked directly with Graves and his colleagues. Instructional practices arising from this research went on to be replicated across the country and around the world, evolving into many present day approaches to the teaching of writing yet how these practices emerged, developed and were adopted by individual teachers may have broader implications for understanding how professional development experiences might be designed to support adult learning within a diverse community of teachers.

SPECIFIC AIMS: The research aims are:
1) to understand the personal and collective process of change in instructional practice associated with research being conducted in particular classrooms in a school community
2) to delineate elements that potentially supported or undermined the process of change for individual teachers and to examine how these elements impacted the evolution of the instructional practices themselves.

This research involves:
(a) exploring the experiences of individual teachers and administrators who worked in a school where Donald Graves was conducting his research on the writing process of young children
(b) archival study of documents and video footage associated with Graves' research
(c) mapping the interaction between prior experiences, epistemological orientations, motivational elements or collaborative interactions that influenced how or whether teachers modified their own thinking and instructional practices in association with Graves' research.

a. Setting:
• Interviews of 1-2 hours will take place in participant homes or other neutral location chosen by participant
• Participants are teachers, researchers, and/or administrators who were located in a school where Donald Graves conducted research, UNH faculty who worked with Graves or family/friends of Graves
• Participants will be contacted by telephone call, e-mail or letter and their privacy will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms, if requested, though if participants prefer, their actual names will be used. Subjects will not be compensated.
• Interviews will be audio-taped or videotaped and focus group discussion(s) will be videotaped in order for researcher to transcribe, code and analyze these conversations. Tapes will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. They will be saved for five years following the completion of the research project and then taped over or destroyed. Audio- and video-recordings will be available for review by participants prior to inclusion in the final data compilation.
Researcher will honor requests to edit a participant from any future presentation.

b. Protocols:
• Participants will do any or all of the following: complete an informational questionnaire, answer questions in a semi-structured interview, and possibly participate in a semi-structured focus group discussion (interview, focus group questions and informational questionnaire are attached)
• Privacy of participant responses will be protected by seeking permission to identify participants by name. This will be done by asking each participant's permission and having them sign in a specific place on the consent form giving this permission. If permission is not obtained, privacy of participant responses will be protected by assigning pseudonyms.

c. Consent:
Following contact by phone, letter or e-mail, and prior to participation in individual interviews and focus group discussions, participants will be sent a letter of introduction including a brief description of the research project and a sample consent form. Consent form will be completed in person just prior to initial interview,
allowing participants to ask any questions. It will be stressed that subjects can opt out of the study at any time.

d. Investigator Experience:
This investigator was a member of research team that conducted a study required as a class assignment for EDUC 914 during the spring semester in 2001. An IRB application was submitted and approved for this study. This is the first study for this investigator involving interviews and the facilitation of a focus group discussion. Experience as a literacy specialist in one of the schools where Graves did his original research may be useful in conducting the research and working with the proposed population. Dr. Ruth Wharton-McDonald, Dr. Georgia Kerns, Dr. Thomas Newkirk, Dr. Thomas Schram, and Dr. William Wansart will advise and oversee the project.

4) DATA:
Data will be collected, coded and analyzed qualitatively, using grounded theory methodology and procedures (Charmaz, 2006). Thematic analysis of coded interview and focus group transcriptions triangulated with archival analysis of videotaped footage of Graves' work in the elementary school will be used to identify elements that support or undermine the process of change in instructional practice for individual teachers and the evolution of these practices over time within a school culture. Participant identity will be revealed only if permission is obtained on consent form and pseudonyms will be used alternatively if a participant does not wish to be identified. Audio- and videotapes will be destroyed if explicit consent is not obtained. Written and transcribed data as well as audio/video tapes will be stored at the researcher's house and access will be limited to the researcher herself. Transcriptions and digital data will be stored on the researcher's computer (possibly using NVivo or other appropriate software).

RISKS:
Minimal risks to participants are involved in this study. Any personal or sensitive information revealed by participants is beyond the scope of this study and participants will be informed that such information will not be included in data collection. The use of pseudonyms will ensure confidentiality for participants who do not wish to be identified personally.

BENEFITS:
Benefits might include a participant's opportunity to bring his/her own personal experience and contribution to a public discussion of factors impacting the ability or inclination of individual teachers to change their instructional practices. Future researchers may benefit from an exploration of elements that influence the evolution of instructional practices for individual teachers and for a school community over time and potential connections with professional development models.

REFERENCES
Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: *A personal and collaborative journey of change in instructional practice: Lessons learned from an educational community’s work with Donald Graves*

Researcher: Barbara Jasinski, graduate student, University of New Hampshire

Purpose of the study:
The purpose of this study is to understand the process of substantive change in instructional practice within a school community from the unique perspective of the teachers themselves. By studying an elementary school that was one of the sites for Donald Graves’ seminal research on the writing process of young children, I will explore the individual and shared experiences of faculty and administration before, during and after the three year period (from 1978-1981) when a cohort of teachers worked directly with Graves and his colleagues. Instructional practices arising from this research went on to be replicated across the country and around the world, evolving into many present day approaches to the teaching of writing yet how these practices emerged, developed and were adopted by individual teachers may have broader implications for understanding how professional development experiences might be designed to support adult learning within a diverse community of teachers.

Description of participation:
Participation in this study involves:
- Answering interview questions posed in a 1:1 situation by the lead researcher (number of interviews expected to be limited to one or possibly two) during a 1-2 hour time frame
- Having responses audio-taped and/or videotaped as the interview progresses
- Possibly participating in a focus group lasting between an hour and 1 ½ hours (involving a limited number of participants)
- Possibly being videotaped during focus group discussion
- Completing an initial background questionnaire (all participants)

The approximate number of participants involved in this study is 10-12.

Possible benefits from participating in this study:
Benefits might include the opportunity to bring your own personal experience and contribution to a public discussion of factors impacting the ability or inclination of individual teachers to change their instructional practices. Future researchers may benefit from an exploration of elements that influence the evolution of instructional practices for individual teachers and for a school community over time and potential connections with professional development models.

Potential risks from participating in this study:
Participation in this study is expected to present minimal risk to you.

Cost of/Compensation for participation:
There is no cost for participation in this study.
You will not be receiving any financial compensation for participating in this study.

Options for choosing nonparticipation or withdrawal from this study:
Please understand that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the participant is otherwise entitled. If you consent to participate in the study, you are free to stop your participation at any time without negative repercussions.

Confidentiality:
Confidentiality of data and records associated with your participation in this research will be maintained to the best of the researcher’s capabilities. You should understand, however, there are rare instances when the researcher is required to share personally-identifiable information (e.g., according to policy, contract or regulation). For example, in response to a complaint about the research, the Institutional Review Board and/or administrators at The University of New Hampshire may have to review the data.

Pseudonyms will be given to all research participants who do not consent to using their real names and these pseudonyms will be maintained in all audiotape and videotape documentation. Due to the particular nature of focus group data collection, though the researcher plans to maintain confidentiality of responses, it
may not possible to guarantee that other participants will refrain from speaking of the event or repeating responses outside of the focus group setting.
All written and transcribed data will be kept in the researcher's home and electronic data will be stored on the researcher's computer. Video and audio tapes will be stored in the researcher's home following their transcription. The researcher and faculty advisor as well as members of the researcher's guidance and dissertation committees will have access to the data generated. All data may be used for future presentations, written descriptions of research or publication of said research.

Contact Information:
If you have questions about this study, you can contact:
Barbara Jasinski OR Dr. Ruth Wharton-McDonald
Lead Researcher Research Advisor
Phone: 603-868-2896 (home) 603-862-2382
315-854-4124 (cell) Email: ruth.wharton@unh.edu
Email: bjasinski@comcast.net

Rights as a research participant: Please contact Julie Simpson, Research Integrity Services, 603-862-2003 to discuss any questions you may have regarding your rights as a research participant.

By signing below, you understand:
1. The University of New Hampshire's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research has approved the use of human subjects in this study.

2. The purpose of this research project, the procedures to be followed and the expected duration of your participation.

3. The potential risks and benefits associated with being a participant in this research project.

4. That your consent to participate is entirely voluntary, was obtained without coercion and that refusal to participate will involve no negative consequences.

5. If you consent to participate you may discontinue your participation at any time without prejudice, penalty, or loss of benefits to which you would otherwise be entitled.

6. You understand that you will not be provided financial incentive for your participation by the University of New Hampshire.

7. You understand that any information gained about you as a result of your participation will be provided to you at the conclusion of your involvement in this research project if you so request.

8. You certify that you have read and fully understand that the purpose of this research project and the risks and benefits it presents to you as stated above.

I __________________________, CONSENT/AGREE to participate in this research project.

_________________________________________ Date

Signature of participant

I __________________________, CONSENT/AGREE to be audio-taped and/or videotaped for this research project.

_________________________________________ Date

Signature of participant

I __________________________, CONSENT/AGREE to be identified by my real name in publications/presentations.

_________________________________________
The following information will assist the researcher in organizing data collection and identification of participants. The information will remain confidential.

Name ____________________________________

Contact Information:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Preferred time of day to be contacted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Home)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Work)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Cell)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Address __________________________________________

Email ____________________________________________

1. Association with the research of Donald Graves (e.g. researcher, teacher, administrator, student, professional colleague, etc.)

2. If you are a teacher or administrator, what was your specific assignment at the time of your involvement in the research of Donald Graves?

3. Are you currently associated with an educational institution? If so, what institution?
APPENDIX B: Questions for Examining Documents

(from Gibson & Brown, 2009)

| Time          | When was the document created?  
|              | Is it a stand-alone document or part of a larger collection?  
|              | How does the timing relate to Graves’ research activities in Atkinson? |
| Author       | Is the writing done by one person or is it a collaborative effort?  
|              | Is the author a member of the teaching faculty or working independently?  
|              | Is there an association between the document and a funding source for Graves’ research?  
|              | Has the author written other related documents?  
|              | Is so, how are they related?  
|              | Does the author have a known identity/association with Atkinson Academy, UNH or other institution? Is this relevant? |
| Purpose      | Why was the document written?  
|              | Why was it structured in a particular way?  
|              | Did the document achieve its purpose? |
| Audience     | Was the document written for a particular audience?  
|              | Is the audience narrow or broad (similar or different?)  
|              | Was the document able to reach its audience effectively? How do you know  
|              | What was the audience’s response? |
| Relation to other documents | Is the document part of a larger collection?  
|              | Does the document confirm pre-existing knowledge about Graves’ research/the Atkinson project or does it introduce new concepts? |
| Ownership    | Is particular ownership of the document clearly established?  
|              | If the ownership has changed, what factors have impacted this change?  
|              | Is the owner also the author and/or the audience? |
| Alteration   | Have any changes been made in the document and if so, what were the changes and who made them? Also, why were the changes made?  
|              | Do these modifications reflect a change in the status of the document itself? |
## APPENDIX C: Data Planning Matrix

*(from Schram, 2003)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I need to know? (Topical Questions)</th>
<th>Why do I need to know this?</th>
<th>What kind of data will answer the question?</th>
<th>Whom do I contact for access</th>
<th>Projected Timeline &amp; Procedures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What was the impact of different individual belief systems about teaching and learning on acceptance of new ideas?</td>
<td>Did a conflict between beliefs and Graves' ideas make change harder for certain teachers? Were beliefs consistent with decision-making and actual instructional practices? How was &quot;border crossing&quot; negotiated?</td>
<td>Interviews—teachers, administrator, video clips of instructional practices, research notes</td>
<td>Jean Robbins, Mary Ellen Giacobbe, Martha Horne, Judy Egan, Carolyn Currier, John Gaydos, Pat Howard, Unnamed teacher, Elaine Malesky, Lyn Kultzelman, JoAn Claveau</td>
<td>Contact participants and arrange interviews in May/June for interviews during Summer 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How did individual teachers perceive their ability to make decisions about whether to change their instructional practices and their ability to actually make such changes?</td>
<td>Were teachers free to choose to change or not? Was there collective empowerment amongst the Graves-teachers? Did association with Graves produce a sense of efficacy?</td>
<td>Interviews—teachers who worked with Graves and those who did not</td>
<td>Jean Robbins, Classroom Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What role did shared leadership within the school community (principals, teachers, researchers, etc.) have on the willingness to consider and implement new ideas?</td>
<td>Were researchers perceived as leaders? Did researchers expect to change instructional practice in Atkinson? Did administration foster leadership in others? How do key individuals within a community impact change? How do opportunities for shared leadership impact efficacy?</td>
<td>Interviews—teachers, administrators, research assistants, people who knew Graves outside of Atkinson</td>
<td>Jean Robbins, Classroom Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Were there elements of school leadership or school culture that supported or undermined the learning process of individual teachers and the sustainability of their instructional practice over time?</td>
<td>How do collaboration, reflective practice, support of parent community, etc. impact the inclination to sustain practices? Did these elements remain in Atkinson after Graves left and if not, did this impact the sustainability?</td>
<td>Interviews—teachers, administrators, research assistants</td>
<td>Jean Robbins, Classroom Teachers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Was it necessary for the school community to have common beliefs about literacy or for members of the community to be at the same point in learning how to implement these practices?</td>
<td>What should the focus of professional development be? How do individual learning needs impact the professional development model?</td>
<td>Interviews—teachers, researchers</td>
<td>Jean Robbins, Classroom Teachers, Research Assistants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX D: PRELIMINARY INTERVIEW GUIDE

Orienting Questions:
01. School culture
02. Graves research – introduction to Atkinson, participation

Longitudinal Questions
L1. Long-term personal/professional impact

General Closing Questions
GC1. Thoughts, suggestions for this research project

Topical Questions:
T1. What was the impact of different individual belief systems about teaching and learning on acceptance of these new ideas?
T2. How did individual teachers perceive their ability to make decisions about whether to change their instructional practices and their ability to actually make such changes?
T3. What role did shared leadership within the school community (principals, teachers, researchers, etc.) have on the willingness to consider and implement new ideas?
T4. Were there elements of school leadership or school culture that supported or undermined the learning process of individual teachers and the sustainability of their instructional practice over time?
T5. Was it necessary for the school community to have common beliefs about literacy or for members of the community to be at the same point in their ability to implement these practices?

Initial Open-ended Questions

- Tell me about how you came to be involved with Donald Graves’ research on the writing process of young children (O2, T1, T2, T3, T4)
- What were your first impressions of the research project? What contributed to these initial impressions? How would you describe the impressions of your colleagues at the time? (O1, O2, T1, T5)
- How would you describe the teacher/administrator you were then? (T1) (e.g. ideas about how children learn, role of the teacher/administrator in an educational community, instructional accountability, etc.)
- How did you teach writing before Graves came to Atkinson? (T1, T2) What factors or experiences do you think impacted how you developed as a writing teacher up to that point? (T1, T2, T3) (e.g. professional training, professional/personal experiences associated with writing, how you learned to
write, whether you continue to write yourself, whether you like to teach writing, whether you feel competent to teach writing, etc.)

• Were you interested in learning about other ways to teach writing? (T2) If so, how did you feel about your ability to change? (T2) Were there factors within the school culture or within you personally that supported or undermined your ability to change your approach to teaching writing? (O1, T3)

• What kinds of decisions were teachers able to make about their instructional practices in Atkinson at the time? (O1, T2, T3)

• To what extent and in what way were your ideas (about teaching in general, about teaching writing, about how children learn, about capability to change, about agency and motivation) shared by your colleagues in Atkinson? (O1, T1, T2, T3, T4, T5)

Intermediate Questions

• Tell me about your involvement in the Graves research over time – initial research vs. implementation of pedagogical strategies (O2, T4)

• How did your ideas about teaching writing change during the 3-year period Graves’ research project? What may have influenced this change? (O2, T1, T2, T3, T4)

• Did the ideas of your colleagues change during this period? If so, in what way did they change and what factors may have influenced this change? (O1, T1, T2, T3, T4)

• Would you describe yourself differently as a teacher/administrator following your involvement in this research? (T1, T2)

• How would you describe changes in the school community prior to, during and after the 3 year research study? (O1, T4)

• Who were considered to be leaders within the school at the time? (O1, T3) What did this leadership look like (e.g. decision-making, actions, pd, etc.) (O1,
T3, T4) How would you describe their leadership qualities? (T3) Were you considered a leader? (O1, T1, T2, T3)

- How do you think the personal characteristics of Graves himself impacted the acceptability of his research and associated practices? (O2, T3, T4) Was Graves considered to be a leader in the Atkinson school community? (O1, T3, T4) What did this look like in terms of actions, decision-making, etc.? (T4)
- Did you observe changes in the school community over time? (O1) Can you describe these changes and talk about what may have caused these changes? (T4, T5)
- As you look back are there any particular experiences that stand out as representative of Atkinson’s involvement with the Graves research project? (O1, T5)

**Ending Questions**

- How would you describe the teaching of writing throughout Atkinson Academy before, during and after Graves conducted his research there? (T5)
- How has the experience of being involved with the Graves research on the writing process impacted you personally and professionally? (L1, T1, T2)
- Tell me how your views may have changed since you were actively involved in this project. (L1, T1, T2, T4, T5)
- What factors do you think impact the sustainability of instructional practices such as those associated with the writing process approach? (T4, T5)
- After this experience, what advice would you give to someone interested in supporting a common belief system around the teaching of writing at the elementary level? Do you think this is important? (T5)
• Is there anything you might like to add that you hadn’t thought about prior to this interview? (GC1) Would you recommend that I interview particular individuals for this research project? If so, do you have contact information for them? (GC1)

• Is there anything else you think I should know about the Graves research, its implementation in elementary school classrooms and/or its sustainability over time? (GC1)

• Is there anything you would like to ask me? (GC1)

(These questions are primarily original though some are loosely based on questions provided by Charmaz (2006, p. 30-31).

Note: Despite generating a list of sample questions, it is not my intention that these questions would be used in a particular order or even be covered in their entirety but would instead be a resource from which to choose, if appropriate.