The teaching portfolio as a vehicle for professional growth

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THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO AS A VEHICLE FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

BY

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This project is dedicated to my family.

Thank you for your support, your laughs, and your unconditional love.

Marian
Evan
Kate
Alison
Robert
Jim
Helen
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER                      PAGE

I. INTRODUCTION               1
   Background                 1
   Purpose of the Study       5
   Questions Guiding the Research 5
   Definitions                6
   Delimitations and Limitations 7
   Significance                8

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE  10
   Introduction               10
   Change and School Culture  10
   Staff Development and Teacher Empowerment 17
   Reflection and Self-Assessment 24
   Teaching Portfolios        27

III. METHODS                  37
   Introduction               37
   Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design 38
   The Case Study             40
   Population                 41
   The Role of the Researcher 42
   Data Collection Procedures 44
   Data Analysis Procedures   47
   Methods for Verification   48
   Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Theory and Literature 49

IV. PRESENTATION OF DATA      51
   Introduction               51
   The Teachers - A History   52
   Portfolios                 77
   Development of the Portfolios 99
   Reflection on the Process  116

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS 128
   Introduction               128
   Summary of Findings        130
   Discussion of Findings     146
   Conclusions                153
   Recommendations for Further Study 154

WORKS CITED                  156
ABSTRACT

THE TEACHING PORTFOLIO AS A VEHICLE FOR PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

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John J. Freeman

University of New Hampshire, December, 1998

This study considered the utility of the teaching portfolio as a structure which might enhance the professional growth of public school teachers. The study was guided by the question: Does the development of individual teaching portfolios support reflection, self-assessment, and professional development on the part of teachers who develop portfolios? Other issues considered were reasons for developing portfolios, the nature of artifacts included in portfolios, structures which support teachers in the development of their portfolios, changes in classroom practice which may result from portfolio development, plans for future portfolio use, and suggestions which portfolio developers might have for others considering doing so.

Three case studies were conducted with the participation of three public elementary school teachers who participated in a year-long teaching portfolio development seminar conducted as a graduate course. A cross-case analysis was utilized to compare cases. Data was collected through an examination of artifacts - journals and the portfolios themselves - as well as through a series of structured interviews with the participants.

Findings included the following: (1) participants reported increased reflection, self-assessment, and changes in classroom practice as a result of their development of teaching portfolios; (2) participants reported an interest in reflection and self-assessment as reasons for initiating the portfolio development process, in addition to other reasons; (3) the participants agreed on a menu of twelve common items for inclusion in their portfolios; these
artifacts also included personal reflections; (4) the participants reported that meeting regularly with a facilitator and within a support group contributed to their work in developing teaching portfolios; (5) the participants individually identified other factors which also supported their work in developing teaching portfolios; (6) the participants reported a number of changes in classroom practice as a result of their participation, including a deeper understanding in student portfolios, a greater engagement of students in self-assessment, and others; (7) the participants reported that they expected to continue to develop their teaching portfolios in the future.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Educational reform has failed time and time again. We believe that this is because reform has either ignored teachers or oversimplified what teaching is about (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996, p. xiii).

The challenge of creating significant change in our students' classroom experience confronts all who are concerned with the reform or renewal of our public schools. A fairly recent field of inquiry, the study of the change process in public schools reveals that the recent history of school reform may be accurately chronicled as a history of failure (Fullan, 1991); this failure, according to Sarason (1982), being largely due to the failure of change agents to understand the complexity of the process of change. The "top-down" (Barth, 1986) conception of school reform - change initiated by legislation, policy, or regulation - which characterized change efforts from the 1960's through the mid-1990's, though evidencing limited and localized gains, has been accurately characterized by the absence of widespread success (Fullan, 1991). Orlich (1989) concluded that our nation has "wasted billions of dollars on poorly conceived but politically popular reforms that have sapped the energies of school people" (P. 512) and suggested that "we need a national moratorium on reforms so that educators and local policy makers can analyze their own problems" (p. 516).

Within the current decade, and despite continued support of grand pronouncements and proposals from political leaders and business interests, the locus of attention for many change agents has shifted to the local districts
and individual schools (Fullan, 1991) and has placed increased emphasis on the role of the practitioner in district and school change (Darling-Hammond, 1993; Glatthorn, 1992; Glickman, 1989; Guglielmino, 1993; Larson, 1992; Midgley and Wood, 1993; O’Looney, 1993; Shuster, 1994; Timar, 1989). This shift in the role of practitioner from object of change mandates to actor in an ongoing process of change is evidenced both in the teacher-as-leader literature (Fullan, 1997) and in the practices of many local schools and districts.

One venue for such a shift, for example, may be seen in the current evolution in teacher evaluation systems used by the schools and districts. Veteran teachers have observed that while a teacher evaluation program of twenty-five years ago would likely have ignored the teacher’s experience and voice in reaching conclusions of adequacy of performance, today’s approaches are typically very likely to engage the teacher as a participant rather than a spectator (Red and Shainline, 1987).

Considering the role of staff development in our present era of school reform, Joyce and Showers (1995) concluded that “the individual practitioner as the source” represents one of the four frames of reference for the current wave of school renewal initiatives” (p. 3). Finding hope in the success of initiatives operating within “individual practitioner” frame, Joyce and Showers observed that “the recent attention to the ‘reflective practitioner’ and the ‘teacher as researcher,’ as well as studies of the stages of growth of teachers and how teachers expand their teaching repertoires, all indicate the substantial capability of practitioners to reflect on their work and engage in innovative practice” (p. 6).

Reporting on this relatively recent recognition that teachers are necessarily at the heart of reform, Darling-Hammond (1996) observed that “as recently as 10 years ago, the idea that teacher knowledge was critical for educational improvement had little currency” (p. 5). This powerful potential
began to be realized in many local and even individual initiatives in some
schools where "those who develop assessments of their own teaching . . . also
discover that careful reflection about standards of practice stimulates an
ongoing learning process" (p. 7).

Lending support to these conclusions, the National Foundation for the
Improvement of Education, an organization endowed by one of the two major
teacher organizations in the country - the National Education Association,
"recommended elements of successful professional development programs last
year in its report 'Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning: Transforming
Professional Development for Student Success.' Following a two-year study,
the group found that the "best" staff development programs were teacher-
driven, ongoing, and tailored to the specific needs of educators" (Archer,
1997).

In what ways, then, can teachers be engaged in the process of change
in their classrooms? On one level, teachers have been engaged in a broad
range of district- and school-wide decision-making structures (Brandt, 1989;
what about a process of examining and assessing individual practice conducted
by the practitioner him/herself? While Larson (1992) found that small scale
innovations were carried out continuously by autonomous teachers who made
their own decisions in their classrooms, are policy-makers and school leaders
to leave the process of change to chance or to the very personal inclinations
of individual teachers? Or, do structures exist which can assist teachers in the
process of self-examination and self-assessment resulting in improved
practice?

What structures have been found to be potentially effective in
cultivating reflection, to provide a vehicle for self-assessment, and to serve
the individual needs of educators? One such structure, which has enjoyed a
long history in several creative fields like advertising, art, architecture, and finance, is an under-explored yet emerging structure which may fulfill the key requirements for effective practitioner development: the portfolio.

Portfolios have been variously described as "a process more than it is a product" (Green and Smyser, 1996, p. 19), "purposeful and selective collections of a person's work . . . [which] have long been a mode of displaying and evaluating a person's work in the arts" (Wolf, 1994, p. 108), and "systematic collections of materials selected and assembled by a professional and used to document professional accomplishments" (Glatthorn, 1996, p. 31). Such "collections" are structured in many different formats and seek to serve several different purposes (Bradley, 1994; Glatthorn, 1996; Green and Smyser, 1996).

Initial reports on the usefulness of portfolios for self-assessment have been promising. Portfolios have shown some potential in portraying the intricacies of a teacher's work (Wolf, 1991) as well as a documentation of a teacher's effectiveness (Stowell, Rios, McDaniel, and Kelly, 1993). But does a potential for portfolios extend beyond the show casing of competence or excellence to possibilities for personal growth and school renewal?

Can the process of portfolio development support teacher reflection and self-assessment? Reflection may be described as the "stepping back, looking again, gaining added perspective and insight, greater understanding" (Perrone, 1991, p. 86). When viewed through the lens of educational reformers, reflective practice may further be defined as "an integrated way of thinking and acting focused on learning and behavioral change; it is individuals working to improve organizations through improving themselves" (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1994, p. 1).

"The professional development of a teacher is essentially a process of personal change, and personal change is essentially an interior process. It is
something that the teacher has to initiate and guide. It is not something that

can be done to a teacher” (Green and Smyser, p. 20). However, as Herman and

Winters (1994) challenge, “Change alone is not enough - the quality of change

and the efficacy of the new practices must be subjected to inquiry” (p. 55). In

the context of demands for improved schools, the failed efforts at reform of the

last thirty-five years, and the emerging emphasis on direct teacher

involvement in the change process, we are led to the question of the potential
efficacy of the development of teacher portfolios by individual practitioners

in enhancing self-reflection and meaningful, positive change in professional
teaching practice.

Purpose of the Study

This study examines the process of portfolio development. The subjects

of this study are three elementary school teachers who engaged in a guided

portfolio development process over the course of one school year. The

primary emphasis of this study is to consider the utility of teacher portfolios to

promote reflection, self-assessment, and personalized professional
development. A secondary emphasis is the consideration the process of

portfolio development itself. The background of teachers who have

voluntarily chosen to engage in this process, the motives of the participants

for developing teaching portfolios, the items chose for inclusion in the

portfolios, the year-long experience of those involved, and the outcomes from

the point of view of the participants are described.

Questions Guiding the Research

The questions which have guided this study, in both the primary and

secondary emphases, were:

1. Did the development of individual teaching portfolios support

reflection, self-assessment, and professional development on the

part of the participants?
2. Why did the participants choose to develop their teaching portfolios?

3. What issues were addressed and what artifacts were included in the participants' portfolios?

4. Did the portfolio development group, which met regularly under the guidance of a facilitator, support the development of individual teaching portfolios?

5. What factors motivated and supported teachers in the development of their portfolios?

6. What changes, if any, did the participants experience as a result of their participation in the portfolio development process?

7. What will the participants do with their portfolios once they have completed the guided process?

8. What suggestions do the participants have for others in considering the development of teaching portfolios?

**Definitions**

*Artifacts* are the items selected from the work of the teacher which will be included in that teacher's portfolio.

*Case study* is a research design through which detailed information will be collected in exploring a single phenomenon using a variety of data collection procedures during a sustained period of time (Creswell, 1994).

*Facilitator* is a person who assists a process.

*Portfolio* is a “purposeful and selective collection(s) of a person’s work” (Wolf, p. 106).

*Professional development* is the growth or advancement of the capabilities of a person engaged in a learned occupation.

*Reflective practice (self-reflection)* is “an integrated way of thinking and acting focused on learning and behavioral change” (Osterman and Kottkamp, p. 1).
Self-assessment is the act of determining the value of an individual’s actions or products.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

This study is confined to case studies of three public school teachers currently assigned to teach in a rural New Hampshire elementary school. The three teachers participated in a guided process of teacher portfolio development facilitated by a private college instructor contracted by the school district to direct the process in the context of a graduate level college course. The teachers were volunteer participants in this course. The teachers’ supervisor, the school’s principal, also participated in the process, developing her own professional portfolio. The fifth and sixth participating members of this course were one additional teacher and the researcher, who served as a principal in the school district. During the year following the course, the researcher served as the district’s superintendent of schools, fulfilling a supervisory role for all course participants during some data collection activities.

Several potential limitations in this study exist. As this study will be confined to public elementary school teachers, its results may be of limited value in informing the practice of middle level and secondary level teachers. As the teachers are graduate level course registrants, their work in portfolio development may be colored by a motivation to achieve a particular grade in the course. And as the teachers’ direct supervisor was an active participant in the group meetings, the teachers work may also be influenced by their relationship with the supervisor. Finally, with the researcher serving as the district superintendent of schools during a portion of the data collection process, the responses of the participants to the interview questions posed by the researcher may have been colored by the supervisor / supervisee relationship.
Significance

A study of the process of the development of professional portfolios and their utility is important for several broad reasons. First, the improvement of our public schools is a nationally-identified need and while many strategies for professional development are currently employed, the challenge of providing personally meaningful structures which recognize the diversity of skill levels and needs of individual teachers can have a positive impact at the classroom level. Second, many traditional staff development methods fail to take advantage of individual teachers' self-knowledge and self-evaluation; the development of a structure for gaining self-knowledge as an initial step in reflective practice can be a powerful staff development tool. Third, while some findings favor portfolios, in general, as an effective tool for assessment, the literature is not conclusive either in supporting or rejecting this process as a valid method of self-assessment and teacher development (Herman and Winters, 1994).

More specifically, the current trend in “authentic assessment” has spurred the experimentation with a new generation of strategies and tools - rubrics, exhibitions, performances, portfolios - for considering and documenting learning, growth, and development. Early initiatives in this movement centered on need for more accurate, descriptive, and more complete assessment of student progress than was provided by available standardized measures, as well as the usefulness of assessments in guiding instruction, or further learning, growth, and development.

More recently, this new generation of strategies and tools have been applied to practitioners: to teachers and administrators (Danielson, 1996). In encouraging the development of teaching portfolios, theoreticians have advocated a variety of formats and have trumpeted a variety of lofty, hoped-for outcomes (Danielson, 1996; Glatthorn, 1996; Green and Smyser, 1996). What
practitioners lack in considering the utility of the portfolio development process. However, is an examination of the process as experienced by their peers, a discussion of the insights gained by those who have ventured beyond theory and have developed their own portfolios, and a frank consideration of the practical question which may rightly be posed by very busy teachers considering the development of their own portfolios: "Is it worth my valuable time?" This study seeks, in a limited but important way, to inform the current discussion of the value and usefulness of teaching portfolios in the growth and development of teachers.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In considering the issue of educational reform as reflected in classroom practice, this review of the literature first considers the process of change and the culture of schools, particularly those aspects of culture which may enhance the likelihood of change in classroom practice. This broad view is followed by a consideration of the current state of thinking on professional development and teacher empowerment. Then, the more specific issues of self-assessment and reflective practice, as they relate to professional development, are explored. Finally, the uses of portfolios in education, and more specifically the uses of teaching portfolios, are also considered.

Change and School Cultures

The education reform movement that began in the 1980's has produced disappointing and unsatisfactory results. Policy makers who have labored over federal, state, and local reform initiatives often blame the failure of widespread reform on the reluctance or incompetence of practitioners. Educators working at the school and classroom levels often blame policy makers for their lack of understanding of the "real life" or culture of the individual school. Many of the parties involved blame the victims or, more accurately, they would blame the victims had they not been recognized the political inappropriateness of doing so.

Whoever or whatever is to blame for this failure, many currently popular reforms could be dismissed as impractical, even ridiculous, if they
were not being devised and supported by apparently credible and powerful
advocates - and if the consequences of their failure were not so devastating to
a generation of American youth. Educational reform in the United States must
not fail (Astudo, Clark, Read, McGree and Fernandez, 1994, p. 1).

In a brief history of educational reform, Orlich (1989) chronicled
decades of failed efforts and concluded that “we need a national moratorium on
reforms so that educators and local policy makers can analyze their own
problems.” On the “national” level, schools have felt the influence of the
federal government, in any significant manner, for only about the last thirty
years. The sheer distance - both physical and psychological - of the federal
government from the schools and the classrooms it seeks to change mitigates
against its often hoped-for influence. Fullan (1991) identified several
implications for the government’s attempts to effect change from afar. These
include the federal government’s leveraging of resources to achieve desired
results, the significance of lag time in effecting change, the time involved in
change initiatives snaking through the legislative process and immense
administrative bureaucracies, the power of the federal government as a
symbolic leader in change, and great need for change based on widening gaps
in student background and performance as well as varying political agendas at
the lower levels (p. 263). Several lessons from the past thirty years of federal
government involvement in change efforts include the often-restated
conclusion that large sums of money alone will not result in desired change
and that symbolic leadership, evidenced by the response of states and districts
to A Nation at Risk, can prove to be powerful. However, the typical big
government approach of legislating a change followed by an expectation of
universal compliance has certainly been limited in bringing about wide-scale
change in schools and classrooms across the country.

Reform activity at the state level has been particularly intense in the
past ten to fifteen years. Reform-oriented legislation has been a common feature of state efforts in the mid- to late-1980's and early 1990's. Despite the often aggressive reform-minded law-making in this period, the Center for Policy Research and Education examined the reform initiatives in six states noted for the diversity of approaches in the late 1980's and found the overall results disappointing. The main features of the reform initiatives revealed in the three-year study included: legislation focusing on standards, teacher policies, and finance; variation in strategies and policies based on tradition and local culture; a general lack of coherence in reform packages; a range of first-order changes including issues such as graduation requirements and curriculum specifications; and, finally, a wide variation in district responses to state-level reforms (Fullan, 1991). Those hoping for quick changes resulting from state-led initiatives have been deeply disappointed. However, the persistence of some states in change initiatives, coupled with a willingness to learn from the earlier efforts, may yet result in significant change at the school and classroom levels. This recent wave of reform activity remains in progress.

In his study of the most recent tries at school reform, Fullan (1991) considered the dilemma of “uniformity vs. variation of solutions,” concluding that “meaning cannot be masterminded at a global level. It is found through small-scale pursuits of significant personal and organizational goals. The school is the ‘center’ of change” (1991, p. 348). This observation seems to support the moratorium on large-scale efforts which Orlich (1989) suggested. A strong potential, however, seems to exist for those who might parlay the interests of large scale reformers with a close-to-home desire for change; a possible direction for would-be reformers being suggested: local, school-based, system analysis. “Each local school district would systematically study its own cultures - yes, cultures - and then implement a carefully researched,
well-coordinated, and well-funded plan for specific improvements" (Orlich, 1989, p. 517). Implementation difficulties associated with traditional top-down strategies for educational improvements have generally been viewed as inconsistent or ineffective (Barth, 1986; Fullan, 1991; Sarason, 1982). Louis and Miles (1990) reported on the study of change in five urban secondary schools and found that the full participation of local, school-based educators in a sustained fashion was an essential element for positive change at the school level. Sarason (1982, 1990) agreed that the proper locus of attention for change agents is indeed the local level.

In considering the most effective "locus of reform," Astuto, Clark, Read, McGree and Fernandez (1994) also looked to the local level. "We define the problems and the solutions of school reform in local terms: one student, one parent, one teacher, one principal, one classroom, one school. If reform is to occur, the reformers will be the actors at the local level" (p. 83). Continuing, Astuto et al. recognized that "there is no easy route to authentic reform in American schools" but affirmed their belief that "parents, concerned citizens, and a professional staff of teachers and administrators hold the potential to solve their own educational problems with a little help from auxiliary agents serving in supportive capacities in the state capitals, Washington, D.C., colleges and universities, regional educational laboratories, and research and development centers. No one," Astuto et al. concluded, "cares more about students than the students themselves and their parents" and "no one knows more about individual schools and classrooms than the schools' professional staff" (p. 84); those most vested in change and those most knowledgeable about the nature of desirable change in individual schools are those who teach in, learn in, and send their children to those local schools.

Fullan (1993), a leading observer and theoretician of the change process in schools, reached similar conclusions:
We have been fighting an uphill battle. For the past thirty years we have been trying to up the ante in getting the latest innovations and policies into place... We have never really recovered from the profound disappointment experienced when our expectations turned out to be so far removed from the realities of implementation (p. 1).

Fullan continued by opining that "the new problem of change, then... is what would it take to make the educational system a learning organization - expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work, not just in relation to the latest policy, but as a way of life" (p. 4). It would be a gross oversimplification, in other words, to expect that a single mandated change from a distant authority would ever be sufficient to result in schools becoming "learning organizations," or resulting in the kinds of schools that Fullan advocated, schools which are continuously reinventing themselves to better serve their constituents. Schools must, in short, recognize change as a constant feature of their own character and, as such, learn how to continuously learn.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) viewed the task of reform as much more complex than had been naively assumed, even in recent times. The task is not "reforming" or "restructuring," rather, the essential task is one of "reculturing," the concern being centered not with teachers' willingness to implement or accept the change agenda of others, but "how we [practitioners] might make schools into the kinds of places that stimulate and support teachers to make changes themselves... It was clear to us, therefore, that cultures of teaching should be a prime focus for educational change" (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 1). The challenge for change agents isn't to come up with the best strategy to address specific issues in schools; it is to commit to a long-term development of a school's culture - working with, not working on the school's teaching staff - to develop a school environment which supports the learning for both children and adults.
"The key question, therefore," according to Fullan, "is what kinds of work communities or school cultures are most supportive of teacher growth and school improvement. How do we avoid creating and maintaining negative cultures that inhibit or squelch development and improvement? And how do we establish more positive ones?" (1996, p. 37). The challenge of would-be school reformers, according to Fullan, is something quite different from what it may have been considered to be just five to ten years ago. The quick fix, silver bullet, Lone Ranger-type model of school leadership must be relegated to the history books. The new leader must recognize that culture development requires a different set of assumptions and skills. Such leadership requires not the correct answer but the correct attitude; one which enhances the development of school cultures which are "most supportive of teacher growth" rather than ones which mandate acceptance of specific formulas for change.

Schein (1992), addressed the complexity of the process of change, which he contrasted with the earlier, more simplistic view of "reform," in his writing about organizational culture. Schein acknowledged the complexity of the concept of culture in his definition of organizational culture as "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 12). Further, Schein cautioned that "I am not implying that culture is easy to create or change or that leaders are the only determiners of culture. On the contrary . . . culture refers to those elements of a group or organization that are most stable and least malleable. Culture is the result of a complex group learning process" (p. 5). Again, the quick fix, so easily touted in the political arena, is generally viewed to be ineffective by those who study its results.
Development of culture on the other hand, which both theoreticians and researchers alike find the more likely path to long-term positive change, takes time.

Often oversimplified in the literature, Schein discussed three levels of culture: values, assumptions, and artifacts. More specifically, Schein identified many categories of phenomena which are associated with culture. These included "observed behavioral regularities when people interact . . . group norms . . . espoused values . . . formal philosophy . . . rules of the game . . . climate . . . embedded skills . . . habits of thinking, mental models, and/or linguistic paradigms . . . shared meanings . . . integrating symbols . . . structural stability . . . (and) patterning of unifying elements" (p. 8 - 10); a complex tangle of both the tangible and the intangible.

Several features of the school's culture have been found to contribute to the likelihood of teacher engagement with change projects. Essential features as relate to a teacher's inclination to participate in change efforts include, among others: attention to attitudes, beliefs, and relationships (Rodriguez and Tomplins, 1994); collegiality, experimentations, trust, awareness of new knowledge, and honest and open communication (Saphier and King, 1985); trust, confidence, support, belief in the efficacy of individuals during periods of failure as well as success, relationships, collegiality, nurturance, and growth (Clark and Astuto, 1994); high morale and commitment (Deal, 1985); site-specific information and instructional initiatives (Joyce, 1991); personal recognition (Johnson, 1987); personal and organizational learning, routinizing internal support, and avoiding staleness (Miles and Ekholm, 1991); voice and reflection (Dana, 1992); an emphasis on "task" goals [learning for its own sake] (Maehr and Parker, 1993): truly a lengthy laundry list of requirements for teacher engagement. Clearly, however, significant attention needs to be paid to individuals in supporting a culture which
enhances the likelihood of teacher development; while not necessarily a solitary voyage, the process of change seems to be very personal journey indeed.

In summary, the literature revealed a shift in thinking on school change which concerned itself with a much smaller scale than generally considered previous waves of reform; a shift which moves from the macro- to the micro-, from the broad stroke to the fine line, from faceless masses to the single practitioner. The individual school has been recognized as the significant unit in a discussion of educational reform. Within that school, a chief task of the change agent is the long-term, labor-intensive work of culture nurturance. The result, a process really more than a particular end product, is a work environment which supports personal and professional growth of individual teachers.

Staff Development and Teacher Empowerment

The role of teachers as learners and as primary actors in effecting educational improvement has been described as an important feature in a positive school culture (Cohen, 1993; Glatthorn, 1992; McGrevin, 1990; Wildon, 1993). A significant and often standardized structure for attending to the learning aspect of teaching has been formalized through the teacher evaluation systems which, in more recent experience, have included components which mandate personalized goal-setting, professional growth planning, and evidence of professional development provided by the teachers themselves. Empowering teachers to develop plans for their own development represented a shift from the one-size-fits-all staff development sessions of the 1970’s and 1980’s in which school- and district-wide programs were imposed on all without regard to individual role functions, experience levels, and needs. Barth (1990) was critical of traditional teaching evaluations programs and staff development programs, asserting that teachers have “precious little
provision in schools . . . to replenish themselves and help replenish others” (p. 61). Effort is needed, observed Barth, in assisting teachers in becoming “able and willing to critically scrutinize their practice and are quite able and willing, even desirous, of making their practice accessible to other adults” (p. 54). Barth acknowledged that this proposition is “very, very hard” (p. 55), but essential to release the potential energy, inventiveness, and idealism needed for school improvement.

Teacher empowerment, the distribution of control from a central source, typically the principal’s office, has been identified as a key feature of a school culture in which professional growth is a norm (Ashby, 1989; Blaise and Blaise, 1994; Bowers, 1990; Brandt, 1989; Fullan, 1992; Hixson, 1990; Hood, 1993; Kampol, 1990; Maehr, Smith & Midgley, 1990; McElrath, 1988; Pavan and Reid, 1990; Streshley, 1992; Tursman, 1989). Blaise and Kirby (1992) reported on a study of eight hundred teachers designed to determine strategies which principals use to influence teachers in positive ways and concluded that, among other influences, principals who empower (a) actively involve teachers in decision-making, (b) provide teachers with autonomy to try creative approaches, (c) support teachers by providing materials, training materials and backing, and (d) “nudge” teachers to consider alternatives. Short (1992) reviewed the literature on teacher empowerment and reported finding six empirically derived dimensions underlying the construct of teacher empowerment: (a) participation of teachers in critical decisions that directly affect their work, (b) teacher impact as an indicator of influencing school life, (c) teacher status concerning professional respect from colleagues, (d) autonomy or teachers’ beliefs that they can control certain aspects of their work life, (e) professional development opportunities to enhance continuous learning and expand one’s skills, and (f) self efficacy, the perception of having the skills and ability to help students learn. Replicating
a 1980 study of teachers that investigated the extent of teacher involvement in schoolwide and instructional issues, teachers' interest and expertise in decision issues, and teachers' job satisfaction. Rice and Schneider (1991) reported that teachers still desired more involvement than they were afforded.

Others have asserted that teachers are already significant decision makers regarding curriculum and instruction. Larson (1992), reporting on a study of two high schools, found that small scale innovations have been carried out continuously by teachers who enjoy autonomy to make their own decisions within their classrooms. Such continuous change, according to Larson, resulted in a cumulative effect of change in the organization. "Think big, and start small." (P. 130) Larson concluded. Cornett (1991) asserted that essential conditions which enhance teacher growth and informed engagement include: systematic study of self, subject matter, pedagogy, and learners. Duffy (1992) argued that inspired teaching resulted when teachers analyze their particular situation and create instruction to meet the needs of that situation.

In equating the notion of empowerment with "professionalism," Maeroff (1988) identified three critical features of empowerment: status, knowledge, and access to decision-making. Empowered practitioners worry not about who the boss is, but are professionals who enjoy the ability and autonomy to act in a professionally responsible manner. As such, professional teachers assume a broad range of responsibilities in their schools.

High, Achilles & High (1989), however, reported that a review of the literature on empowerment provides no clear, overwhelming evidence that teacher empowerment alone made a real difference in schools. Other factors, such as values and school norms, interacted with empowerment producing varying results. Wood (1993) critically examined the rhetoric of the effective schools and school-based management models for reform and found, among
other conclusions, that teacher empowerment, as a single strategy for improvement, provided limited scope for substantive change. In other words, while a collegial staff may be desirable, it is not in and of itself sufficient for meaningful school reform.

Is the issue of individual teacher empowerment reflected in successful staff development activities? In reporting on a study which considered the classroom practices and beliefs of four teachers who were being trained as Reading Recovery teachers, Stephens, Gaffney, Weingierd, Shelton & Clark (1993) reported findings which suggested that teachers' beliefs and practices were embedded in and connected to broader contexts, and that, within these contexts, teachers held a succinct set of beliefs. Changes began as experiments and teachers used their personal beliefs to determine whether something "worked." Findings also suggested that teacher educators need to rethink the approaches they currently use for inservice education, as though approaches do not consistently take into consideration the complexity of the change process nor do they consider the contexts of teachers' professional lives.

In reporting on foundation support of effective staff development approaches, Archer (1997) cited National Foundation for the Improvement of Education Chairman Wise: "For the most part, the overwhelming majority of professional development (consists of) one-day workshops put on by a consultant who makes a presentation . . . From what we know about adult learning, that's not the way to go" (p. 3). Rather, according to Darling-Hammond, "in policy terms, betting on teaching as a key strategy for reform means investing in stronger preparation and professional development while granting teachers greater autonomy" (1996, p. 5).

Guglielmino (1993) observed that the goals of greater involvement of teachers in their own staff development mirror those of quality adult education. If the further development of teachers as self-directed learners is
facilitated by giving them both the time to make the transition to such methods and a chance to plan and implement professional development projects, Guglielmino argued, then both teachers and students will benefit. Others called for changes in the delivery of in-service education to teachers; emerging features of effective in-service education include broadened staff development definitions (Hirsh and Ponder, 1991); a holistic, individualized approach to staff development (Davies and Seagren, 1992); “inspiring teachers to solve problems, take risks, assume ownership of their teaching, and exercise leadership in schools” (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 761); the preparation of teachers to examine and assess their own practice and teacher participation in decision making (Abdul-Haqq, 1989); assisting teachers in taking possession of new knowledge and working out its implications and consequences for their own settings and contexts.

Summarizing the effects of the past twenty years of educational reform efforts delivered from the top down, Glickman (1989) concluded that:

It is time for teachers to be equals . . . Supervision must shift decision making about instruction from external authority to internal control. This is the only way, on a large and long-term scale, that supervision will improve instruction. As long as decisions come down from authorities far away from those who teach, we will have dormant, unattractive work environments that will stymie the intellectual growth of teachers and the intellectual life of students. Teachers are the heart of teaching. Without choice and responsibility . . . motivation, growth, and collective purpose will remain absent. What motivates people to work harder and smarter is not money but a work environment that lets [professionals] make decisions and nurtures a free exchange of ideas and information (Harris Survey, 1988, p. 8).

Certainly, a focus on the teacher as a center for change is not entirely new. The “teacher proof” curriculum materials of the 1960’s and 1970’s, the large-scale “one-shot” workshops that persist today, and the various teacher evaluation schemes of the recent thirty years have all focused on changing teaching practices. In the misguided enthusiasm for form over substance, the
limited vision of teachers as employees rather than teachers as learners has clouded our ability to see that many ill-conceived methods of depersonalized teacher development activities have resulted in disappointment and cynicism. Fullan (1990) observed that "it has been well known for at least 15 years that staff development and successful innovation or improvement are intimately related" (p. 3). The uses of staff development for implementation, innovation, and institutional development are hampered by several factors, among which is, according to Fullan, the reality that "it is frequently separated artificially from the institutional and personal contexts in which it operates" (p. 4).

With the concept of "teacher as learner" (1990, p. 18) as centerpiece of both classroom and school improvement, Fullan identified three strands for thinking about change in schools: "the individual, the school, and the district" (p. 21). In considering "the individual," Fullan asserted that

Those involved in staff development must think and act more holistically about the personal and professional lives of teachers as individuals ... many staff development projects provide temporary resources and incentives for particular changes but do not amount to much in the bigger scheme of teachers' lives ... Huberman's research clearly shows the importance of recognizing career and life cycle experiences of teachers. What is at stake is the reconceptualization of the professional role of teachers. Staff development in this view becomes the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences accumulated across one's career. The agenda then is to work continuously on the spirit and practice of life-long learning for all teachers (p. 22).

Attention to the individual professional needs of teachers and a new emphasis on the centrality of individuals has been supported by others (Duke, 1990; Shanker, 1990; Shuster, 1994). Levine (1989) also discussed this new focus. "Traditionally staff development focuses on getting other people to change ... Since we know that growth starts from within, the most effective forms of staff development begin with the self" (p. xv). Levine later continued,

The professionalization of teaching and administration will
require that learning be an expectation and goal not only for students but also for adults. A profession is continually expanding and modifying its knowledge base; likewise, learning and development of adults necessary for the growth and well-being of children, but growing and changing are part of a lifelong process to which both adults and children are entitled (p. 31).

In reporting on her six-year study of the professional growth experiences of four elementary school teachers, Levine (1989) concluded that “instead of (or in addition to) leaving the school at three-thirty to attend a workshop on classroom management, it may be important for adults to focus their energies on particular issues in particular classrooms within the school . . . individual schools miss the opportunity to improve current practice and initiate change when they only look outside the school for ideas and tools of professional growth and school improvement” (p. 53). “The major conclusions to be drawn, I think, are that adults manifest different life stages and phases and that it is helpful to recognize the particular nature of their development in order to understand their immediate needs and to provide appropriate supports for stability and incentives for movement” (p. 290). Finally, Levine asked “shouldn’t it . . . be the responsibility of the principal and the teachers in the school to continuously raise basic questions about the teaching and learning of both children and adults? Such questions can form the basis for instructional and staff development options” (p. 292).

Darling-Hammond (1998) asserted that contemporary staff developers have learned that teacher learning required “developing a practice that is different from what teachers themselves experienced as students” which are “more powerful than simply reading and talking about new pedagogical ideas” (p. 8). This practice included, rather, “studying, doing, and reflecting; [and] by collaborating with other teachers,” among other strategies.

Just as the change literature sharpens the focus on the individual, so too
does the staff development literature. While not advocating that the individual represent the sole level of activity for change, the individual clearly deserves equal footing with the school and district in consideration of staff development programs. When supported by a setting which encourages the individual to study and analyze one's own teaching and learning needs, which empowers the individual to take risks and creatively experiment in designing one's own plan of development, and which provides for individual autonomy and choice from among a range of activities, the likelihood of individual development is enhanced.

**Reflection and Self-Assessment**

In describing a staff development model intended to apply the current thinking on adult learning, staff development, and the need for school development, Licklider (1997) based the model on certain assumptions about adult learners. "Adults must confront their beliefs and assumptions before change can happen. Adult learning theory clarifies the personal understandings that must be addressed in the transformative process . . .

Supporting the preference for self-directedness among adults, the model included provisions to promote and participants' predispositions for all aspects of self-directedness: thinking and acting independently; willingness and capacity to conduct their own education; decision making about goals, strategies, and evaluation of their own development; and pursuit of learning in their own setting" (p. 13).

Self-direction in terms of assessment of individual learning needs was supported by Duell and Davison (1987), who reported on a study of the opinions of elementary school teachers and administrators regarding traditional teacher evaluation systems. Teacher self-evaluation was viewed as accurate by both teachers and principals. Others placed the teacher in a central role in the evaluation process by developing self-evaluation practices as vehicle for
instructional improvement (Askins, 1983; Bailey, 1981; Brandt, 1996; Hanan and Kuklinski, 1983; Herbert, 1992; Schwartz, 1992). Believing that adults ought to be afforded a level of choice enjoyed by their students, McGreal commented that “we can’t pride ourselves on individualizing instruction for students and then treat all adults exactly alike” (qtd. in Brandt, 1996, p. 33).

In developing this newly-enhanced role of the practitioner in personalized professional development, Fulmer (1993) recommended “reflective practice:” the examination of an individual’s own actions and contrast of the actions to the ideal or the intent of practice. Fulmer asserted that reflective practice can result in behavioral changes that improve professional performance. Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) took a more emphatic position on the central importance of reflection in practice. They asserted that “unless we change behaviors, organizations will not change . . . to create change, then, we must examine our own behaviors carefully, bring unexamined assumptions to awareness, and consciously self-monitor both our behaviors and our assumptions” (p. 1).

Reflective practice was viewed by Osterman and Kottkamp as a contemporary expression of the traditional conception of “experiential learning.” An experiential learning cycle, as described by Dewey, included four phases: (a) concrete experience, (b) observation and analysis, (c) abstract reconceptualization, and (d) active experimentation. Others, including Long (1994) and Peters (1991), also describe four phase cycles as being useful in reflective practice. Employing such a cycle emphasizes a shift in teacher development from a traditional model which is characterized by knowledge acquisition, a rational basis for change, and change via standardized knowledge to the reflective practice model which is characterized by “behavioral change, rational/emotional/social/cultural bases for change, and change via self-awareness” (p. 41).
A variety of methods have been shown to enhance reflection, including response journals (Bean and Zulich, 1989; Cooper and Dunlap, 1989; Jalongo, 1992; Kottkamp, 1990; Langer and Colton, 1994; McAlpine, 1992; Stephens and Reimer, 1990; Strom, 1992; Voss, 1988), simulations of crisis decisions and analysis of critical incidents (Brookfield, 1992; Kottkamp, 1990; Tama and Peterson, 1991), stimulated recall (Harris and Wear, 1993), writing (Kottkamp, 1990), case records (Kottkamp, 1990), instrument feedback (Kottkamp, 1990), electronic feedback (Kottkamp, 1990; Langler and Colton, 1994), shadowing and reflective interviewing (Kottkamp, 1990), personal histories (Langer and Colton, 1994), role playing (Langer and Colton, 1994), and action research (Langer and Colton, 1994).

In terms of outcomes, Kelsay (1993) found that professional knowledge was created by teachers as they interacted with a complexity of variables, including reflective practice, in the development of high quality teaching. A qualitative study designed to identify key factors in teacher reflection, Kelsay found two main categories of reflective activity: problem solving and theory building. Both may occur as “reflection-on-action,” or thinking about teaching, or “reflection-in-action,” or reflection while teaching. Personal theories of teaching were found to be developed as the three teachers in Kelsay’s study engaged in problem solving to integrate their beliefs, knowledge, and experience into their present teaching context.

Imel (1992), in considering the role of reflective practice in adult education, observed that while experience forms an important basis for learning, reflection was an essential element of learning as it serves the sense-making function. Pointing out that reflection can positively affect professional growth, Imel also observed that reflection takes time and may involve personal risk. Reflective practice can be a tool for revealing discrepancies between theory and practice according to Imel, who also
suggested a four-step process - describe, analyze, theorize, and act - for practitioners looking for a structure for reflection-on-action.

Kent (1993), in considering linkage between the current movements toward reform in teacher development and reflective practice, suggested that teachers who reflect are better able to accomplish their goals. Strom (1992) reported that effective teachers were able to develop practices of inquiry about their own practice. Athanases (1993) described the difficulty of reflection in teaching, given the norms of the profession and the context of the work. Teacher reflection resulted in adaptation and tailoring of lessons to different class populations and changing circumstances. Others (Brodky, 1993; Calderhead, 1993; and Zeichnew, 1990) suggested that teacher reflection should not be expected to develop without ongoing teacher development and the ongoing nurturance of the habits of reflection.

Self-assessment and reflective practice, in general, have been shown to offer promising results for teacher professional development while a number of structures have been shown to be effective in promoting self-assessment and reflection. When combined with empowerment for change and collaboration, these practices may hold promising possibilities. But is free-rein empowerment and isolated self-assessment an effective direction for positive change? Or is there a format, a structure for organizing data collection for self-assessment and reflection which will also include the best elements of empowerment, collaboration, and change?

**Teaching Portfolios**

While portfolios have been considered a standard means for displaying products or demonstrating competence in the arts, the conception of portfolios as being useful in public schools is a more recent development. The current interest in student portfolios has grown out of a concern for deeper assessment of student progress. A dissatisfaction with and questions about the
usefulness of standardized testing and teacher-developed testing and grading as accurate and complete methods of assessing student learning has resulted in initiatives for “alternatives” to the traditional methods which have been found to be lacking by many practitioners (Elbow, 1991). In considering the utility of portfolios for assessment of student writing, for example, Elbow observed that “portfolio assessment occupies an interesting in-between area between the clean, artificial world of carefully controlled assessment and the swampy real world of offices and livingrooms where people actually write things for a purpose” (p. xii).

Classroom teachers have found that the use of portfolios with their students has had many positive outcomes, including: an increase in student motivation, a sense of a greater involvement in their own learning, a responsibility for the management of their own learning, a more accurate documentation of student growth and progress, the development of an effective vehicle for communicating student performance data to parents, and increased self-reflection, according to Scott (1995).

Fontana (1995) charted the development of portfolios in the current wave of interest in alternative assessment practices.

The use of portfolio assessment was once just another way of documenting and evaluating a student’s ability, especially in art. Portfolios, like other authentic assessment techniques, were used by teachers, but sparingly and only in subject areas where they gave superior insight . . . It was the ongoing movement toward authentic assessment, advocated by Grant Wiggins (1998) and others in professional publications; the use of performance-based assessment techniques by teachers of foreign language, physical education, business subjects, and vocational courses; rallied by proponents of process writing; and strengthened by the National Council of Teachers of Math’s national standards that led to today’s portfolio mania (p. 25).

Reckase (1995) reported that “portfolios have been used in the classroom tool for some time . . . in 1977, the Ministry of Education for the Province of Ontario encouraged teachers to establish ‘writing folders’ to
support instruction and evaluation... Since the 1980's, the portfolio concept has become more formal as proponents have suggested that portfolios of students' work can be used to enhance instruction and provide information useful for the purposes of evaluation" (p. 31).

While student writing may regularly be collected in portfolios, student products across curriculum areas have increasingly also been collected in portfolios. In both cases, portfolios serve two purposes: assessment and the demonstration of competence. However, portfolios have also been observed to increase collaboration and "community" (Belenoff & Elbow, 1991) and a sense of "empowerment" among portfolio users (Wauters, 1991), at least when considered in the context of writing instruction.

In their overview of current practices in testing and assessment, Ryan and Miyasaka (1995) described student portfolios as "a collection of a student's work developed over a period of time" (p. 5). Ryan and Miyasaka recognized that "portfolio assessment is a complex process for assessing students, but it has certain worthwhile benefits." Among other benefits for students, portfolios placed "more responsibility on students in several ways, beginning with the requirement that students select the pieces that go into the portfolio. Students must think about their own learning when they write a rationale explaining why they selected the entries they included... Portfolios," concluded Ryan and Miyasaka, "provide a very useful vehicle for communicating students' progress to students and their parents" (p. 5 - 6).

Gilman, Andrew, and Rafferty (1995) identified several common features of student portfolios. These features included a documentation of meaningful activities as a demonstration of student growth and interests.

The preparation of a portfolio presents opportunities for reflection. As students go over their work, deciding what to include in the portfolio, they make critical evaluation judgments about their work. Rather than relying on a teacher to tell them what is good or bad, they develop their own criteria for what
constitutes quality or weak effort (p. 22).

Wiggins (1998) recognized the "uncertainty" that surrounds much of the current applications of portfolios as tools for student assessment. Essential - yet unanswered - questions include "what is the purpose" and "who is the audience" for portfolio development (p. 189). Wiggins identified eight different potential uses for student portfolios, ranging from showcases for a student's best work or interests or growth to professional assessments to work collections for the purposes of achieving and documenting. Too often, according to Wiggins, the purpose of portfolios have not been "thought through" (p. 190) by educators employing them. As a result, the collections which are called "portfolios" hold "no real value" (p. 192) in many applications.

In considering the opportunities that have been realized by student portfolios, however, it may, in retrospect, seem that a small step was taken to consideration of portfolio use by practitioners. The path of student portfolio development - with recognition of its value for individual reflection, self-assessment, and personal growth - and the path of professional development - with its need for greater individual analysis, self-determination, and personal growth - may seem now to have been destined to cross. Eventually, the paths did indeed cross. Within approximately the last five to seven years, the literature revealed the first attention to teaching portfolios. Teaching portfolios have served several specific purposes, but reported uses fall chiefly within the two main purposes identified for student portfolios: assessment and the demonstration of competence.

Wolf (1994) defined teaching portfolios as "purposeful and selective collections of a person's work and reflections" (p. 108). Wolf reported on the range of such collections and reflections which are commonly included in the broad conception of a teaching portfolio. This range included the
“scrapbook,” “the most common format . . . [which] is a collection of assorted mementos that has strong personal meaning for the portfolio owner, such as photographs of the classroom and affectionate notes from parents and students . . . [but is] virtually indecipherable to anyone other than its owner” (p. 110). A second “frequently observed type of portfolio is the ‘overflowing container’ . . . [which] is a box or other such container simply filled with “nearly everything that the teacher and students have created all year” (p. 110). Wolf termed a third type of portfolio a “resume on steroids . . . [which] documents a teacher’s experiences in much the same fashion as a resume by listing activities and accomplishments but in much greater detail . . . [and] might include degrees obtained, work experiences, conferences attended, awards received, and the names of people who can recommend the teacher’s work” (p. 110). Wolf criticized this latter type of portfolio, observing that such portfolios had not included any evidence of quality of action or thought.

Kurtz (1996) described one such portfolio project. Reporting on a California elementary school’s plan to help teachers develop portfolios for the purpose of year-end teacher evaluation, Kurtz reported that the teachers used cardboard boxes to collect a range of artifacts which included student work samples, photographs of class activities, lesson materials, letters from parents, and other items. The “portfolio” was then constructed at the end of the school year of the materials which found their way into the boxes.

Several authors, however, reported attempts to bring portfolios beyond the act of collecting which Wolf describes. Snyder (1993) reported on a pilot project conducted with student teachers. Students indicated a belief that their portfolios presented an accurate picture of their skills and experiences while portfolio reviewers observed that a sense of collegiality emerged during the process of portfolio construction. Stroble (1992) also reported on a project involving student teachers’ portfolio construction and concluded that the
portfolios served as powerful learning devices. Tierney (1993) reported on a study of twelve school districts and fourteen preservice and inservice programs which used teacher portfolios for various purposes. Teacher education programs reported using portfolios as a means of increasing teacher reflection and providing a record of teacher growth to be discussed with others while some school districts reported using portfolios as a way for teachers to demonstrate professional growth; some districts reported using portfolios as a part of the teacher certification system.

Green and Smyster (1996) described the work of three teachers who developed portfolios for the dual purposes of professional development and performance evaluation. The authors reported their finding that portfolios provided an effective supervisory method and a powerful staff development practice. They identified sample rubrics for developing portfolio evaluation of teaching performance.

Bull, Montgomery, Coombs, Sebastian & Fletcher (1994) reported on a survey of elementary and secondary teachers and administrators on the usefulness of portfolios in teacher hiring and evaluation. Portfolio assessment was perceived as being a positive addition to the teacher hiring process while teachers favored the uniqueness, empowerment, and self-evaluative control involved in portfolio assessment when used for evaluation. The authors also reported that respondents showed moderate levels of knowledge concerning the portfolio process and suggested that greater knowledge was found to be needed about portfolio processes such as establishing goal statements and reflections, early documentation to demonstrate professional growth over time, and appropriate products of teaching portfolios.

Several authors (Boileau, 1993; Centaur, 1993; Edgerton et al, 1991; Murray, 1994; Robinson, 1993; and Seldin, 1991) reported on the use of teaching portfolios in higher education settings. Reports variously concluded
that found that portfolios assisted evaluators of teaching performance (Centaur, 1993), commented on the need for a supportive climate in the portfolio development process (Murray, 1994), observed the time-consuming nature of the process and the reported on an observation of participants that the process was not useful to portfolio developers (Robinson, 1993). Additionally, it has been reported that participants in one study believed that portfolios for personnel decisions should be differentiated from portfolios for teaching improvement (Seldin, 1991). Boileau (1993) concluded that portfolios enhanced reflective thinking about teaching and that portfolio construction resulted in the creation of dialogues about teaching. Certainly, portfolios have experienced a broad application, with mixed and varying results.

Blake, Bachman, Frys, Holbert, Ivan and Sellitto (1995) asserted that

If the purpose of evaluation is to improve the teaching/learning process, a different method must be used. The inclusion of reflective practices must become part of this new method if professional growth is to occur. One way schools can promote reflection and self-assessment is to encourage the use of teacher portfolios (p. 38).

Wolf (1991) reported on the so-called Teacher Assessment Project which sought to develop portfolio procedures to assist the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards. Wolf contrasted potential problems - "portfolios are messy to construct, cumbersome to store, difficult to score, and vulnerable to misrepresentation" (p. 129) - with potential benefits - "no other method of assessment can equal them in providing a connection to the contexts and personal histories of real teaching . . . teachers felt that their portfolios accurately reflected what took place in their classrooms" (p. 136).

But does a potential for teacher development exist beyond the use of portfolios as documentation of competence, beyond the collection of materials which may help an observer reach a judgment about the performance of the individual practitioner? McGreevy (1995) cited several potential benefits in
portfolio development which included influences upon the teacher which also extended to the school environment. Portfolios, McGreevy believed, can help a teacher become a reflective practitioner and can contribute to the development of a school as a community of learners. Teachers, McGreevy felt, should include curriculum artifacts that haven’t proven to be successful with students as well as entries that demonstrate teacher competence, as it is the self-reflective “why?” which may result in the value for the individual and the collaboration with colleagues which can result in a changed climate for the school.

Wolf (1991), while reporting primarily on the summative function of a teaching portfolio, also acknowledged the potential of formative benefits: “. . . their larger contribution may lie in the ways that they can reshape the profession of teaching. Portfolios can give teachers a purpose and framework for preserving and sharing their work, provide occasions for mentoring and collegial interactions, and stimulate teachers to reflect on their own work and on the act of teaching” (p. 136).

The chief value of portfolios lies in the ways that they can contribute to the professional growth of teachers. It is important to keep in mind, however, that teaching portfolios are a means, not an end. The objective is not to create wonderful portfolios but “wonderful” teaching (Duckworth, 1987). When carefully conceived, portfolios are a powerful vehicle for improving the quality of teaching in our schools, and it is this professional development goals that should constantly guide decisions about the design and implementation of portfolios (Wolf, 1994).

Langer (1996) likened the portfolio development process to the action research process in which an individual (a) identifies problems and goals, (b) develops an action plan to reach the goal, (c) collects data on the process, and (d) reflects on the process. The final step in which teachers “pull all the pieces together” is essential. Langer asserted that teachers should “describe what they learned from the process and how their professional practice has
improved as a result . . . veteran teachers should be encouraged to use the portfolio development process as an opportunity to self-assess and improve their teaching. Creating a professional development portfolio . . . offers teachers a much more powerful learning experience [than presentation portfolios] (p. 6).”

Lumpkin (1996) agreed that there are advantages to be gained by teachers developing teaching portfolios. Portfolios, according to Lumpkin, helped teachers to examine their teaching and how they change as teachers. Self-reflective statements, according to Lumpkin, must be supported by artifacts, feedback, and examples of teaching products.

Wagenen and Hibbard (1998) reported on a large portfolio project which engaged more than 65 teachers in Connecticut. The outcome of this project for many was summed up by a participant high school social studies teacher, who stated: “The students constantly are asked to assess their work and the work of their peers. Because this is such a valuable teaching tool [the portfolio], it makes sense that we as teachers assess our own teaching methods, too” (p. 28). In summation, Wagenen and Hibbard reported that that the participants “learned the art of reflection and the value of collaboration” (p. 28).

Hurst, Wilson, and Cramer (1998) reported on the work of education school professors with teaching portfolios. At first, they reported their thinking about portfolios was colored by a job-seeker who was told that her employment was owed to her presentation of her teaching portfolio. After working with their students who were preparing for employment as teachers, Hurst, Wilson, and Cramer reported having their original belief that portfolios were helpful in the placement and advancement processes confirmed; but they also reported that they had found teaching portfolios helpful in refining “an individual’s professional and personal goals” as well as being helpful in
encouraging reflection (p. 582).

Finally, Golomb (1996) asserted that “portfolios let teachers reflect on their practice while showing others what happens in their classrooms” (p. 50) while long-time student of and one of the most prolific writers on teacher portfolios, Wolf (1996), concluded that portfolios can significantly advance a teacher’s professional growth as well as preserve evidence of exemplary teaching over an extended period of time.

Educators have begun to consider teaching portfolios as tools to meet several goals. As with many of their students, teachers have considered the utility of portfolios in enhancing their own growth. Portfolios seem to provide a structure for the collection of information about teaching and for reflection about and analysis of this information as teachers grow in their profession. Portfolios may hold potential for combining what we now know about school change, staff development, and adult learning. The question remains: can the teaching portfolio become a vehicle for professional growth?
CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

This study seeks first to provide an answer to the grand tour question: does the development of teacher portfolios result in reflection, self-assessment, and professional development on the part of those teachers who choose to develop teaching portfolios?

Secondarily, in considering this main question, several sub-questions are also considered. These include the following: Why would participants choose to develop portfolios? What artifacts were included in the portfolios? What did the choice of artifacts reveal about the teacher and the teacher's beliefs and values? Did a portfolio-development group which met regularly under the guidance of a facilitator support individual development? What changes in teacher thinking or behavior resulted from portfolio development? How were the effectiveness of these changes assessed? Will the participants choose to continue the development of their portfolios following the study? What suggestions do the participants have for others considering the utility of portfolios?

To address these questions, a qualitative design best serves the needs of the study. Such a design emphasizes "a holistic interpretation" and seeks to provide understanding of a social phenomenon in a "context-specific" setting (Wiersma, 1991, p. 14). Predispositions of the qualitative mode emphasize the context as opposed to generalizability, interpretation as opposed to prediction, and an "understanding of the actors' perspectives" as opposed to "causal
explanations” (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 7).

In this study, three case studies of elementary school teachers engaged in a year-long process of professional portfolio development are constructed. Data collection has been conducted through interviews and document collection: three teaching portfolios developed by the participants. Data analysis entails a cross-case analysis which includes description, data reduction, data organization, and theory checking (Wiersma, 1991, p. 83).

Assumptions and Rationale for a Qualitative Design

The qualitative paradigm, according to Creswell (1994), is defined “as an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and constructed in a natural setting” (p. 1). Qualitative research, according to Merriam (1988), “assumes that there are multiple realities - that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring . . . Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends” (p. 17).

Merriam (1988) identified six assumptions underlying the qualitative paradigm:

1. Qualitative research is concerned with “processes rather than ends” (p. 17). In this study, it is the process of portfolio construction with its potential to support the professional development of teachers which is of concern. This study seeks greater understanding of this process, what it includes and what it excludes, relative to the eventual classroom experiences of the teachers’ students.

2. Qualitative research is “interested in meaning - how people make sense of their lives, what they experience, how they interpret these experiences, how they structure their world” (p. 19). A concern in this study
is how participating teachers made sense of the portfolio construction process: what steps were identified as essential; what steps were identified as non-essential; what items were selected for inclusion in the portfolios; the reasons why were such items included; what issues were addressed; which issues were not. The experiences of the participants as they negotiated the steps in the portfolio construction process are considered. In addition to the construction of the portfolios, this study is also concerned with what this experience meant in the classroom lives of the teachers and students. In other words, what difference did this portfolio development process make in the teaching and the classrooms of these teachers.

3. The qualitative paradigm holds that the “researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines” (p. 19). In this study, the researcher became an active participant with the subject participants in the process of portfolio construction. The researcher participated in group meetings as the various elements of portfolio construction are discussed; the researcher interacted with the teachers and their portfolios in the data collection process.

4. Qualitative research “involves fieldwork. One must physically go to the people, setting, site, institution, in order to observe behavior in its natural setting . . . Most investigations that describe and interpret a social unit or process. as in case studies, necessitate becoming intimately familiar with the phenomenon being studied” (p. 19). Erickson (1986) considered the emphasis on interpretation to be the distinctive characteristic of qualitative inquiry. As stated above, the researcher participated as an active member of the portfolio construction group, constructed a portfolio of his own, and interacted with the teachers, their portfolios, and their classrooms in the data collection process.

5. Qualitative research is descriptive; it is concerned with “process,
meaning, and understanding” (p. 19). It is through words and pictures, rather than through numbers, that the process and meaning of portfolio construction, and the influence of such a process, can best be described and understood.

6. Qualitative research “builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses, or theories, rather than testing existing theory” which stands in contrast to deductive research which hopes “to find data to match a theory” (p. 20). In this study, the research begins with no “existing theory” but rather is concerned with the application of an experimental process to an unaccustomed setting.

The Case Study

This study utilizes a qualitative case study design. The case study is preferred in examining contemporary events, when the relevant behaviors cannot be manipulated. Thus, the case study relies on many of the same techniques as a history, but it adds two sources of evidence not usually included in the historian’s repertoire: direct observation and systematic interviewing. Again, although case studies and histories can overlap, the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence - documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations (Yin, qtd. in Merriam, 1988, p. 8).

Merriam further discussed the main points in the decision to choose the qualitative case study design, concluding that the “deciding factor” occurs when a “bounded system can be identified as the focus of the investigation. That is, a case study is an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group. The bounded system, or case, might be selected because it is an instance of some concern, issue, or hypothesis” (p. 9 - 10). In this study, the three cases included the study of the portfolios of each of three teachers who engaged in
the year-long process of portfolio development. Additionally, each of the three teachers participated in structured interviews through which the process of portfolio development, as well as outcomes of the portfolio process, were explored. In other words, three case studies have been conducted to describe the process and outcomes of portfolio construction by each of the three teachers in this study.

Stake (1994) supported his use of the term "case study," in stating that "it draws attention to the question of what specifically can be learned from the single case" (p. 236). In applying Stake's conception of case study to the cases under consideration here, the researcher seeks to "optimize understanding of the case rather than generalization beyond" (Id.). Each "case" examined is expected to be unique and its usefulness in understanding both itself - any single one of the three teacher portfolios under consideration - as well as provide a local context for the other two "cases" under consideration. Such a consideration of "a population of cases" (Stake, p. 237) illuminates the understanding of each of the single, individual cases.

More specifically, Stake described three different purposes for utilizing case study methodology. These included: (a) "intrinsic case study," which is utilized when the researcher seeks to better understand one particular and specific case; (b) "instrumental case study," which is utilized to "provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory" and in which the case plays a secondary or supportive role to the issue under study; and (c) "collective case study," which is utilized when several cases are to be studied. In this latter variation, which was utilized for this inquiry, the researcher studied "a number of cases jointly in order to inquire into the phenomenon," in this case, the construction of teaching portfolios.

Population

Three elementary school teachers who were employed in a rural New
Hampshire elementary school were the subjects studied in this project. The three teachers represented individuals at different career stages: at the time of this study, the teachers were in their second, seventh, and twentieth years of teaching, respectively. The former two teachers were women; the latter teacher was a man. All three were voluntary participants in a year-long portfolio development course offered at the school by a local college. The course participants received three college credits for their participation in the project. The three subjects represented half of the teachers or administrators who participated in the course.

The Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher as the primary data collection instrument necessitates the identification of assumptions, biases, and influences upon the research setting at the outset. This study took place in a school district consisting of two schools. During the 1992-1993 school year, a group of teachers assigned to the researcher's building and I (serving as building principal at the time) engaged in an ongoing conversation regarding the possibilities of developing teacher portfolios as vehicles for fulfilling a requirement for self-assessment which is part of the district's annual teaching evaluation process. As a result of these conversations with several individual faculty members, a study group formed during the 1993-1994 school year; this group met periodically to discuss portfolio development and several participants experimented with portfolio development. However, the process did not result in a systematic process for the development of portfolios by group members. Throughout this process, I was viewed as a proponent of professional portfolio development and struggled with the development of my own portfolio.

In the 1995-1996 school year, a professor from a nearby private college conducted a professional portfolio development course conducted on-site in
the participant teachers' school; four teachers, the school district's other principal (the elementary school principal), and I were the course participants. For the duration of the course, I served as the middle school principal in the same district. In this role, I held no supervisory responsibilities over the teachers involved in the course who were all assigned to the district's elementary school. In the spring of the 1995-1996 school year, near the completion of the course, I was appointed to serve as the district's superintendent of schools. However, my tenure in this position, in which I would eventually serve in an indirect supervisory capacity over the teacher-participants, would not begin until the course had been completed. Having made the arrangements for this course, I continue to be viewed as a proponent of this process.

It was during the 1996-1997 school year that the interviews took place. At this time, as noted above, I served the district as superintendent of schools. As such, I was an indirect supervisor of the participants, but did not supervise participants on a day-to-day basis. Additionally, again as noted, I interacted with participants as a course member in the portfolio development project.

Consistent with the qualitative mode, the researcher's role is not represented by the detached, impartial, objective observer of the quantitative mode. Rather, the researcher's role is characterized by "personal involvement and partiality" with regard to the participants and the issues raised in the study as well as an "empathic understanding" of the participants and issues (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 7). The open approach permits the researcher to capitalize on rapport developed with the subjects both prior to and during the process of portfolio development in reaching an understanding of the subjects' engagement of the process. Additionally, the qualitative mode permits the researcher to develop a depth of understanding gained by maintaining active participation in the year-long process which an
observer not so engaged would find impossible to achieve.

**Data Collection Procedures**

Data was collected during the 1996-1997 school year, the school year immediately following the development of the portfolios. Data collection included an examination of the completed portfolios and a series of three structured interviews conducted with each of the three participants as well as an examination of participant journals/logs which were maintained during the year-long portfolio development process. The journals offered participant impressions recorded during the portfolio construction process, providing a commentary to the artifacts included in their portfolios themselves.

Each of the three structured interviews centered around one general theme: (a) the first interview, a biographical sketch; (b) the second interview, the portfolio process; and (c) the third interview, the outcomes of the process for the participants. The interviews included the following basic questions and prompts for each of the participants:

**Biographical Sketch**

1. Describe your own elementary school experience.
2. What led to your decision to become a teacher?
3. Describe your teacher preparation program.
4. Describe your career path to this point.
5. Where do you expect to go from here in your career?
6. What rewards do you gain from teaching?
7. What frustrates you about teaching?
8. How has your view of teaching changed since getting started?
9. What do you see as the major issues confronting educators today?
10. What changes would you like to see in our schools?
11. How do you feel about the following issues:
- student discipline;
- assessment;
- technology;
- special education;
- role of the state and federal governments in schools;
- establishment of standards;
- supervision of teaching;
- teaching thinking;
- challenging the more capable students;
- influence of special interest groups on schools;
- grouping for instruction;
- education for character;
- professional development;
- decision-making processes in schools;
- at-risk students.

The Portfolio Process

1. What was your experience with portfolios prior to this experience?
2. Why were you initially interested in constructing your own portfolio?
3. What did you expect to gain from the experience?
4. What surprised you about your experience?
5. What disappointed you about your experience?
6. What advantages or disadvantages did you working in a group offer you?
7. How did your view of the process change over the course of the year?
8. How important was the facilitator in the process?
9. How much time did you devote to portfolio construction?
10. What influence, if any, did your participation in this process have on your teaching during the year?
11. How did you choose the items included in your portfolio?
12. What did you think about including but ended up leaving out? Why?
13. What else do you think might have been useful to you in including?
14. How did the work of others in the group influence you in choosing items to include?
15. Did your involvement in the process influence your relationships with others?
16. Would you recommend this process to others? Why or why not?
17. What changes to the process would you suggest for others interested in constructing portfolios?

Outcomes of the Process

1. What have you done with your portfolio since completing it?
2. Do you have future plans for your portfolio?
3. Has your participation in this process had any influence on your teaching during your participation?
4. Has your participation in this process had any influence on your teaching since your completion of the process?
5. What changes have you made as a direct result of your participation?
6. What changes may be an indirect result of your participation?
7. What practices were reinforced as a result of your participation?
8. This process began with teachers considering alternatives to the self-assessment requirement of our teaching evaluation plan. Has this process aided you in self-assessment?

9. Has this process contributed to your own thinking about your teaching?

10. Have you identified areas for professional development as a result of your participation in this process?

11. Have you followed through on those plans?

12. What would you say to teachers who are considering putting together a portfolio?

Data Analysis Procedures

Data reporting includes "collecting information from the field, sorting information into categories, formatting the information into a . . . story, and actually writing the qualitative text" (Creswell, 1994, p. 153). A "thick description" is provided for each individual case. A biographical sketch is provided for each teacher, an itemized accounting of each artifact included in individual portfolios is constructed, a consideration of each teacher's interaction with the portfolio development process will be made, and a reflection of each individual on the effects of the process following the completion of the portfolios is explored.

In considering the individual case data, a cross-case analysis is conducted to examine the findings in each of the three individual cases in the context of the other cases. Stenhouse (qtd. in Merriam, 1988) pointed out that "a case is an instance, not a representative, of a class - that is, in the statistical-experimental paradigm one is interested in selecting a sample that is representative of a certain population, whereas a case is selected because it is an example of some phenomenon of interest" (p. 153). A case study approach has been selected in this instance because of an interest in
understanding the portfolio development process in a holistic manner. Truly, it would be challenging to consider the portfolio development process in any other way.

A cross-case study involves the collection and analysis of data from several cases. In studying the success of various school improvement initiatives in urban high schools, Louis and Miles (1990) collected and analyzed five cases while Wagner (1994) collected and analyzed data from three cases in his study of improvement efforts in three high schools. Each case in these examples was first treated as a case in and of itself. The presentation of each case was then followed by a cross-case analysis in which generalizations about high school improvement projects were offered. A value of this method, cross-case analysis, is an increase in the potential to generalize beyond a single case; “by comparing sites or cases, one can establish the range of generality of a finding or explanation, and at the same time, pin down the conditions under which that finding will occur” (Miles and Huberman, qtd. in Merriam, 1988, p. 154).

In developing this analysis, an attempt is made “to build a general explanation that fits each of the individual cases, even though the cases will vary in their details” (Yin, 1984, p. 108). “Comparing as many differences and similarities in data as possible . . . tends to force the analyst to generate categories, their properties, and their interrelations as he tries to understand his data” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 55). In so doing, relationships and trends between and among the singular cases may emerge which may otherwise have been overlooked.

**Methods for Verification**

“To ensure internal validity, the following strategies will be employed” (p. 167) as recommended by Creswell:

1. Triangulation - Data has been collected from the three participants
through multiple sources, including artifacts, journals, and interviews; Strake (1995) identified four triangulation protocols: data source, investigative, theory, and methodological; methodological is the most widely recognized of the protocols.

2. Member checking - An ongoing dialogue regarding the researcher's interpretations and the participant's reality will be employed to ensure accuracy.

3. Long term observations and interviews - Interviews will take place over short period of time of several months but will reflect the year-long portfolio construction experience and extend beyond the one-year limitation of the course itself.

4. Clarification of researcher bias - At the outset of this study, the researcher identifies and articulates bias under the heading of "The Researcher's Role" in this report.

Consistent with standards for qualitative and case study research, it is not the intent of this researcher to conclude with generalizable findings. Rather, limited generalizability may be anticipated through the interpretation of a unique process of events and participants: of the three cases.

**Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Theory and Literature**

Consistent with the qualitative research paradigm, the results of this study are presented in a descriptive, narrative form rather than as a scientific report. Essential elements of report findings include a discussion of the problem which suggested the study, a description of the context in which the study took place, a description of the portfolios constructed by the three teachers, a description and an analysis of the processes observed in the study, a description of the key themes which emerge, and a discussion of the outcomes of the study. Finally, care is taken throughout to maintain a descriptive, rather than a conclusive, tone. Wolcott (1990) advised that in
reporting qualitative research, after all, the researcher avoids "the term conclusion" and that he does "not want to work toward a grand flourish that might tempt me beyond the boundaries of the material I have been presenting or detract from the power (and exceed the limitations) of an individual case" (p. 55).
CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

Introduction

The data are organized into four parts. The first section, The Teachers: A History, introduces the three teachers who participated in the study, both their professional backgrounds and viewpoints are described. The biographical sketches of the teachers are provided to establish a context for an examination of their portfolios. In Portfolios, the second section provides descriptions of the three teaching portfolios. An annotated listing of the artifacts included in each portfolio is presented. This data was collected through an examination of each of the portfolios. Development of the Portfolios, the third section, examines the portfolio development process from the participants' points of view. Primarily through interviews conducted after the portfolios have been completed, but also through an examination of personal journals maintained during the process of portfolio development, the process is described from each of three individual points of view. In the fourth section, Reflection on the Process, the participants reflected on the portfolio development process, considering how the process has affected them and their teaching, from a distance of about one year following the completion of their portfolios.

The three participants were engaged in a series of three structured interviews in which they discussed their backgrounds and beliefs as well as their experiences with the portfolio development process. The interviews were intended to stimulate the participants to reflect on the process, to
consider how it has influenced their teaching, and to reflect on the utility of
the development of teaching portfolios for other teachers interested in
professional development. The original portfolio development project
extended from September through May, over the course of a full school year.
The interviews were structured (questions are listed in chapter 3) and were
conducted in the springtime, March through May, in the following school
year. At the time of the interviews, about one year had elapsed from the
conclusion of the portfolio development project. Unless other sources are
indicated, quotations included in the first, third, and fourth sections in this
chapter are taken from the interviews; data and quotations included in the
second section in this chapter are taken from examination of the teaching
portfolios, including the portfolio journals which were maintained
throughout the year of the portfolio project.

The Teachers: A History

In this section, The Teachers: A History, the presentation of data begins
with an introduction of the three teachers who developed teaching portfolios.
A brief biographical sketch is provided to afford the opportunity to gain an
understanding of the three different personal contexts in which the teaching
portfolios were created. The usefulness of a study of this nature hinges upon a
recognition of the complexity of human lives. Because individuals construct
their own meanings, the participants' experiences, thoughts, values, and
understandings contribute to a very personal portfolio experience for each
person. Similarities and differences may be noted, underscoring the
complexity of the process of change for both individuals and schools.

Two stonemasons . . . were engaged in similar activity. Asked
what they were doing, one answered, "I'm squaring up this block
of stone." The other replied, "I'm building a cathedral." The
first may have been underemployed; the second was not. Clearly
what counts is not so much the work a person does, but what he
perceives he is doing it for. (Harman, qtd. in Caine and Caine,
52

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Karen. During the year of portfolio development, Karen was a third year, first grade teacher in a rural elementary school of about 550 students, which houses grades from one through five. A Dean’s List student in her undergraduate years, Karen held a Bachelor of Science degree in Family and Consumer Studies and a Masters of Education degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Experiential Education, both awarded by the nearby state university. During her engagement in her teacher preparation program, Karen served as a teacher aide in the university’s child study and development center and also served as a summer school instructor in a local elementary school. Additionally, Karen completed a full-year internship in a first grade classroom as a requirement of her academic program and served as an assistant director of a child care center.

In her three years of teaching, Karen had served on her school’s preschool screening team, participated on a district strategic planning committee, and served as treasurer of a regional association of teachers of reading. In her “Statement of Educational Philosophy,” a portfolio entry, Karen stated that “schooling has the potential to be the most influential growth experience in an individual’s life” and considered the “educator’s need to focus on the whole child, that is, classroom experiences should include the development of each child’s mental, physical, social, emotional, and cognitive abilities.”

Developing her “Statement,” Karen expressed her belief that “a teacher should not only accept individual differences in students, but provide a positive environment where each child feels important and appreciated.” To support the accomplishment of this aim, Karen stated that she believed that “a teacher/student relationship needs to be built on a strong foundation of mutual trust and respect. The teacher should maintain high expectations of students and make these expectations known to students, staff, and parents.
alike.” To effectively do so, Karen stated that she felt that teachers should assume a “facilitator” role for their students in their classrooms, “presenting material in several different ways and offering as many hands-on activities as possible.”

In reflecting on her own elementary school experience during an interview, which occurred about one year after the conclusion of the portfolio project, Karen recalled that “it [her elementary school experience] was always very, very boring.” Reinforcing her generally negative memory of these school years, Karen remembered a time during her first grade year in which she provided answers to calculations to a friend during a “mad minute” math activity. She recalled that she “got in trouble” as a result and further recalled that she remembered thinking that she shouldn’t share anything in school as a result of this experience. She described her school as “very rigid.” Specifically she remembered “sitting in rows;” conversely, Karen remembered recess and extracurricular activities as her favorite school activities. Karen stated that she believed that, because of these experiences, she chose to become an elementary school teacher to “make change” and to “help children enjoy learning,” and credited her parents and grandparents for supporting her learning and helping her to develop an enjoyment of learning, as well as “one or two” teachers who influenced her in positive terms. She named and described her own sixth grade teacher as having exerted a positive influence upon her, specifically describing this teacher as one who created a classroom environment which was a “little more fun” and a “little more challenging” than the norm in her elementary school experiences. Importantly in her view, Karen’s sixth grade teacher also demonstrated personal respect for all learners. Karen recalled that although she was always in the “high group” for reading, she empathized with the children in the “low group,” reflecting her sixth grade teacher’s sense of “respect for all learners.”
Karen began her college career with the intention of becoming a teacher. Two factors influenced this decision. First, Karen enjoyed being with young children and enjoyed the notion of teaching. "As a young kid, I'd teach my dolls; I'd teach my teddy bears," she stated in the course of her interviews. "I always liked helping people." Second, Karen fondly recalled the "hands-on" learning experiences which her mother provided for her: "I learned in the woods, I learned in the ponds, I learned in the world; just by doing it. It was a lot of fun and I wanted to do that same thing" [that her mother had done for her].

When she started to visit public school classrooms to conduct observations during her undergraduate years, Karen felt that her view broadened as to the potentialities for elementary school classrooms. In her teacher training program, Karen found that the practicum classes and other experiential opportunities to develop her knowledge and skills in public school education represented a significant strength of her program and would have liked to have more of such experiences, having found that the full-year internship "was the best thing for me . . . I had to learn . . . I learned by doing." A weakness of her program was its failure to accurately represent the "behind the scenes" aspects of teaching - the planning, record keeping, paperwork, special education requirements, and meetings - which she found to be "overwhelming" when she started to teach on her own. In her third year of teaching at the time of this study, Karen acknowledged that she is "still struggling" to determine an effective, purposeful method of observing students and keeping records of data collected on her students to the benefit of both her students and their parents.

Karen also stated that she believed that her teacher training program could have been stronger with additional training and experience in the area of special education. She reported in her interviews that she had "felt stupid"
at special education team meetings because of her limited knowledge base and lack of experience in this field, and sensed a failure in her ability to contribute to team decisions in a manner which significantly helped her students and their parents. As noted above, Karen stated that she felt under prepared in methods of observing individual students at work in her classroom and in keeping records of her observations which would eventually contribute to a team approach in developing an educational plan for students. Training in "observing and recording," even at the time of her interviews, would be helpful to Karen, she believed, potentially strengthening her contributions in special education team planning and also improving the quality of the required quarterly student assessment reports which she provided to parents of her students; "We never had anything on assessment; if we did, it was like two weeks out of one course . . . they covered it . . . they went through it so fast . . . I never felt comfortable," Karen recalled of her teacher preparation program. At the point of view expressed in her third year of teaching, Karen felt that she was gradually learning these skills from her peers in her school.

Karen was also critical of her teacher preparation program in its failure to provide her with a strong base of methods courses prior to her internship, having taken some of these courses during the internship itself. She stated that she would have liked to have had more such courses and sometimes, even in her third year of teaching, felt that she was teaching "by instinct." She didn’t believe that she had a global view of the curriculum and stated that she felt somewhat uncomfortable with her limited view as a primary grade teacher regarding the expectations which her school had established for students as they progressed through their years in school. Karen acknowledged that what she is looking for is "very broad" and subject to regular change, however, she felt that a more comprehensive
understanding of the continuum of the elementary school experience would be helpful to her, even at the point of her third year of public school teaching.

In reflecting on her beginning years of teaching, Karen spoke with enthusiasm and joy of her experience with “looping” or multi-year student/teacher assignments. Her current students, she believed, had become a close community and Karen anticipated that she would have a “hard time letting go” when her students eventually moved on to the next grade at the end of the following year. “I know them so well. I spend more of their waking hours with them than their own parents.” Karen commented alluding to the close relationships that she believed had formed between her students and herself. Karen observed that she believed that looping maximized learning time at the beginning of the year when a class returns to her for a second consecutive year; the need to establish routines, to come to know her students, and to develop a sense of community in her classroom with a new set of students was not required of her in the second year of her two-year loop. Karen also stated, however, that three-year loops may have disadvantages for her students, especially for her special needs students about whom she expressed feelings of her own personal inadequacy in helping to realize further progress in their academic growth. Reflecting on the practice of eight-year student-teacher assignment organization of the Waldorf School model, Karen expressed that “it’s like having children” and considered that she’d like to try such an arrangement “in other circumstances.”

Karen recalled the discouragement she experienced in her first year of teaching when she “felt like I really got nailed with a large population of very needy kids . . . I would go home in tears.” Karen expressed her belief that her negative experience was not due to her lack of teaching experience or skill, but to the great degree of individual needs which she encountered in her
students as well as the time and energy required of her by the special education process; specifically, Karen identified “paperwork . . . [and] I felt that I didn’t get to the kids who were . . . ‘on level’ because I was too busy controlling the class.” Providing adequate challenge to the capable and more accomplished students, Karen observed, was “a really hard thing to do . . . we don’t offer them enough.” Exacerbating her situation was a sense of loneliness which she felt in her teaching: “I felt like I was very isolated that year.” Reflecting further on her deep feelings of isolation during her first year of teaching, Karen later found, as an experienced teacher, that help and collaboration was possible and available to her if she sought it out herself. However, Karen felt that if she didn’t seek such relationships in her setting, that others would not likely have been assertive in supporting her. “In teaching, you’re so caught up in covering the curriculum and taking care of your kids and getting them to where they need to go, you don’t see anybody unless you’ve been given that time or unless everybody’s been given the time off and you can sit and talk . . . unless we have a scheduled meeting. I never see anyone . . . you have to keep yourself going.”

The autonomy which she enjoyed in her classroom contained a good deal more flexibility and independence than she had anticipated prior to the start of her teaching career. Karen had initially expected to be provided with a “rigid” curriculum which included both topics and skills to be taught as well as specific activities designed to teach; she stated that she had also expected to have a supervisor regularly checking on her work to ensure that the curriculum was being delivered as directed. (She stated that she would, in fact, like to see more of her supervisor in her classroom, believing that more regular and intense supervision could contribute to her growth as a teacher.) Her experience in planning for classroom instruction prior to her first year of actual teaching, she recalled, was limited to the two “solo” weeks of her
year-long, preservice internship. She stated that she had felt under prepared to assume responsibility for the design of instructional activities - "I thought it [the expectations of her teaching] would be way more structured" - although she also stated that she appreciated the opportunity to assume so much of the responsibility for designing instructional activities for her students. She would not have liked the rigidity of being expected to carry out a pre-designed program with her students as she had originally imagined she would be required to do.

Karen expressed her enthusiasm about the "mental stimulation" which derived from her role as a teacher of primary-aged students. The challenges to serve the needs of her students, as well as the challenges of her principal to read and talk about current research and theories about children's learning and school programs, proved to be important to her in her teaching and in her life. "I always know if I'm interested in the latest in some area, I can always ask her [Karen's principal] and she has an article on it . . . and I like the discussions we have on it . . . the opportunities I have to still 'go to school' . . . I think that part of teaching is learning."

"I get a lot from the kids," Karen acknowledged when speaking of her relationships with her students; she stated that her relationships with her students are a source of joy for her and are important in her life. "If I'm out sick for a day, I get letters 'we really missed you.'" Karen, approaching the time of the birth of her first child during her interviews, described the baby gifts which her students brought to her which included clothing items which they had themselves worn. "It feels good to have somebody care about you as much as you care about them."

Among her greatest frustrations in her teaching, Karen listed scheduling - "the choppiness of our days" - and time limitations. "I don't feel that I have enough time to get to all I want." Another frustration identified by
Karen was the special education process; “I don’t even know how to explain it . . . I just feel like I’m not getting anywhere.” Karen felt that her recent experiences with a special education team planning process demonstrated an overemphasis on test scores and an underemphasis on a “whole child” view, to the detriment of her students, in Karen’s eyes. “I also think money is a big issue in this profession” Karen observed in reflecting on her school district’s limited considerations of options for special needs students.

Karen also expressed frustration in what she saw as inadequate parenting of some of her students. She questioned the priorities of parents as she spoke of students who came to school inadequately clothed for the winter months while she observed their parents “drinking beer and smoking cigarettes” during home visits. Karen recounted the story of a student whose mother told him that he would have birthday presents on his birthday only if “the check comes” . . . it [what she saw as misplaced priorities] drives me insane.”

Karen saw “accountability” and “standardized tests” among the major issues confronting educators at the time of her interviews; “I feel more watched than I did.” Karen also felt that concepts of student assessment were constantly changing and represented a weakness in her teaching; Karen stated that she found it difficult to know where to turn for support and help in developing her skill in assessing the progress of her students. Additionally, Karen believed that parents needed to gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of the problems faced by public education. Feeling that her school’s low test scores in the state assessment resulted in a good deal of “finger pointing” by some parents, Karen invited the parents of her students to her classroom to help them realize a fuller understanding of the learning process; she was disappointed when none of her parents accepted her invitation. Much of her communication with parents, Karen observed, was
one-way; she expressed disappointment in the response she received from parents to her efforts to open channels of communication; for example, on occasions when she wrote to parents, either through class newsletters or more personal letters about individual students.

Reflecting on school program adoptions, Karen felt that schools sometimes "jump on the bandwagon" with new programs and approaches, often before considering issues of philosophy and research findings. Programs are started at times, she believed, for "convenience," often without careful thought. Although she supported some "trial and error," she was critical of initiatives which occurred "because I read in the newspaper that this town does it this way; let's do it . . . I would like to see more studies . . . before we actually jump into it [new program initiatives]."

On a personal level, Karen believed that "not enough is expected of us" for professional development. She questioned the utility of "these little workshops" which are offered in her region as compared with more intense course work extending over a period of time. Karen believed that teachers should be engaged in long-term study and seek a deeper understanding of issues rather than engage in "one-shot" workshops which result in the creation of "cutesy little things" for discrete classroom applications.

Karen appreciated the opportunities presented to her colleagues and herself for staff involvement in decision-making in her school. Recognizing that some decisions were made - appropriately in her mind - at the administrative level without teacher involvement, Karen appreciated the level of "input we're allowed to give," in general.

Looking ahead in her teaching career, Karen stated that she is thinking about taking a year off to stay at home with her soon-to-be-born first child. She would also consider teaching an upper grade in the future and expressed a strong interest in looping in the future. Above all, Karen stated in
considering her future in education, was her strong interest in writing for children. "I actually wrote a book for my class this year . . . [which] I hope to send to a publisher when I get enough guts . . . I'm really proud of it." She was not sure that working toward this goal will allow her to remain in the classroom or not. In the short term, however, Karen wanted to remain in public education: "It's a lot of fun . . . I like the challenges." Karen stated that she had "a lot of things in my mind" for future goals and quickly added that she believed that she will accomplish them all "because they'll probably bug me until I do." Among these was Karen's desire to eventually establish her own early childhood learning center.

"In addition to my role as a teacher, I also view myself as a learner. I believe that I have a lot to learn and I am committed to continuing self-improvement and professional growth."

**Susan.** During her year of engagement with the portfolio development project, Susan was a second grade teacher in the same elementary school described above. A distinguished undergraduate student who received a full tuition scholarship for her undergraduate education, Susan graduated from a state college with a Bachelor of Arts degree in art, later completing her teaching internship and graduate courses required for state teaching certification as an elementary school teacher at the state university. At the time of the project, Susan had taught for three years as a first grade teacher and was in her fourth year as a second grade teacher, all in the same school. Susan had previously served as a substitute teacher, an aerobic instructor, and a self-employed day care provider. Among Susan's interests were art, literature, drama, bird watching, cross country skiing, sewing, singing, and gardening ("It's very therapeutic," Joan observed in her first interview, "it's nurturing something other than children."). She expressed her pride in her daughter, a high honor eighth grade student, and her husband, who shared
Susan’s art background and interest.

Susan began her own formal education in “a typical Catholic school” in which she reported being “terrified” during her elementary school years. Her terror was born of a fear of “doing something wrong” and being “humiliated” or struck by the teacher as a result. If she had the chance to alter her own elementary school years, Susan “would have taken the fear out of education” for herself.

She later moved into the local public junior high school, a transition which she described as being “very traumatic . . . I sort of crawled into a shell and stayed there.” Behaviors like “teasing,” and “what I heard about a friend being beaten up in the bathroom,” and “kids smoking pot around me” encouraged Susan’s self-imposed isolation in junior high school: “I was really scared.” The large school population, in Susan’s view, mitigated against the formation of close “connections,” or strong relationships, between students and teachers. A significant aspect of her experience in junior high school was tracking. Susan remembered being separated from her elementary school friends as a result of tracking; she recalled being very conscious of which students were assigned to the different tracks. While the social aspects of her junior high school experience represented a negative landscape for her, Susan enjoyed the classes in which she felt she was able to achieve success. Susan recalled, however, making some very close friends and having the benefit of “some good teachers” in her junior high school. Susan finished her precollegiate education in what she described as a large, impersonal high school.

In reflecting on her decision to become a teacher, Susan acknowledged that she had not considered teaching as a career through her early education and high school years (“I was never the type of person who said ‘oh, I love children;’ that just wasn’t me,” she stated in her first interview.). It was not
until Susan found herself married, with a daughter, an art degree, and looking for a career that she began to think seriously about a teaching career. She felt that her undergraduate art degree did not adequately prepare her for a career as a commercial artist. In her decision-making process, Susan thought about the teachers who she had met through her husband's teaching. She found herself wanting "to be around those kinds of people who cared about the kinds of things I cared about and were doing something purposeful and important and I thought I might be good at it."

Similarly to Karen, Susan described her teacher education program as "good." but felt that it would have been enhanced and strengthened through additional elementary school classroom experiences. Susan cited, as an example of this weakness, her one-semester science methods course which did not include any classroom observation or practice. Susan believed that the opportunity to plan, implement, and evaluate lessons in "real classrooms" rather than in the university setting would have been beneficial to her development as a prospective teacher.

A "key" element in Susan's program was the full year internship spent working with an experienced teacher in an established elementary public school classroom, which Susan evaluated as "great." A most meaningful feature of the internship was Susan's opportunity "to develop relationships with the children." Susan found that the planning, preparation, and instructional aspects of her internship "came pretty easily . . . time consuming . . . but it was good." Susan moved directly from her internship into a long-term substitute teaching position at the same school to complete the school year. She was assigned a "difficult" class, an assignment which Susan believed contributed to her growth and definition as a teacher "because I really had to define myself in terms of discipline."

In the year following her internship, Susan took a year to "job hunt
and to substitute teach.” Finding the experience of completing her internship, taking graduate courses, raising her kindergarten-aged daughter, and living on campus to be “very intense,” Susan recognized that she needed to “take some time for myself” following her internship year. She found that “subbing for the year was a great experience,” as it allowed Susan time to develop her classroom management skills; “as you know, children will do what they can for the sub . . . I was a good sub.” Susan served as a substitute teacher in a number of local schools and felt that this experience gave her an insider’s view of the different schools. The experience provided Susan with a knowledge of “knowing where I wanted to apply” when it came time to secure a regular teaching position.

Susan described her first year of teaching as “different;” she felt challenged by a first grade teaching assignment which included students who “didn’t have kindergarten.” Her limited experiences as a teacher having been with “established” classes, Susan found her expectations for students and the reality of her students’ abilities and social skills to be at odds in her first full-time teaching position. Students “came in at a very different level” from what she had expected. Susan found that she lacked a repertoire of skills for teaching beginning reading, for example, but fortunately found her first grade teaching colleagues to be very helpful and important in Susan’s program development during that first year. “That was a real challenge . . . and I discovered that I didn’t really want to teach first grade . . . I didn’t feel really confident a lot of the time.”

At the time of her interviews, near the completion her third year of teaching second grade, Susan reported that she liked teaching at that grade level. She stated that she was open to considering other grade assignments because “I’m real confident . . . but I’m teaching the same content . . . and I might want to make a switch . . . just to keep myself fresh.” Susan reported
that she had "spent a couple of years basking in that confidence" and had sought a new challenge in the year following the portfolio project by working with a year-long university intern, which "has been very energetic and motivating and rejuvenating for me."

Susan expressed that she had experienced "the feeling that my life has purpose and that I'm accomplishing something very important and I'm making a difference in the lives of children." Susan found that working with children was rewarding in itself. Susan also spoke of "those times when the parents say 'thank you for what you do'" as rewarding to her as well. She looked forward to having her former students return from high school and speak fondly about their time and experiences in her class, "good memories from the class."

"What frustrates me most [about teaching] is being unable to meet the needs of the children in this class . . . because there are too many needy children . . . I just feel overwhelmed at times." Susan found that the demanding needs of special education students and students who were experiencing emotional difficulties were very challenging. She found that special education consultants working in her school were very heavily scheduled and lacked adequate time for observation of her students and consultation with her; Susan believed that caseloads must be smaller for special educators. She felt that students were not being provided with the necessary resources for an adequate education. Susan spoke of a time when she had seventeen children in her class and the assistance of a confident and capable intern: "That was heaven." Susan's "ideal" class size would be fifteen students; "I just wish I could do more [for the students]."

Alluding to the solitary work life of the public elementary school teacher, Susan commented on the value of working with an intern. She felt that "having someone to feed [ideas] off" contributed to her creativity in her
teaching. Susan also spoke of the emotional drain of teaching and her use of the summers for “recharging;” Susan felt that working with her intern had helped lessen the draining which she typically felt during the school year. “I’m being spoiled this year . . . if I could have that ideal classroom, that [a second adult in the classroom] would be a part of it . . . together we see so much more.” Among her wishes for teaching, Susan expressed that she would like to have more time to spend with colleagues, both in conversation and in collaboration. She reported that the often-cited isolation of teaching is very real for her.

In the course of her teaching career, Susan considered that the biggest change in her thinking about teaching has been an increased focus on relationships with her students as opposed to a strong focus on content. In her early years of teaching, Susan found it necessary to develop expertise in content areas, including the development of her own teaching materials. Now, she considered that “I’ve got that part down” and had chosen to focus on forming and maintaining her relationships with her students “knowing that that’s the most important thing . . . I know them, I can anticipate their needs, I can be there when they need me.” She believed that she has gained a greater sensitivity to the needs of children with her developed knowledge of “who children are.”

Compared with her early years of teaching, Susan reported that, at the time of her interviews, she “spends more time with children during times when I don’t need to be with children.” Susan found herself remaining with her students during recess, snack, and lunchtimes, for example, rather than removing herself from her students. She also reported on her practice of asking individual students to remain with her for part of their “specials” times - art, computer lab, library, music, physical education - “because there’s something more important to talk about.” She reported that she had engaged
in “a lot more talking to children . . . pulling them aside and talking to them in private . . . a lot more individualized stuff [than in her earlier years of teaching].”

Susan observed that she had developed an instructional approach which included a good deal more small group activities and individual or personal engagements than she had earlier in her teaching. She had also striven to ensure that, in instructional terms, “there’s a level for everyone” in her mixed-ability classes. Acknowledging the difficulty in achieving such an environment for her students, Susan described her work to gear instructional activities to the various abilities of students as well as providing activities for “different intelligences” of the students in her class as the “most major change” which she had experienced in her teaching. Susan described the planning for this approach to be “fun” and as coming more easily to her than it had during her first years of teaching. She believed that her planning practices not only presented students with an appropriate level of challenge but also stimulated and provided increased success opportunities for her students.

The essential elements of good teaching, Susan stated, were “attention to individuals, flexibility, creativity, ability to form and sustain relationships, ongoing assessment.” “Fun and trusting and caring and respectful and nurturing” is how Susan described her own classroom and school environment. Susan believed that her school is accurately characterized as a place where people care for each other and that the students in her school saw school as “a second home;” a sharp contrast to her own elementary school experience.

Susan considered that she had remained as idealistic about teaching as she was when she began her career. She observed, however, that she had become “realistic” about the “parent aspect” of her teaching. She found, for
example, that while she had assumed that parents would want to know everything about their children ("I just assumed that everyone was like me!") she had to temper her enthusiasm, which had not been mirrored by many of the parents with whom she had interacted. Susan reported that this is also "a frustrating part of teaching." Quickly though, Susan assured that "there are enough parents" who were involved and supportive of their children to "keep me calm and not jaded" in her view of parents in general.

Reflecting on the changes she had experienced personally through her teaching, Susan reported that she was no longer searching for something important to do with her life; she believed that she had found it. She also observed that she was a very shy person who had developed confidence and ability to speak to others, both individually and in groups, although she didn’t relish opportunities to speak in front of very large groups. Susan felt that she had grown in her ability to listen to and advise parents. "I’ve learned a lot about myself," Susan observed, through her teaching.

Susan expressed concern about "the way our society has been going" in terms of student behavior and social skills development among young people. Susan had observed generally deteriorating conditions in this regard and an increase in student behavior issues in her school. She also observed the strong need for partnerships with parents in dealing with such issues, while she expressed frustration when partnerships are not available due to an unwillingness of parents to engage with schools to address such issues: "If it’s not there, what do we do?" Susan stated that she would like to be able to count on parents for more support. "I’d like to say ‘you need to read to your child for at least twenty minutes a night. If you don’t, don’t ask me to teach your child to read.’" Susan believed that a stronger school / community relationship is essential to continued school development.

Other concerns of Susan’s included the inadequacy of support and
funding for special needs students, lack of adequate supervision of teachers ("I would love it if . . . [my principal] had more time to be in my room"), failure of schools to adequately challenge the more capable students, lack of sufficient resources for schools, the need of schools to help students develop social skills, the need for teachers to continue to develop professionally throughout their careers ("education is not finite"), inadequate resources to support "at-risk" students, a general lack of appreciation for the work of teachers, parents who Susan sees as lacking in personal responsibility as parents, and again, inadequate time and opportunities for teacher collegiality ("the time to be supportive of each other isn't there").

Reflecting on her career choice, Susan observed "it's a good job; it's a good profession . . . I don't mind that our salaries reflect that [school vacations] because this is my life. I'm living it right now. I'd rather live it in this way than punch a clock, nine to five, year round . . . it fits in perfectly with what I value."

Kevin. While engaged in his year-long portfolio development project, Kevin served as a sixth grade teacher in the same elementary school described above. The father of four (Kevin's fifth child was born in year following the project), Kevin holds a Bachelor of Science degree in elementary education from a state college and had taken a variety of graduate courses over his twenty years of public school teaching experience. Kevin's various teaching positions have included assignments in five different elementary and middle schools in five different school districts. Additionally, Kevin had worked outside of education for two years for a C.P.A. firm in tax preparation and computer accounting applications. Summertime and part-time employment for Kevin had included positions as a camp director, house painter, factory laborer, school custodian, and retail store clerk.

Kevin had been a very active member of his church, having served as a
deacon, junior worship coordinator, and praise chorus director. He had also been an active member of Crossroads, a five-member contemporary Christian music ministry which sings and ministers throughout a two-state region. Kevin acknowledged that he had also enjoyed sports, games, music, and camping with his family and friends; Kevin had served as a member of his school’s student assistance program core team.

Kevin’s elementary school years were spent in a “traditional” school consisting of grades one through eight. He remembered the traditional approach to elementary education which was reflective of that typical of the late nineteen fifties and early sixties and characterized by oral textbook readings, rigid reading groups, and the like. “I don’t think I was crazy about it,” observed Kevin. “I distinctly remember disliking homework a great deal [laboring for hours over simple assignments] . . . I wasn’t a good reader; I didn’t like reading.” As a result of his father frequently playing math games with him, Kevin found that he “liked math a lot.”

Kevin revealed that he respected his teachers, but didn’t like them a great deal: “I didn’t develop a real liking for them; I remember them all.” One particular teacher who was appealing to him was Kevin’s fourth grade teacher who was “soft-spoken, easygoing.” Kevin recalled that he “toed the line” in his elementary school experiences, for the most part, but does also recall “getting shaken by my first grade teacher because I did something wrong and my third grade teacher yelling at me for some crazy thing and my sixth grade teacher calling up my mom because I was chewing Lifesavers during a filmstrip.” Remembering the classroom environment of his elementary school years, Kevin recalled sitting up straight in classic schoolroom rows and having his fifth grade teacher check the students’ posture and fingernails; thinking about the types of engagements in his elementary school experience, Kevin considered that “I never recall doing a group project.”
Kevin's career began with a year of substitute teaching; he had not aggressively pursued employment and enjoyed a trip to the western states following his graduation from college. Kevin was in his first position for five
years before he left education for two years. His decision to leave teaching was based on finances. Finding himself unable to afford living expenses associated with a recent house purchase, Kevin worked weekends as a convenience store clerk and decided that he would seek employment outside of teaching, which might better provide for his needs. He then worked for an accounting firm for two years; he reported that he enjoyed the work but was uncomfortable with the unethical behavior of his supervisor and colleagues. He returned to teaching, holding three positions in three different towns prior to securing his present assignment.

Throughout his teaching experiences in different settings, Kevin has observed a good deal of “commonality” among the teachers with whom he worked. “Teachers, as a whole, have the same philosophy . . . they have a certain kind of heart . . . [they are] unselfish people who are compassionate . . . which you don’t see in the business world . . . when I was there.” Kevin observed that he has seen many different teaching and administrative styles but preferred the school environment, as a work setting, to the business environment. The essential qualities of a “good teacher” included creativity, compassion, love of people, patience, stamina, sense of humor, ability to listen, fairness, communication skills, organized thinking, according to Kevin.

Reflecting on the rewards of teaching, Kevin stated that he “loves to see kids get excited about the things that they’re doing” and “get excited about learning things.” The opportunities to establish strong personal relationships with his students, to have his students “open up” and talk about important issues in their lives - whether they’re serious or not - giving Kevin the opportunity to guide them - “knowing that I’m making a difference in a kid’s life” - also represented a reward of teaching for Kevin. “Knowing that a little bit of me will stick with them along the way” was important to Kevin.

In addition to dealing with student misbehavior and an increasing
amount of paperwork associated with his teaching, Kevin was frustrated by “a shift in parent attitude” regarding what they are willing to do for their children and what they expect the school to do for their children. Diminished “moral guidelines” and “expectations for behavior at home” were negative manifestations of what Kevin observed as this “shift in parent attitude.” Parent support for homework and “parent backing” in student discipline “is not what it used to be.”

“Generally orderly” is how Kevin described his classroom environment. “I would like to think that if you took a snapshot at any one time, the kids would be actively engaged in their work.” Kevin characterized the desirable volume of the activity in his sixth grade classroom as being “constructive noise.” The student engagement would be ideally in small groups or as individuals and students would be conversing with each other about their ongoing work; Kevin believed that this view represented a general view of what would be found in the other classrooms of his school.

Kevin observed that he was more excited about “the things I do in the classroom now” as opposed to how he felt at the beginning of his career. “Over the past twenty years, a lot of things have happened to make teaching more exciting and learning more exciting for kids.” Kevin cited student engagement in long-term projects and a broader variety of available and acceptable teaching methods as key reasons for his view that teaching had developed new appeals, both for teachers and students, over the course of his career. Kevin believed that he had made significant efforts at integration of subjects - interdisciplinary teaching approaches - in his teaching at the time of his interviews; formerly he taught subjects separately. He attributed his work at integration to a teaching team with whom he had worked several years ago; the team, according to Kevin, engaged in group planning of instructional activities and actively worked to develop an interdisciplinary
instructional approach. Such an approach, Kevin believed, provided students with a more complete “picture” of concepts rather than discrete aspects of a larger process. “A lot of fun things can be done” to “help students see connections.” Continuing to reflect on his change in perspective toward his teaching over his career, Kevin observed that as a new teacher he thought every student should like him; but at the time of his interviews had come to believe that he first had an important job to do in teaching his students certain knowledge and skills and he lately worries less about impressing than about doing his job of teaching very well.

Kevin reflected on his own development over the course of his career in education. At the beginning of his career, he recalled that as a single adult, he was an active participant in “the party circuit.” In the early years of his teaching, he viewed his students as “my family” and recalled contacts with his students outside of his classroom, often taking meals with his students outside of school and inviting students into his home or on trips, including trips to the beach, for example. The nature of Kevin’s relationships with students have changed; he described his involvement with his own family and cited his becoming a Christian in 1983 as the two most profound aspects of his life at present. Reflecting on his religious beliefs, Kevin stated that “it adjusted my focus in teaching.” He ranked his priorities at the time of his interviews as “service to God, my family, and school.” His beliefs about “absolutes” was expressed to be much different today than during his growing up years in the 1960’s and 1970’s. Kevin expressed his belief that “there are absolute rights and wrongs” and acknowledged that his strong religious faith had influenced his work in his classroom, particularly in the quality and nature of his conversations with his students about moral and behavioral standards. Kevin felt that his faith and beliefs operationalized in the kinds of advice and guidance he provided for his students, a marked difference at the time of his
interviews when compared with the nature of his conversations in which he engaged with his students in his early years of teaching.

Special education, in Kevin's view, represented a significant challenge for public schools. Kevin recognized a conflict between parents who advocated for their children with the sometimes runaway costs associated with what some parents demanded and the finite resources of many school districts. A public perception of the high costs associated with special education programs remained a challenge for educators. Kevin's "wish list" for public education included smaller classes of less than twenty students per class and a closer connection with the community which would include a stronger personal relationship with citizens, better use of community members and resources in the formal education process, and a greater comfort level on the part of community members in visiting and working in the schools. Relative to his school, Kevin would like to have seen more orderliness on the part of students, particularly citing student misbehaviors in common areas as a concern. Kevin talked about students running, jumping, and "smacking" each other in the hallways of his school and his concern about poor student self-discipline and behavior standards which mitigate against the support of a positive "learning environment." Relative to behavior standards, Kevin described himself as "traditional."

For the future, Kevin stated that he was open to different career options for himself, including potential employment possibilities outside of the education field. Reasons for leaving education would include Kevin's concerns regarding student behavior issues, which he has found as disruptive to his teaching and as interfering with his opportunities to interact with his students in a positive manner. Kevin was disappointed by what he has seen as a diminished opportunity to form productive relationships with students due to student misbehavior; "I wouldn't mind leaving that garbage behind."
Additionally, Kevin expressed disappointment in the increased paperwork demands being placed on his time. Kevin had spoken with a friend about a position as a technical writer and to other contacts who operated a camp about a potential job change to assume a position as a resident camp director. Both possibilities - writing and camp programming - were appealing to Kevin at the time of his interviews.

**Portfolios**

In this section, *Portfolios*, the presentation of data continues; first, with a listing of the artifacts common to each of the three portfolios developed during the year-long portfolio development course. This list is followed by a description of the artifacts included in each of the three individual portfolios.

**Common Items.** The participants in this study engaged in the portfolio development process through a year-long graduate level course presented by a professor from a local teacher-preparation college. At the initial meeting of the course, the professor/facilitator presented a guide for artifacts to be included in the teaching portfolios, stressing the desirability of some commonality in portfolio content. Among other advantages to such an approach, it was expressed, was the opportunity to discuss each entry and the opportunity for participants to provide mutual support for each other in the process. Course participants and the professor/facilitator negotiated the items to be included. The agreed-upon artifacts to be included in each teacher’s portfolio included:

1. Table of Contents;
2. Resume;
3. Self Analysis (participant reflection on his/her interaction with the portfolio development process);
4. Philosophical or Reflective Statement on Teaching;
5. Timeline (a depiction of the teacher’s professional autobiography);
6. Professional Development (an annotated listing of recent professional development activities);
7. Curriculum (a description of original curriculum material developed by the teacher);
8. Community or Professional Service (a description of service outside of the teacher's primary school responsibilities);
9. An Artifact (an item selected by the teacher which is believed to represent the teacher's professional work);
10. A Creative Item (an item which demonstrates a creative approach to a teaching issue);
11. Journal Entries (reflective journal entries maintained during the portfolio development process);
12. Other Items (items selected by each teacher due to personal as significance).

Karen. Karen's one hundred thirty-five page portfolio was contained in a large three-ring binder. Her cover page included a John Holt quotation entitled "We Learn By Doing" which spoke to the singularly individual significance of the sometimes-fractured processes of "learning" and "doing." Her cover page was followed by her dedication of her portfolio to her mother, who died during Karen's childhood. The dedication page included large photograph of her mother and the statement: "Dedicated to the memory of . . . my mother and my friend to whom I've kept my promise." This page was followed by a reference to the significance of the dedication, a quotation from Adrienne Rich: "The loss of the daughter to the mother, the mother to the daughter, is the essential female tragedy."

Karen's portfolio was organized as follows:
1. Table of Contents. (Common Item #1) Karen's table of contents included seventeen entries, among which were included the twelve common
items: introduction, resume, statement of philosophy; professional growth; professional service; resource list; teacher as reader, writer, thinker; curriculum piece; planning; artifact; photo journal; video; children's portfolios; self-analysis; comments; journal entries; course hand-outs; and works in progress.

2. Introduction. (Common Item #12) Karen provided a brief autobiography of her teaching experiences and a preview for her portfolio in her three-page introduction. Karen introduced the portfolio itself by stating that “the bulk of this portfolio is comprised of evidence of my teaching and learning” and concluded by asserting that “this portfolio is just a start where I am concerned. I feel fortunate to have completed this portion at such an early stage in my career. From here I will establish a goal setting section to be added to each year with accompanying reflections, as well as continue my work in the area of student portfolios . . . And on it goes!”

3. Resume. (Common Item #2) Karen’s resume documented her education, certification, and experience.

4. Statement of Educational Philosophy. (Common Item #4) Karen’s one-page “Statement of Educational Philosophy” presented her belief in importance of schooling in an individual’s life. Karen stated her belief that educators must take a holistic view of education and that schooling provided children with a foundation upon which they will then build their entire lives. Further, in considering her role as a teacher, Karen stated that she also viewed herself as a “learner” and exerted her commitment to “continuing self-improvement and professional growth.” A photocopy of Karen’s academic degree was also included in this section.

5. Professional Growth. (Common Item #6) An annotated list of Karen’s recent professional growth activities was included in this two-page entry. Karen provided mixed reviews for the workshops and seminars in
which she had participated. In her professional growth entry reflection, Karen affirmed her dedication to continuous growth: “I am proud of my dedication to my continued growth as a learner and the diversity of the experiences I have had is very beneficial to me in my classroom.” In discussing this entry, Karen observed that developing this section led her to conclude “how insignificant some of these things that we are offered are to professional growth . . . I didn’t take very much away from some of these workshops . . . other than buying books.”

6. Professional Service. (Common Item #8) Karen’s six-page entry entitled “Professional Service” included a two-page descriptive statement in which Karen discussed her work with a colleague to develop a “new math assessment tool to be used at our grade level.” Karen described her collaboration with a colleague in researching the topic, meeting regularly with her grade level teammates, and the outcomes of the project. Karen and her colleague viewed the project as open-ended and subject to further modification. Included with her descriptive statement were copies of a baseline, entry point record sheet and three quarterly (representing the first three quarters of the school year for first grade students) assessment requirements. In reflecting on this entry, Karen acknowledged that this was a difficulty entry for her to complete, due to her newness in the profession; in her second year of teaching, Karen found that she had limited engagement with service to her profession and concluded that “this would be something I would need to work on and think about” as she gained experience in her profession; “I guess I could only pick one thing” to represent her service to her professional community: the math assessment.

7. Resources. (Common Item #12) Karen included both photographs and narrative statements in this eight-page entry. “Resources” listed her included references to books (3 books), individuals (5 individuals), a
university course, and a university program. Specifically, Karen recognized these eleven “resources” as significant in her development as a teacher:

a. Books (3). Three influential books were described briefly in this entry: (a) *Guide to Developmentally Appropriate Practice* described practices which “just make sense” for Karen; (b) *The Difficult Child* “was a real eye-opener to extreme behaviors” from which Karen believed that she “gained insight into management techniques;” and (c) *What’s Best for Kids* “allowed me to have more informed conversations with colleagues and gave me practical strategies to use in instructional planning as well as parent conferences.”

b. Individuals (5). Karen recognized five individuals as influencing her significantly in her teaching. Karen’s (a) intern supervisor was included as he “would push me to search for positive teaching qualities in myself, to set goals for improving my teaching practices and to analyze my rationale for teaching certain topics” and left with Karen “qualities [which have] helped me to feel comfortable with my ability to teach and the me to this day.” Karen’s (b) cooperating teacher was viewed as “a person who is forever dedicated to continued teacher education” from whom Karen believed that she gained “the logistical and managerial aspects of teaching” but who also “allowed me to find and build on my strengths.” (c) A teaching colleague of Karen’s, who was an experienced teacher “took me under her wing and virtually became my mentor” was described. Karen commented on her colleague’s communication abilities and her dedication to her teaching as qualities she admires. Karen described (d) her “Gramps” as “without a doubt my hero.” In describing her 84-year-old grandfather, Karen observed that “he has always put others before himself and happiness before wealth” as well as an individual who displayed “genuine emotions and a willingness to help others succeed.” Finally, Karen cited (e) one of her former students as “one
the most challenging students I have even met.” From “Steven” Karen learned that she was “able to handle severe behaviors, but also that I cannot save all of the children.”

c. University Course. Karen observed that the course “Introduction to Exceptionality” provided her with “stimulating conversations and exposure to many valuable guest speakers,” “relevant readings and projects,” and “fantastic awareness issues and lots of emotion.”

d. University Program. Karen described the local state university program “Live, Learn, and Teach” as “one of the most enriching experiences of my life” which helped her gain “a sense of trust in others, an appreciation for the most minute details of nature, and a level of confidence that was absent in my life prior to this trip.” Karen participated in this summer enrichment program for elementary school-aged students while she was a university student.

“I had a lot of fun doing that” is how Karen remembered her work on this entry from the distance of about one year after completion of the project. Her discussion of this section included further appreciations expressed toward the people cited here, especially Karen’s intern supervisor, her grandfather - “I still learn things from him,” and her student - “A very big challenge; very scary to me as a first-year teacher.”

8. Teacher as Reader, Writer, and Thinker. (Common Item #12) Karen described, in this five-page entry, both her broad desire to continue her development through independent reading, writing, and thinking on professional topics as well as a strategy which she has begun to use as an organizing frame to help her address her goal. (“This [reading a book cover to cover] was a challenge to me,” Karen observed later, “I’m so random.”) The strategy, suggested by her seminar leader, was to select the book which she most wants to read and read it one chapter at a time, writing a reflection
following her reading of each chapter. This had proven to be a helpful strategy for her. Karen described her interaction with a current reading and listed four additional books which “are high on my list” for reading in the near future.

9. Curriculum Piece. (Common Item #7) In eighteen pages, Karen described “a mini-unit on parts of books and characteristics that set various stories apart from one another” in this entry. Included were photographs, instructional materials which Karen had designed, schedules, and student products as well as a descriptive narrative. Karen’s narrative included reflective aspects; she stated that “if there is one characteristic about my teaching style that I would want others to notice, it would be that I always display children’s work on walls and bulletin boards as opposed to teacher-created materials” giving “my student full ownership over each creative representation of the curriculum topics we cover;” and “I avoid telling them what I want to see on their papers;” and “I focus my attention on process rather than product.”

10. Artifact. (Common Item #9) Karen selected a child-created “quilt panel” as a representation of her professional beliefs. Karen’s entry included a one-page description of the panel; the panel is featured by “various colors and shapes of dinosaurs . . . [various kinds of] stitches . . . jagged edges . . . [and] imperfections.” In her one-page reflection on her artifact, Karen concluded that “I was amazed to see all of the varied approaches to a similar task in one room. It was great fun and it just goes to show that we all have our own strengths and there is a time and place for all of us to be ‘experts.’”

11. Photo Journal. (Common Item #10) Karen acknowledged that “I really enjoyed [creating] this portion of my portfolio,” in reflecting on this thirty-six page entry which is divided into several key sections and is comprised of annotated photographs depicting what Karen believed was “all
the work that actually does get accomplished throughout the course of the year.” Karen observed that this aspect of the project “was helpful to take such a close look at what I do everyday.” Her photo journal was divided into seven sections, entitled: (a) “freedom and support,” (b) “kids teaching kids,” (c) “cooperative learning,” (d) “covering the curriculum,” (e) “home / school connection,” (f) “community building,” and (g) “classroom arrangement.” In reflecting later on this section, Karen stated that she believed that “it showed every aspect of my classroom.”

Karen addressed her portfolio readers in her reflecting statement, expressing hope that readers will “notice . . . that I have attempted to share a very well-rounded image of our classroom environment.” Karen also acknowledged that this might not be the case in the photographs presented. “One thing I wish I had the guts or (at least the idea) to do is to photograph them [Karen’s students] when they are not so engrossed and critique those pictures in the same thoughtful way. I think that would be an even more challenging exercise because no one wants to capture those moments, never mind share them. However, if I ever have the opportunity to do so, I think I will try it to see if I learn anything . . . Portfolios are for learning and growing, not a display of only your best work, so it’s a shame that I have none of those pictures to add to the photo journal now, it has sparked my interest!”

12. Video. (Common Item #12) Included in Karen’s portfolio is a “video tape of a lesson that I taught in March, 1996.” Karen’s four-page written entry included a two-page description of the lesson and a two-page reflection. Karen created the curriculum context for the video viewer as well as establish the instructional context from her point of view. This latter included her intentions to “enable each child to succeed,” to develop “the sense of community and cooperation” among her students, and to demonstrate her level of “knowing my students.”
In her reflections, Karen acknowledged that “this was one of the harder entries to complete for my portfolio,” having experienced anxiety over choice of a lesson to videotape as well as a fear that she would be overly critical of her own performance when she viewed the videotape herself. However, she found that multiple viewings helped her to overcome her fear. In fact, Karen observed, “I think I became more objective the more I watched it . . . [finding that] it was almost as if I were critiquing some else’s lesson.” Discussing the videotape after the project had been completed, Karen stated that she found this to be a very challenging aspect of the project, but acknowledged that she was “proud” of her engagement with this aspect of the portfolio and that she felt “glad she did it.” She found that it was helpful “because I don’t always take the time to evaluate” her own teaching and “to have someone look at it with me.”

In addition to her willingness to recognize the strengths of the lesson, Karen also found herself identifying four specific goals for developing this lesson, and other lessons of this type, in the future. Karen observed strengths as including personalizing the lesson to the needs of her individual students, developing her students vocabulary in the context of a geography lesson, and relating the lesson “to many relevant issues in my children’s lives.” Her suggestions for her own teaching involved her skill in questioning techniques and the wait time which she provided for student responses.

13. Children’s Portfolios Reflection. (Common Item #7) Karen included this second curriculum entry “due to my dissatisfaction with the portfolio entries that I was doing with my students.” (“It didn’t tell me anything about them.”) Specifically, Karen found that “the reflection process was not as meaningful to the students” as she would have liked it to be. Karen found that her own engagement in the portfolio development process had enhanced her understanding of the potential of student reflections and she included this
twenty-two page entry to demonstrate her development of student portfolios with her class: "As soon as entries began to appear in my portfolio . . . I began to share them with my students. They were excited and wanted to add items to their portfolios as well." This entry was comprised of a brief introductory statement and a series of annotated student products which were intended to demonstrate increased depth of reflection over time.

14. Self-Analysis. (Common Item #3) In her three-page self-analysis, Karen considered her engagement with the portfolio development project. She identified two reasons for engaging: "I wanted to have a portfolio of my own to share with my students" and "I wanted to take a closer look at myself as a teacher." Written at the conclusion of the project, Karen had stated that "I have learned a lot about myself as a teacher." Karen further stated that she believed that the project had "brought my beliefs to the surface," had helped her to become a better planner to meet the diverse needs of her students, had rejuvenated "my connection to professionalism and evaluating my teaching practices," and had caused her to have "looked very closely at the purpose of the first-grader’s portfolio."

Additionally, the portfolio project had provided Karen with a context for goal setting. Included in Karen’s goals are two general, long-term goals: "to learn more about special education" and "to become more comfortable and confident with my behavior management strategies in the classroom." Two "short-term" goals included Karen’s plans to "become a better record keeper and to learn to plan my curriculum topics for an entire year." Karen concluded, in her final reflective statement on the portfolio project, "It has revived my desire to learn and has made me crave a change in my work to challenge my abilities."

15. Journal Entries. (Common Item #11) Karen’s final portfolio entry was her collection of journal entries which formed a running commentary of
the process as these entries were submitted to the facilitator periodically during the year-long project. In Karen’s entries, she discussed her interaction with the process, her reaction to seminar meetings, and her interaction with the journal articles provided by the facilitator during the project. Also included were the facilitator’s handwritten comments to Karen’s journal entries.

Karen’s final journal entry included comments on the overall portfolio development process itself. “In reflecting on my portfolio ‘measuring up’ to the challenge of examining my teaching practice and preserving the best of what I do, I feel that it is in the average range . . . I am not sure that I want this to be a display of my best work . . . you don’t learn as much from compiling only examples of your best work. These examples will help people realize their strengths, but will not assist with goal-setting.”

Karen clearly believed that her engagement with the process ought to have resulted in her growth. “I feel that this [her portfolio] was a comfortable place for me to begin and my goal-setting and follow-up on those goals over time will help me to grow further as a professional educator.” Karen’s final statement oriented herself to the future and her intention of continued growth and development. “Although it was hard for me to point out my strengths, it really helped to know that I have some. The ‘best’ will come with time and reflection. I am still new at this!”

16. (Works In Progress.) (Common Item #12) In this untitled section, Karen included a draft of a children’s book along with personal letters to Karen from a number of students and parents.

Karen did not include Common Item #5, “timeline,” in her portfolio.

Susan. The main body of Susan’s portfolio was ninety-three pages in length and was also organized in a large three-ring binder. Her title page included personally identifying information as well as a quotation attributed
to Herbert Hoover: "Children are our most valuable natural resource."

Susan's timeline entry was an artistically created, extended piece which unfolded to display her autobiography with annotations which is described below; considered "one page," its unfolding was representative of many pages, were it presented in a more traditional format. Susan's organization closely reflected the organization negotiated between the participants and the facilitator.

1. Table of Contents. (Common Item #1) As noted above, Susan's organization was largely faithful to the agreed-upon common artifacts. The twelve entries included: resume, analysis, philosophy statement, professional development, professional service, autobiographical timeline, spelling curriculum, photo journal, artifact, class journal entries, letters from parents and students, letters of recommendation and transcripts. Additionally, Susan included a final section of items which were under consideration for future inclusion or were "works in progress."

2. Resume. (Common Item #2) Susan's two-page resume documented her educational and experiential background. Susan included "honors / awards . . . interests . . . professional affiliations . . . [and] family" information on her resume.

3. Self Analysis. (Common Item #3) Susan's four-page self-analysis was developed in three parts: "why I chose to complete this portfolio . . . how has this process helped me to understand children's portfolios . . . [and] what are my educational goals for the future." In the first part, Susan described her own experience with the portfolio process, beginning with her work with children's portfolios, moving to her own development of a "literacy portfolio" in recent years, and extending to her engagement with the teaching portfolio project. "I felt that is was just what I needed to get me on the path toward creating and maintaining a quality portfolio with purpose and meaning."
Susan found that the experience provided her with the opportunity to “put together a vehicle for reflection and documentation of my teaching philosophy practices, and goals,” reflecting that with “a lot of teaching experience under my belt” it had seemed to be “a perfect time to work toward making sense of all that I have learned, experienced, and accomplished during that time.”

In Part 3 of her self-analysis, Susan stated that “throughout this year I have thought a great deal about what I might want to accomplish in the next few years . . . This portfolio course was a wonderful impetus for me and has somehow given me a feeling of confidence and eagerness to become involved in some new ventures.” Susan categorized her newly-articulated goals into three areas. These included, (a) “practical goals” which included her becoming a cooperating teacher for a university intern, completing her master’s degree, and better organizing her collection of curriculum materials; (b) “research goals” which included investigating brain research and taking a supervision course at the nearby university; and (c) “creative goals” which included planning and implementing a staff development workshop for her peers, designing and creating a children’s story, and “keep[ing] my portfolio current and growing.”

4. Philosophy Statement. (Common Item #4) Susan’s statement opened with her recognition that “understanding the nature and the characteristics of the learner is integral to the practice of teaching.” She went on to discuss the important aspects of these characteristics for herself and her beliefs about the role of the teacher in the life of the learner. In consideration of the latter, Susan included as key concepts the nature of the relationship between teacher and student; the development and maintenance of a classroom environment which “allows for productive interaction, team, partner and group efforts;” the provision of “guidance and encouragement,” the role of effective
communication, and "lastly, [her belief that] the teacher must be ever aware of his or her role as a model to students. Words and actions must never be thoughtless. Their impact is on the lives of many."

5. Professional Development. (Common Item #6) Susan's six-page entry on this topic began with a reflective statement on the process as well as on the eight activities described later. Susan observed that "a teacher's continual education is and I feel will always be an important aspect of our educational system." Personalizing this broad statement, Susan reflected "looking back at the workshops and courses in which I've been involved in the past two years, I was surprised to realize that my current practices really do include bits and pieces of them all." Susan's entry also included descriptions and reflections on the "workshops or courses" with which Susan had engaged in the preceding two years. On the value of the whole experience, Susan reaffirmed her belief that continuous learning is important. She asserted her belief that both self-selection of such opportunities are important as well as the need to address school-wide training priorities. But mere workshop participation would not be enough in itself to gain a full benefit from such experiences, according to Susan. "There needs to be time to meet, discuss, talk out problems, share successes, and just support one another when new methods or ideas are tried. When this doesn't occur the teachings are forgotten; the handouts collect dust on [the] top shelf."

6. Professional Service. (Common Item #8) Susan's two-page professional service entry opened with Susan's belief statement that "service is the teacher's profession." Susan acknowledged that "it was at first difficult for me to think in terms of a specific service I may have provided for the community that was not simply a by-product of my usual teaching responsibilities." Susan realized that her consistent willingness to serve as a cooperating teacher for a university course - Exploring Teaching -
represented a significant contribution to the “members of a wider learning community.” Susan described this experience in her entry.

7. Autobiographical Timeline. (Common Item #5) In her introduction to her artistically developed, fold-out timeline, (Susan: “This is the piece where everybody goes ‘Wow!’”) Susan described her work as containing “brief sketches of the major events of my life and the years of their occurrence.” The importance of this entry for Susan was strongly articulated: “it was a highly meaningful piece for me . . . a way of putting my life in order before beginning the huge task of reflecting on my life and practices as a teacher and setting goals for my future.” Results of developing this entry were Susan’s realizations that “the main focus of my life to date has been both family and schooling . . . steady growth of self confidence . . . how much I have truly accomplished so far . . . [the] need to broaden my experiences and try more new things.”

Susan’s timeline began with her birth and included descriptive and reflective annotations for events which she considered to be significant mileposts: her birth, the birth of her first brother, a family relocation, the birth of her second brother, her kindergarten entry, her first grade entry, the birth of her third brother, the birth of her sister, her transfer to a different school, her eighth grade year in school, her first job, her first romance, her high school graduation, her first full-time employment, two significant accidents, her development of her art talents, meeting her husband, her marriage, the birth of her daughter, her husband’s present job, relocating to a new apartment, her work as a day care provider, her work as an aerobic instructor, her enrollment in her first education course, her work in her graduate program, her teaching internship, her work as a permanent substitute teacher, her first teaching position, the purchase of her family’s home, and a change in her teaching assignment.

91

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8. Spelling Curriculum. (Common Item #7) Susan's curriculum entry was represented by her work with the teaching of spelling. "I have been consciously working to improve my spelling program for years, and add these improvements a little at a time . . . it stands as the one curriculum area that I am the most satisfied with in terms of organization, work for the students, assessment materials, recording formats and appropriateness for the developmental stage of the students." Susan's entry included photocopies of materials which she has developed and student products intended to demonstrated student engagement with the materials, as well as her description of the program.

9. Photo Journal. (Common Item #10) This thirteen-page entry was subtitled "A Walk Through Room 155." Susan acknowledged that "the creation of this pictorial essay was arduous at the very least." Susan found her greatest challenge to lie in her selection of photographs which would permit an observer to realize "a full sense of the kind of learning environment I provide." Susan's stated goal for this entry was "to describe, in photos and words, some of the elements of my teaching and classroom environment as they are experienced by an average, a special needs, and an above-average student in second grade." The result, a series of annotated photographs, served to complement her statement of educational philosophy, Susan believed.

10. Artifact. (Common Item #9) The artifact (Susan: "To me, that was not a necessary piece to do.") which Susan selected as representative of "my philosophy of the nature of the young learner and a teacher's role in her development" was a flowering cactus. Susan's three-page entry reflected on the process of selection ("the ability . . . to adjust to their new surroundings . . . [and] their prickly defense system") as well as an extension and discussion of her metaphor. Several aspects of Susan's belief system about teaching was reflected in her discussion; key concepts for Susan include diversity.
nurturance, guidance, encouragement, attention, defensiveness, longevity, blossoming. "A carefully nurtured and blooming cactus is a lovely sight. An excited, eager learner, bursting with confidence, trust, and blossoming abilities is equally beautiful."

11. Journal Entries. (Common Item #11) The journal entries were completed periodically over the course of the project. In her entries, Susan reflected on her engagement with the seminar series, the articles provided by the facilitator, a videotape viewed in class on portfolio development, and on portfolio development process. In this latter reflection, Susan considered which elements of her portfolio provided meaning, safety, support, and challenge. Considering her curriculum entry, Susan reflected "this sense of knowing what I have done and what helps me to again feel freer to take risks, feel confident in myself, and secure with the underlying philosophy."

12. Letters from Parents and Students. (Common Item #12) Thirty-eight separate items, without annotations, were included in this eleven-page entry. The letter which Susan received confirming her teaching appointment, her first teaching contract, many notes of appreciation from students and parents, and notes of appreciation and recognition from her principal and portfolio project facilitator were included in this section.

13. Letters of Recommendation and Transcripts. (Common Item #12) This twelve-page section included seven items without annotation. Susan included college and university transcripts, photocopies of her diplomas and degree, a photocopy of her state teaching certificate, and recommendations from university associates in this entry.

14. (Works In Progress). (Common Item #10 and 12) In this untitled section, Susan had collected a variety of potential entries and ongoing projects (Susan: "Part of who I am"). These include poetry, a draft of a story, articles and notices describing her classroom and a theater group of which Susan is a
member, letters from parents and others, and materials and written thoughts on the topic of multiple intelligences which Susan is gathering for a possible children's book and teacher workshop on the topic. Susan also included information from the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards; she was considering developing materials for submission for national certification, although she readily acknowledges that "it scares me to think of that."

Kevin. The seventy-five pages of Kevin's portfolio, entitled "A Teacher's Professional Portfolio" were organized in a three-ring binder as well. In addition to identifying information, Kevin's title page included the quotation "The teaching of the wise is the fountain of life," which Kevin attributed to King Solomon.

1. Table of Contents. (Common Item #1) Kevin's table of contents identified nine sections in his portfolio: resume, self analysis, timeline - 1976-1996, professional development, curriculum component, community service, the artifact, a creative element - The Bog Bug, and The Lesson.

2. Resume. (Common Item #2) Kevin's one-page resume contained a description of his "education and experience" as well as family information (placed above other sections on his resume), and "other activities and interests." These latter included committee work at his school, church-related activities, and recreational interests.

3. Self Analysis. (Common Item #3) A five-page entry, Kevin's self analysis was subtitled "What Does It All Mean?" In his discussion, Kevin identified four "key reasons" for engaging in the portfolio project. These included his interest in a portfolio which will "give me a framework for preserving my work." Kevin believed, consolidating his thinking near the end of the year-long project, that the process provided him with the opportunity to refine and remove items from a collection which has resulted
in a portfolio which contained "only that which is essential."

A second reason for Kevin's engagement in the portfolio development process was to provide himself with "a framework for sharing my work." Kevin viewed his portfolio as a vehicle which could add to his professional interaction as he discussed his work with colleagues. Kevin also viewed his work with the project as having provided additional such "occasions for interaction." Kevin concluded that "I have benefited a great deal from my colleagues as they have related their process in creating their project." And Kevin also stated that he looked forward to improving the process for others, concluding with the observation that "what would be beneficial, perhaps, is to have a regularly scheduled forum of interested teachers getting together to share what has been going on in their classrooms and to give insight into what growth is occurring in their portfolios." Finally, Kevin observed that "working on this portfolio has stimulated me to reflect on my work and on the act of teaching."

4. Timeline . . . 1976 - 1996. (Common Item #5). "History Through One Teacher's Eyes," was Kevin's subtitle for his timeline which spanned Kevin's teaching career. In his introduction, Kevin reflected on the changes which he had experienced throughout his time in classrooms ("Everything seemed to be in such a jumble back in 1976 when I stepped into my first fifth-grade class.") as well as "constants" which Kevin had identified for himself ("Some things are certain . . . a teacher must be open to revision"). Finally, Kevin closed his introduction with a recognition that "it's also interesting to observe how my personal life has affected the level of interaction I have with my students." Kevin recalled the comparatively large amount of time he spent with his students and their families in his first teaching assignment as a "young, single teacher," while also recognizing that "as time moved on and I got married and started a family, the time for that interaction diminished,
leaving less opportunities to develop such close bonds.” Even as his own view of his role has changed, Kevin observed an opposing shift in the needs of his students: “Paralleling my personal life change has been a dramatic change in the family structure. There is certainly a greater need now for parental relationship and guidance than ever before.”

Kevin’s entry continued with five different sections organized around his five teaching assignments over the course of his career. Sketches of his five different schools and notations describing essential features of these experiences for Kevin are included with photographs of his class experiences, his family, and himself, documenting changes in the various aspects of his life through the years of his teaching career.

5. Professional Development. (Common Item #6) His five-page professional development entry was subtitled “A Little of This and a Little of That.” Twelve activities were enumerated; brief descriptive and evaluative comments were included for each. In addition, Kevin chose one of his experiences - a math curriculum development project - to reflect on at greater length.

6. Curriculum Component. (Common Item #7) “American Revolution Journals” described Kevin’s fifth grade project which he selected for this fourteen-page entry. Kevin included curriculum materials which he had created or obtained from other sources, a description of the utility of this particular segment of a larger unit, a statement on the context of its use, student products, and his own running commentary accomplished through the use of Post-it notes attached to the various components of this entry.

7. Community Service. (Common Item #8) A narrative, photographs, and a reflective statement were included with this entry, which is subtitled “Nursing Home Enrichment.” Here, Kevin described his work with middle school students engaged in a service project at a local nursing home. In his
reflective statement, Kevin described the genesis of the project and its development as well as his observations of individual students and their engagement with the project.

Kevin focused his discussion on a sometimes-troublesome student (Kevin initially wondered "Why is he here?") and this student's experience on the first day of the nursing home visit. "After introductions, Bob was paired with a frail-looking lady, Norma, and they nervously tip-toed into a conversation. At first it seemed like an interview of a school newspaper story. An observer could tell that Bob was carefully choosing his words as he both asked and answered questions. He would occasionally catch my eye and give me an 'I can't believe I'm doing this . . . how much longer' look. I notice a suppressed wisecrack and a sheepish grin and realize that experience is causing Bob to grow . . . to stretch. I find that I am extremely proud of Bob and the rest of the kids for daring to take that step along the edge, to do something different, something meant to be more for someone else than it was for them . . ."

8. Artifact. (Common Item #9) Kevin included a photocopy of his artifact along with his reflection in his More than Just a Ruler Sleeve entry. Kevin’s ruler sleeve was a gift from a student in a previous teaching assignment; the word “teacher” was embroidered on it. The item had proven to be a valuable possession of Kevin’s; “each time I happen across it, I pause to consider what had been carefully embroidered upon it:” the concept of teacher. The notion of a teacher as representative of unchanging standards was important to Kevin. “We must wear our symbols of care and trust on our sleeves, knowing that they will be embraced by most, realizing that they may be trampled by others.

9. The Bog Bug (Creative Item). (Common Item #10) "The Bog Bug is a story I started last year and took out to complete, revise, edit, and publish this
year,” explained Kevin in his commentary in this seventeen-page creative entry. “The story is an outgrowth of an assignment my [sixth graders] . . . do while we are studying invertebrates. When I write, not only do I have opportunity to model the writing process, but also can demonstrate that stories can and should have a moral base or theme to them.” Kevin stated. Reflecting his personal beliefs, Kevin continued, “I am inspired to outline opportunities in my curriculum next year to greater encourage my students to express positive values and morals within their writing.”

10. The Lesson: Reflections on a Great Teacher. (Common Item #12) In this three-page entry, Kevin presented a satirical rewrite of the Sermon on the Mount, critical of what was viewed as widely-held contemporary, self-centered attitudes. The author of the piece was not identified. In his reflection, Kevin revealed that he found the selection on the bulletin board in his church’s library and “thought it would make a nice addition to my [portfolio] work.” For Kevin, Jesus was “one of the greatest, if not the greatest, teacher of all times.” Kevin acknowledged his occasional frustrations with his work as a teacher but affirmed that he worked to “follow Jesus’ example” in his work.

11. Journal Entries. (Common Item #11) Kevin’s journal entries comprised nine pages in his final portfolio section. The journal entries represented Kevin’s interaction with the project’s seminar meetings, journal articles presented by the facilitator, and the portfolio development process itself. Throughout the process, Kevin commented, “I have shared my progress with some colleagues . . . they are very encouraging . . . [however] they are all happy that they are not doing it at this time but all agree that at some point they will develop their own.”

Kevin did not include Common Item #4, “philosophical or reflective statement,” in his portfolio.
Development of the Portfolios

In this section, Development of the Portfolios, the participants were engaged, through a structured interview format, in reflecting on the portfolio development process; their reflections are presented here. Again, the interviews were conducted over a period of approximately three months, all occurring about ten months to one year following the completion of their teaching portfolios. This passage of time permitted the participants to consider their experiences in portfolio development from a bit of a distance and the various elements of their portfolios to be viewed as parts of a whole that had since been revealed. The usefulness of this study for others relates to the very personal interaction of three teachers with the process as they constructed their portfolios. What the teachers did and what it meant to them as they engaged with the portfolio development process holds a primary meaning and importance for the participants themselves.

Karen. At the time the project began, Karen stated that she had limited experience with the concept of portfolios “other than trying to do them with my class because when I first got here [to her first teaching assignment] I had heard that that was what we were supposed to do.” Her initial work with student portfolios with her own early childhood-aged students was “really very random,” by her own account. Karen had observed that different teachers worked in various and individualized ways with the student portfolio process and acknowledged that she didn’t know what she should be including in her students’ portfolios “because no one had a clear definition for me.” Operating without clear expectations, Karen proceeded to have her students periodically select school assignments for inclusion in their portfolios and asked her students to write about their reasons for selecting the items that they had chosen; she described these portfolios as “cumulative folders” which contained a range of random samples of student products. The portfolios were
passed on to each child's subsequent year teacher "hoping that they would add
on to it." However, Karen was not sure if the subsequent year teachers had the
students continue to develop their portfolios.

"Because I didn't think it was fair for me to ask them to do something I
didn't have of my own to even show them," Karen developed an interest in
creating her own teaching portfolio. "I didn't think it was fair to be asking
them [her students] to think of their own growth if I wasn't . . . and I needed
some kind of focus for helping them with their portfolios because I didn't
know what they were really." Karen had hoped that the year-long seminar
would provide her with an idea with "what a portfolio really was." She also
wanted to engage in a process for documenting her own growth as a teacher,
not to demonstrate growth to peers or a supervisor, but for herself.
Additionally, she hoped that the development of a portfolio would suggest
direction for further development; "almost 'this is where I've been; this is
where I am; this is where I want to go.'" Karen felt that her engagement with
the process had resulted in the achievement of these broad goals for herself.

While the facilitator had wanted to keep the participants' work in the
professional realm, Karen found it very difficult to separate the professional
aspects from the personal aspects of her work in the school. "It was very hard
to keep the personal out of there," she observed. While she stated that she
understood and accepted the need to limit her portfolio to her professional
work, Karen would have liked to have included more of her personal life in
the portfolio to provide a broader view of her life for herself rather than a
snapshot of a part of her life: "That's me, but that's not all of me." In
including her "dedication page," Karen felt that she was able to make a
"personal connection" within the finished portfolio.

In commenting on the process, which involved periodic (approximately
every six weeks from September through May) seminar meetings, Karen
expressed that she would have enjoyed more opportunities for the seminar group to share their work and their reflections during the process. She expressed appreciation for the diversity of the group and the opportunity to come to know participating colleagues on a deeper level than she might otherwise have had, given the busyness of the teachers' school lives. Karen reported that she felt stimulated by the creative approaches taken by other seminar participants in the presentation of their portfolio entries. In reviewing the contents of her portfolio, and particularly in considering the reflections completed, from a distance of about one year following the project, Karen stated that she would like to expand upon or change some of her reflections in that similar themes seem to predominate across her reflections. She stated that she may add to her reflective pieces.

Karen considered that the opportunity to develop her portfolio with a group of colleagues was very important to her, especially in that the teachers involved represented some diversity within her school. Given the list of required entries, Karen reflected that she experienced some difficulty in "fitting" herself "into those topics." She found it interesting to observe how her seminar colleagues addressed the required entries in different ways; in particular, Karen found that Susan's creative approaches to the requirements of the portfolios stimulated her own creativity in developing her entries. Her meetings with a support partner (not a participant in this study) outside of the seminar meetings was also helpful to her in considering creative approaches to Karen's entries. Also important to Karen in the process was the opportunity to form deeper relationships with peers with whom she had experienced only casual relationships in the past. In the year following the portfolio project, Karen engaged her class with the class of another participant in a multi-age project. Karen also appreciated the opportunity to "see another side" of the administrators who participated in the seminar group; it "made them more of a
person [in Karen's eyes] . . . I think we need more time to interact with people."

Considering the imposition of a structure - specific entry components - for portfolio development was helpful to Karen: "I needed it." Having wanted to develop a teaching portfolio for some time, Karen found the structure - including timelines and deadlines for the specific entries - to be important for her as were the regularly scheduled meetings and continuous support from the other seminar participants. Additionally, Karen found that the process was "not so overwhelming" as originally anticipated, as the project was scheduled to be completed over the length of a full school year.

Karen's view of "what a portfolio was" developed over the course of her experience. At first, Karen's conception of a portfolio could have been described as "all about you," including both personal and professional entries: A portrait of Karen as a person and as a teacher. However, as she progressed in the process, Karen found that her efforts focused more on her teaching, her "professional life." As the project neared its conclusion, Karen came to recognize that "they're [portfolios] never done" and thought of her portfolio not as a finished product but as an "open ended," ongoing work which she expected that she would continue to develop. "It's still not done" Karen observed nearly one year after the seminars had concluded.

In selecting her entries, Karen attempted to choose entries which she felt exemplified her own educational philosophy and provided accurate glimpses of herself as teacher. Karen was particularly challenged to select her three dimensional artifact which was intended to represent her teaching. She struggled as she considered and rejected many possibilities, settling on her choice during a fish-feeding visit to her classroom during one of her school vacations. The student-made quilt, displaying such imperfections as sewing mistakes and Dorito smudges, was illustrative of important points about
her for her. She decided, in that one moment of quiet enlightenment. She took it down from where it hung in her classroom immediately and found her reflection piece on her quilt a very easy task to complete. Having devoted a good deal of time and energy to each individual item which she selected for inclusion, resulted in Karen’s satisfaction with the portfolio which she had completed by the end of the project year. “When I was done, I wanted to share it. . . . it’s me!”

Karen believed that the role of a facilitator for the portfolio development process was a “very important” one. The facilitator created a unified approach and structure to approach the task of developing their portfolios for the small but diverse group of participants in the seminar, provided helpful background reading, presented useful models, stimulated thinking through group discussions, provided “positive feedback,” and prevented the portfolios from slipping into the realm of scrapbooks by maintaining professional standards for portfolio entries. At the same time, the facilitator allowed for some “flexibility” to personalize the different entries of the participants. “It seemed like it was never ending,” responded Karen to the question of amount of time devoted to the portfolio project. “On the light side, easily I put in three hours a week,” throughout the course of the school year of the project, “but probably way more than that.”

As the process unfolded, Karen found herself becoming “more sympathetic” to her students who she was asking to develop their own portfolios. She felt that she could present more accurate models to her students “because I knew how this felt to me.” Karen felt that the process helped her to become more sensitive her students’ struggles with the portfolio development process, helped her to become more effective in her conferences with her students, helped her to support her students’ reflections by pushing them toward more specificity and focus, helped her to be more sensitized to the
demands she placed on her students in all subject areas, helped her to provide
more effective models, and helped her to realize greater empathy toward her
students as learners within a larger system. Karen found herself stimulating
her students to think beyond a simple “this is good work” to a more thoughtful
and deeper self-evaluation when reflecting on their own writing and other
portfolio entries as she asked them, for example, “what kinds of things show
learning.” Additionally, Karen found herself moving from a “random sample”
approach to student portfolio building to a more structured approach which
was designed to result in a range of entries, similar to the approach which she
experienced as a portfolio builder herself. This standardization of entry types
for her students was a more satisfying approach, when compared to the
random approach, for Karen as their teacher.

Karen recommended the portfolio development process for other
teachers because “it really makes you think about what you’re doing and why
you’re doing it and how much you’ve grown and what your focus is for the
future.” For potential future portfolio developers, Karen recommended more
frequent meetings with partners than she had experienced during this project
and the varying of partners over the course of the project to allow for
feedback from different viewpoints during the work. “I think it would have
helped us get more done in the first half” of the project.

Susan. As an art student, Susan has had experience with portfolios in
advance of her teaching career; Susan had previously developed her own
portfolio, in the traditional sense of an artist’s portfolio of work samples.
Susan’s artist’s portfolio was very “focused” and was intended as a “showcase”
of the artist’s “best work.” A significant difference between Susan’s artist’s
portfolio and her teaching portfolio was that her artist’s portfolio “was not
reflective at all.” It’s purpose was to advance the artist’s education and/or
career; an artist’s portfolio is meant to “show what you could do . . . not so

104
Additionally, Susan's school had been developing concepts of portfolios in the teachers' work with their students. As a key feature of this initiative, a number of teachers had developed their own "literacy portfolios." These portfolios were intended to project the portfolio-developer as a reader and as a writer, both documenting growth and recognizing the many different aspects of reading and writing in the individual teachers' lives. Susan felt that her experience with literacy portfolios allowed her to gain first hand experience with the process of portfolio development as she worked with her students. However, she found that the literacy portfolio wasn't fully meeting her own needs: "It was just a collection." Her desire to develop a teaching portfolio which represented both a process and product and which was much deeper than a "collection" motivated Susan to participate in the year-long teaching portfolio project.

Susan had actually been thinking about developing her teaching portfolio for a number of years but had not undertaken to construct such a portfolio prior to this project. "I guess I knew that I needed guidance and I needed motivation," as well as feedback from others, as she engaged in the process. In reflecting on her desire to develop a portfolio, Susan related that she had found herself wanting a document to demonstrate her growth as a teacher over the years of her career and to collect "in one place" her philosophy and beliefs about her teaching as well as a document to demonstrate her creativity in her teaching and to demonstrate her growth as a teacher over time.

The "amount of time it took" to develop her portfolio was one of the surprises which Susan experienced during the process. The level of others' interest, particularly her teaching colleagues at her school, in her project represented another surprise for Susan. "People were interested in doing
their own and were really interested in seeing mine and others.” Susan found that her portfolio became “something to share with others” - colleagues at her school as well as her family members - and was gratified by the “amount of positive feedback” for her which resulted from this sharing. Susan found that individuals with whom she shared portfolio components commented on the quantity and thoroughness of material which she included and stated that they particularly enjoyed reading her reflective statements. Some “readers” even requested copies of various components of Susan’s portfolio while a number of Susan’s colleagues expressed interest in developing their own portfolios after examining Susan’s.

While the portfolio development process was very much “an individual thing,” Susan was also surprised about how much she counted on the support and feedback from others as well as “hearing the struggles others were going through” during seminar meetings. And, Susan was “surprised about how great I felt about it [her emerging portfolio]; I knew I’d feel good about it, but I feel really good about it. I’m really proud to share it.”

Over the course of the year, Susan’s conception of “the amount of work” expanded. “I knew it would be a lot of work, but not that much.” Susan stated that she didn’t “think I could” estimate the time which she invested in the development of her portfolio: “hours and hours, weekends, vacations; I would just seclude myself in a room and work.” In addition to the portfolio itself, Susan devoted a good deal of time to reading the journal articles provided by the seminar leader, as well as to writing her periodic journal entries throughout the process. “I can’t even tell you” how much time it took to develop her portfolio. Susan acknowledged, “it took all year.” Upon further reflection, Susan estimated that she devoted about five hours per week and five hours per school vacation day to the project.

Although Susan had “completed” her portfolio by the conclusion of the
seminars, she had intended to include more entries later. She was disappointed that she did not have the opportunity prior to the conclusion of the school year of the project to complete the portfolio to her own satisfaction. "I'd planned to do way more than I actually got accomplished." She did not, however, consider her portfolio "finished." She had gone back to it in the nearly one-year after the end of the project and expected to continue to do so throughout her career; Susan had added notes from children and parents to her portfolio and had initiated "new sections," which "are more like collections now; they're not reflective yet; but they will be." One new section was planned to focus on Susan's experience with a university teaching intern as a cooperating teacher; she expected to spend a good deal of summer vacation time in reflection, which Susan expected would be written and added to her portfolio. "It's [her portfolio] ever evolving; it's not a finished piece."

Thinking about her reflective writing in her portfolio, Susan found that her former conception of a portfolio - as an art student - had changed considerably. Following the completion of the project, she recognized the importance of reflection in her teaching portfolio in stimulating thinking about as well as documenting her own learning.

Susan found the support of the seminar group important to her. The group, Susan found, allowed her the opportunity to share the portfolio entries on a step-by-step basis and receive feedback on her work. Susan believed that sharing and receiving meaningful feedback was an important aspect of learning, both for her students and herself. Additionally, Susan found that "the sharing part" of the portfolio development process was also very significant for her: "I didn't know how important that would be." Susan also found some security in knowing that, like her, other seminar participants were also having difficulty in accomplishing their aims. The supportive aspect of the seminar group tended to take some pressure off of herself,
according to Susan. She also found support and encouragement in the enthusiasm of the group members, both for what they were accomplishing in their own portfolios and in her work. The variety of approaches to portfolio entries was also helpful to Susan during the process; this aspect helped Susan to develop and extend ideas for her own work. Susan could not identify any disadvantages to working with the group as opposed to the prospect of working on her own in the creation of her teaching portfolio. Certainly, the group was important to Susan in the process: “I can’t imagine doing it alone.” And “I really felt like I got to know those people better . . . it was a chance to be with them on a regular basis . . . I got to know them better, not only as teachers, but as people.”

“Very key to the process” is how Susan describes the importance of the role of the facilitator in developing her portfolio. “I don’t know if it matters who it is, but it just needs to be somebody to say ‘this is what you need to do, this is what we want you to do for next time, how about you share something now;’ somebody to just coordinate things.” Susan had high praise for the particular facilitator who helped her group complete their portfolios. “We couldn’t have done it without her.”

In considering the different aspects of portfolio construction, Susan reflected that “collection was easy, selection and reflection was much harder.” Susan had not anticipated the difficulty she encountered in these two latter aspects of the project, but she discovered these aspects becoming less difficult as she worked through these new patterns of thinking for herself. They became easier with practice over the course of the project “because I had no practice” prior to this project. “Being in that reflective and analytical mode is very different from what I have to do . . . for other kinds of writing.” Susan expressed that she was happy to “do that kind of writing” but acknowledged that she “was rusty.” Susan believed that the busyness of peoples’ lives
mitigated against reflection on action in teaching.

While some of Susan's entries were "requirements," other items were selected as a result of Susan's consideration of what she wanted portfolio readers to know about herself. Following the completion of the project, she added a new section which she believed portrayed a deeper understanding of herself "as a person;" this section included samples of her writing and programs documenting Susan's work with a local theater group. These were important because they were "parts of me that I take back to the classroom," in Susan's view. Susan believed that her portfolio should portray herself both as a teacher and as a learner. Her "Professional Development" and "Teacher as Learner" were important sections of her portfolio for her. Susan also collected potential new entries in the back of her portfolio binder for future inclusion.

In considering the effects of her participation in the portfolio development project, Susan found that she thought more "about what is important to me as a teacher and a learner . . . I think much more carefully now about what I'm doing with the children and with Janet [Susan's teaching intern], and I'm constantly aware that if I need to explain this to somebody, what would I say." The development of her portfolio, Susan believed, was helpful as a prelude to her experience with her intern. She believed that the reflective aspect of her portfolio development prepared her to become a more effective cooperating teacher for her intern, more able to discuss and explain the various aspects of her classroom decision-making.

As noted above, Susan collected a number of potential entries over the course of the year following the project; she believed that development of her portfolio was an ongoing process and she envisioned herself continuing to work with it throughout her teaching career. She recognized that she would be culling some items from her binder and replacing them with new items, but
at the time of her interviews, she expressed that she is “afraid to touch it.” in terms of elimination of items previously included. Her self-analysis and her seminar journal entries were items which Susan believed would be among the first to be eliminated or replaced by more personally meaningful entries as she became more distant from the year-long seminar series. Additionally, Susan’s eventual children’s book on multiple intelligences, a videotape of her work with children, a photo essay representing a typical day in her classroom which she could share with parents, samples of her students’ work, her plans to develop a workshop for her peers were all envisioned as future entries.

Susan would “definitely” recommend the portfolio development process to other teachers. “It is important, worthwhile work that challenges you to grow, set goals, interact, and remember why you are a teacher.” In considering how her process might be enhanced for others, Susan recommended the presentation of model portfolios by teachers who had completed the process, as well as an opportunity for discussion with such teachers. As a facilitator, Susan would have required fewer “required pieces” while recognizing that she believed that the structure helped with the “floundering” the group had experienced early in the process. Susan found that the regularly scheduled (about every six weeks) meetings of the seminar group were too infrequent for her; she would have found a schedule of meeting every three weeks to be more supportive of her work. Additionally, Susan would have like to have shared her portfolio more frequently with non-seminar participants.

“It was a lot of work, but I’d do it again. It wasn’t wasted time at all . . . I think every teacher should have one . . . even if you’re close to retiring, what a great memento to have . . . I look at it as something that will be passed on to my daughter.”

Kevin. Prior to Kevin’s work with the portfolio seminar, Kevin
described his experience with portfolios as "zero." His conception of teaching
portfolios was that they were a "collection of worthwhile things" which
reflected a teacher's work. Kevin was "not quite sure" about the purposes
such a collection would serve. In considering his involvement in the process,
Kevin talked to a number of colleagues who he had known to have some
limited experience or interest in teaching portfolios. His curiosity piqued,
Kevin considered developing his own teaching portfolio. The notion of
reflection on practice was one aspect of portfolio development in particular
which had appealed to Kevin. He envisioned his consideration of his teaching
processes as having some utility in helping him develop his instructional
skills. Additionally, "a celebration of good things," Kevin thought, would be
an another worthwhile outcome of the portfolio development process.

The structure of the portfolio development project through the seminar
was a surprise; specifically, Kevin was surprised by the range of artifacts
which were included. Kevin had expected a more limited approach which
would focus strictly on instructional practices. Kevin stated that he would not
have thought of including some of the elements which were included, such as
entries on professional development and community service. Also, the amount
of time required for completion of his portfolio exceeded Kevin's original
expectations; the selection and reflection steps represented time-consuming
aspects of his project that Kevin hadn't considered at the outset. Kevin had not
anticipated the amount of time required for his structured reflections.

This structure was, at first, a potential discouragement for Kevin. He
recalled speaking to a seminar "drop out" about the rigidity of the
requirements while asking each other why participants couldn't "do it our
way." Kevin acknowledged that he had considered dropping out himself in the
early stages of the process. Recognizing that he could realize some
independence in "fitting" items which he wanted to include into the
requirements of the seminar. Kevin decided to continue with the project. “At first, it did seem overwhelming and a little bit terrifying but, when you sit back and look at each component, it didn’t look so bad.”

Kevin “never did” estimate the time which he devoted to the development of his portfolio, recognizing that “the time was much greater the closer we got” to the conclusion of the project. “That last April vacation before they were due . . . I probably put thirty-five hours into it.” Kevin found it difficult to estimate his actual total time commitment to the project, but recalled that the development of his portfolio took “a substantial amount of time,” minimally twice again the time which he devoted to the project during his April vacation.

Kevin considered that he considered himself to be generality reflective in his teaching, noting that he typically wrote notes to himself about lessons and units following his teaching of the lessons and units. His experience with reflection in his portfolio project, however, broadened the topics on which Kevin reflected. These included, for the first time, Kevin’s reflection on his “history as a teacher,” a specific enrichment activity in which he had engaged with middle school students, the artifact which Kevin had chosen which he believes symbolized his philosophy of teaching: all “different types of reflection” compared with his usual practice. “It sort of put you in different directions.”

“There were some components that I never finished,” observed Kevin in considering disappointments with the process. Kevin observed that his disappointments were actually concerned with his own inability to complete the project as intended rather than through any identified flaws in the process as presented. He had hoped to include a photo journal of a unit or a day-in-the-life of his classroom, but found himself limited by time and competing priorities. He had hoped to complete this entry during the year.
following the project, but again found himself to be limited by available time. He acknowledged that he had “not extended” his portfolio in the year following the project and expressed some disappointment over his not continuing to develop his portfolio. Kevin quickly cited that both time and competing priorities have mitigated against his continuing to develop his portfolio following the year-long seminar.

Kevin found that the structure of the project - carried out as a formal college course with specific requirements for course credit - provided a focus for his work; he considered this aspect of the project to be an advantage for him after all. Having a facilitator guide the process for the participants, specifically the facilitator with whom the group worked, “was fantastic” in Kevin’s estimation. “She was extremely knowledgeable . . . she just knew what they [portfolios] were all about . . . the articles that she gave us were extremely helpful.” The facilitator’s experience as an educator and writer, her ability to access resources for the participants, her willingness to meet individually with Kevin regarding his project, and the feedback which she was able to provide all contributed to the facilitator’s value to Kevin and, in Kevin’s estimation, to the entire seminar group. Kevin also observed that the “interaction” and “support” of working with a small group of portfolio developers was both “terrible” (when, for example, he had to go to class and “say, well, gee whiz, I didn’t do anything”) and supportive (“sharing and being able to encourage each other”). Kevin found the sharing of entries in the seminar meetings to be helpful and motivating and conversely intimidating at times (“Do I have to do that?”). Overall, however, Kevin found the modeling of others as they fulfilled requirements of the project to be helpful in standard setting for his own and other’s entries. The small size of the group (eight participants) he believed, contributed to Kevin’s comfort level in sharing his work and in frankly discussing his teaching.
Kevin found that the portfolio project strengthened his relationships with the other participants. He recalled, for example, passing participant-colleagues in the hallway, asking "how's your P coming?" and engaging in ongoing discussions regarding the project. Kevin views this relationship-building as an unanticipated, positive outcome of his participation in the project.

Over the course of the seminar, Kevin's appreciation for the process, as personally beneficial to him, grew. "At first, I was a little bit leery" about the demands of the project as outlined at the outset. He had wondered if the efforts would be "worthwhile;" by the conclusion, Kevin considered his engagement in the process to be "extremely worthwhile . . . the more components I had finished up, especially the reflections on what I had done, the more of those that were completed, the more convinced I was that it was very worthwhile."

In selecting his portfolio entries, Kevin attempted to select items which would best represent himself as the kind of teacher that he was and curriculum items which he believed to be particularly successful for his students in terms of student learning. Kevin acknowledged that he was "challenged" in his selections and cites his "artifact" selection as being a particularly difficult requirement for him to fulfill, beginning with "five or six" possible choices before narrowing his consideration to the item which was eventually chosen; "something I just happened to stumble on." His community service entry was chosen as a result of a personal conversation in which he engaged with the seminar facilitator. He was guided by his question "what about me would best fit into these components" in the selection process.

Given time and resources, Kevin stated that he would like to have the opportunity to include more student products in his portfolio which would document his teaching; particularly, Kevin stated that he would like to include student writing in his own portfolio as a reflection of his work with students.
in this area. Additionally, Kevin would include student reflections and his own reflections on the same products to provide a more complete perspective of such a learning sequence.

While participating in the process, Kevin found that he provided his own class with more generous amounts of writing time. Kevin's class was "very impressed" when he shared his portfolio with his students; he had hoped to help his students develop portfolios during the year following his project, but he did not do so, again due to competing priorities and the time-consuming special needs of students in this particular class, according to Kevin. He found that he devoted "more time" than usual "critiquing my own units" during his year of participation. Kevin observed that his teaching was altered, based on realizations which he made during his increased practice of reflection: "As a teacher, I was more aware of what I was doing."

Kevin "highly" recommended the portfolio development process to others: "It was very worthwhile." Kevin would represent the process to potential portfolio-developers as a "self-esteem builder; it makes you feel like you're really doing something important." He also described the opportunity to "interact with your colleagues" as he did in this project as a "terrific benefit" observing that "you don't get to do that very often." He would caution prospective participants that a good deal of time and work would be devoted to portfolio development; he found that those who examined his own portfolio recognized these features of the process. Personally, Kevin would advise participants in such a process to "try to get more done earlier" so as not to be faced with a backlog of entries which may be due very close to a concluding deadline; "the last few weeks before the deadline were definitely a madhouse in trying to get things done." Completing the various components on a regular schedule - "doing one thing a month would make a lot of sense" - would have helped Kevin avoid the pressure he experienced in completing his
Reflection on the Process

In this final section, Reflection on the Process, the three participants reflected on the portfolio development process from a perspective of about one year following the completion of their portfolios. Here, they focus on outcomes, attempting to articulate a response to the larger question: How have they or their teaching been affected by the development of teaching portfolios? In other words, now that the three teachers have developed their portfolios and have continued their teaching careers for about one year following the completion of their portfolios, has the process made any difference to them as they engage their students?

Karen. Since completing the seminar during the previous school year, Karen had shared her portfolio with her school's new university teaching intern group, as they were required to complete portfolios during their intern experience. Karen observed that "I think I overwhelmed them" when sharing her portfolio with the student interns. This was the case, she believed, because the interns were just beginning to develop their portfolios at the time and they found themselves confronted by a significant product - Karen's teaching portfolio - resulting in a humbling and intimidating feeling. This experience, showing and explaining her own portfolio, also informed Karen by demonstrating to her some similarities in her written reflections, a fact which she found less than satisfying. In reflecting on her early stages of portfolio development, Karen expressed that she would likely have found the presentation of completed models as "intimidating" as well, observing that this was not the case in her experience, as she had viewed others' portfolios after she had begun to create her own entries.

Looking ahead during her final interview in the late spring following her completion of the project, Karen expressed that "I don't know if I would
take anything [in terms of entries already complied] out of there” but believed that she expected to add new items, citing her “reading / writing piece” and her hope to include a published children’s book in her portfolio at some point in the future. Karen stated that she would like to add entries to her curriculum and planning documents to demonstrate for herself her own growth as a teacher over the course of her career. She believed that her continuing to update entries would be motivating to her to “continue to grow with it [her portfolio].” She believed that continuing to develop her portfolio as an ongoing process would help to focus her future growth and development as a teacher. Leaving previous entries in her portfolio would be important “because I want to see where I came from over time; that’s important to me.” Karen also stated that she would like to include her annual “professional growth plan,” which she developed each year as a requirement of her school’s teacher evaluation process, in her portfolio as well. She reflected that her teacher preparation program had neglected to address the issue of continuing growth for teachers, that she identified less-than-challenging development goals in her first years as a teacher, but that she felt that she had grown in her ability and willingness to identify challenging professional development goals for herself.

Karen reflected, as noted above, that her engagement in the portfolio development process provided her with a greater sensitivity for helping her students develop their own portfolios during the year in which she was engaged in the process. “It helped me to get children to, even in first grade, write more reflectively about what they were doing. It was hard for me to do that about myself . . . I kind of scaled that way down,” for her students. “Mostly in [the curriculum area of] writing, I think it influenced my teaching.” Karen remembered that, prior to her own experience in developing a portfolio, she viewed her students’ portfolios as “collections” and their
reflections as "not very thoughtful, not very deep, they just were 'I did my best' . . . or 'I like it,' that was just about it." Karen believed that improving the quality of student reflections contributed to her students' learning, particularly when they were able to articulate shortcomings with particular learning tasks and articulate their own thoughts on why they experienced such shortcomings, which is "pretty hard for a first grader."

Since completing the portfolio development process, with the distance of nearly one year since that time, Karen believed that she had become increasingly sensitized to individual differences in her students and their varying abilities to engage with the range of learning tasks which she presented to them in her classroom. She related to the seminar facilitator who she imagined must have observed the great variation with which each participant engaged with the standardized framework for the portfolios developed during the project. Karen considered that the facilitator must have wondered "how do I meet all of their needs with one portfolio [design]? Like, I have this one curriculum and how am I supposed to meet [the needs of] all of these kids? . . . I think I have really kept the word 'fragile' in my mind this year." Karen found that she worked increasingly harder to address individual concerns and questions of her students and has consciously worked to lower her own "frustration level" with her students as well.

"Really reflecting on why I teach and the way I teach" was a significant outcome of her participation in the process for Karen. Reviewing her portfolio entries had been self-affirming for Karen, in both her educational philosophy and teaching methods. She also found that she was much less inclined to simply send student work home to parents on an as-completed basis, opting to collect student products, assessing student progress over time. For example, in the year following the portfolio project, Karen collected student products over the course of a unit of study, and sent home a
"set" of products, thus providing students and parents with a more complete picture of the child’s engagement with a topic demonstrating her students’ growth over time and providing a context for child/parent conversations about the topic and student learning. “It’s not just . . . take that home . . . it’s something for them to be proud of . . . if I send home this folder, maybe their parents won’t automatically toss it.”

Karen believed that her participation in the portfolio development process had “very much” aided her in her professional self-assessment. “It actually forced you . . . to actually look at why you’re doing . . . if it’s effective and where [you] might go from here; I liked it.” Specific outcomes of Karen’s self-reflection during the portfolio development process was the recognition of her need to develop her skill in planning for instruction and keeping records to document student progress and to support instructional planning. These have been translated into goals articulated in Karen’s professional development plan in the year subsequent to the portfolio project which she submitted to, and received approval for, from her building principal.

“I would highly recommend” other teachers’ engagement in the portfolio development process, Karen asserted. She observed that many teachers with whom she worked had “shied away from” the prospect of developing a teaching portfolio, due to what was viewed as an immense task in developing the portfolio. Karen recommended the background reading provided by the facilitator, which she had completed during the year of the project, as important in the initial stages of the process for teachers developing their own portfolios, found that a structure - with personalizing flexibility - was important, and recommended that teachers form portfolio development groups, that they not work “on their own” in attempting to develop their teaching portfolios.

119
Susan. Since completing the year-long process, Susan had engaged with her portfolio in several ways. Shortly after the completion of the project, she accepted an invitation by the facilitator to display and discuss her portfolio with a college class focused on portfolio development conducted by the group's facilitator. This experience was positive for Susan and proved to be "a very important thing for me." Additionally, Susan shared her portfolio - as a model - with the teaching interns assigned to her school to support their development of their own portfolios. Finally, Susan had added items to the back of her portfolio for future development as new entries. In the future, Susan intended also to place her portfolio on display at the annual "open house" events held at her school for parents of students new to her class.

Susan found that both groups with whom she shared her portfolio - the college class and the intern group - were "very supportive and interested." They had many questions of Susan regarding the process and told her that they appreciated seeing a model for what they were expected to complete; Susan felt that she was helpful to the prospective teachers by sharing her own work and experience with the process. Additionally, Susan asserted, "it felt really good to share."

In the year since she completed the project, Susan added two sections: One new section was devoted to writing and the arts - which included her own writing and documentation of her involvement in community theater - and one section was devoted to "the cooperating teaching experience." Susan, as she observed earlier, planned to devote a good deal of time and energy during her upcoming school summer vacation to this latter entry, reflecting on and writing about her experience as a cooperating teacher. Additionally, Susan included a works-in-progress section at the back of her portfolio which was comprised of items which she planned to develop and reflect on in the future as potential entries.
Susan felt it important to include these items in her portfolio because she wanted her portfolio to reveal "that there’s a lot more to me" beyond the limited view of herself as a public school teacher. She thought it important to demonstrate that she “works a lot at the kinds of things that I ask my children to work at; I take some of the same risks that I ask them to take; and I enjoy some of the same things I’m hoping they enjoy.” Susan believed that it was important that her portfolio reflected her interest in continuing to learn and grow personally. She also believed that the addition of these items helped to make the portfolio “a little more holistic” by developing a more complete picture of her own identity, both personally and professionally, than is reflected in her original work. Susan expected to continue to expand the variety which her portfolio displayed. As an example of a potential future entry, Susan offered her interest in gardening which she saw as similar to teaching in its “nurturing” quality as well as being an important “recharging” activity for her during the summer months. Susan saw the “artifacts” which she chose to include as the “easy” part of portfolio development. The “reflection,” on the other hand, was “harder to come by . . . but that’s the part I want to work on.”

In terms of her teaching, Susan had become interested in theories of multiple intelligences, having done a good deal of reading and having attended formal presentations on this topic. She noted during the project year, that she would like to include an entry section on this topic and she had been gathering potential sources of entry information for herself. This area represents an entry for future development which began during the project year itself.

During the year of her participation in the project, Susan believed that her work with her own portfolio had influenced her teaching. Most significantly, in Susan’s estimation, her work has helped her to develop a
greater understanding of the portfolio development process for her own students. Additionally, she found that she has gotten "into a habit of reflecting and thinking about what I'm teaching and why I'm teaching." Susan believed that she had become "a lot more aware . . . [and] being a lot more reflective during the course of the year." For example, Susan observed that she has found herself continuously asking herself questions like: "Why am I asking them [her students] to do this . . . This didn't work well . . . [what should I do] next time . . . This was great; maybe I could add this to it." Susan found herself more inclined to "write down right away what I was thinking about what I was doing and what I was asking the children to do." Susan considered it significant that she had gotten "into the habit of reflection . . . being in this process was really good for that." But, Susan cautioned, "you can also get out of it." Susan also found that her work with the university intern contributed to her increased inclination to reflect on her work.

Additionally, Susan realized that she took "a lot more photographs" in her classroom since completing her project. She found the photographs helpful in providing evidence for herself that she is engaging her students in activities which reflect her beliefs about teaching and learning; she observed that she felt that she was more conscious about documenting her work with her students. And she asked for "a little more feedback from the children" on the instructional activities she presented to her class, finding that she has been not only more reflective herself but has sought also to have her students become more reflective. She found that she not only has asked frequently for her students to share their "quick ratings" on the activities (having her students rate the classroom activities on a one-to-five scale, for example) but also has sought deeper information, beyond the simple ratings ("Why was it a five?"). "There's an awful lot of feedback from the children; and they have a lot of good ideas." Susan used the student feedback to alter her approach,
personalizing instruction for individuals and for her whole class; “I need more than just my own thoughts” on her instruction. Acknowledging that she had asked for such input from students in the past, Susan observed that the frequency of her asking for student feedback on instructional activities had become much more consistent: “I don’t think a day goes by that I don’t ask them about something.”

Susan realized that she had not participated in any professional development workshops during the year following the project. She believed that this may be the result of her listing her recent workshops in her portfolio along with her acknowledgment that she hadn’t felt that she had gotten much out of many of the workshops. She was less enthusiastic than she was in the past about taking time out away from her classroom if her time investment is not likely to be rewarded by significant growth opportunities. Susan was not closed to participating in workshops and would do so if an opportunity to explore a topic in which she had a strong interest, such as multiple intelligences, presented itself; she had become more discriminating in how she selected workshops, she believed, as a result of her reflection on recent workshops which she attended in the recent past.

Susan also found that her work with her students’ portfolios - through which she engaged her students in self-assessment and documentation of learning - had become a strong priority for her during the school year following the portfolio project. She had broadened her use of student portfolios to include photographs which she has taken of her students engaged in classroom learning activities. She found that she was more likely to photocopy student products as potential student portfolio entries. Susan stated that she would like to continue to develop her use of student portfolios by providing more time for students to share their portfolios with each other.

Regarding the use of her portfolio for her own self-assessment, Susan
felt that her portfolio has “very much” supported her work with self-assessment. For example, Susan’s curriculum portfolio entry centered around her approach to teaching spelling. When she had assembled the key elements of her program for inclusion in her portfolio and took the time to reflect on her program’s effectiveness, she determined that she wanted to “make some changes for next year.” From this self-examination, Susan also developed an interest in examining other curriculum components in much the same reflective, self-critical manner. “I would be happy to have my portfolio be my new goal for each year,” documenting Susan’s growth as she worked to achieve self-identified professional improvement goals.

Susan regretted that she had not begun to develop her portfolio earlier in her career. In her eighth year of teaching at the time of her interviews, she realized that she had very little by way of documentation of her earlier work with children. Sadly, she felt that she has lost important information about her teaching which could inform her present and future teaching. “I don’t want to forget any more.”

In looking to the future, Susan found that her work with her portfolio helped her to identify several “practical” goals for professional growth. These included becoming a cooperating teacher, completing her masters degree, and better organizing her classroom curriculum. In addition, Susan identified “research goals” as well; these included the topics of multiple intelligences and educational supervision. Finally, Susan also identified “creative goals,” including leading a workshop for her peers, writing a children’s story, and keeping her portfolio “current.”

To others who would consider developing a teaching portfolio, Susan advised to “find a mentor or join a class or form a support group; don’t try to do it on your own; and stick with it.” Susan concluded that “it’s huge time and effort, but it’s worth it.”
Kevin. Since completing his portfolio project nearly one year prior to his interviews, Kevin had shared it a number of times including his sharing the portfolio with the student intern group assigned to his school. He had “stuck some notes [from others] in there,” but he had not added new entries or modified existing entries in the year since completing the project. Kevin reported that others’ reactions to his portfolio have been “very favorable, very positive” when he shared it. Observers had commented on particular entries relevant to their interests and, generally, had also commented on the amount of work involved in creating his portfolio. “It’s been encouraging.” Kevin assured the observers that he had devoted a good deal of time to the project but that “it has been worthwhile.”

Kevin had hoped to compose a photo essay depicting his classroom and stated that he would also like to include additional personal writing, but he had not done so in the year following the project. Kevin acknowledged that “it hasn’t been a priority” when considering the reason why he hadn’t continued to develop his portfolio as originally planned.

While engaged in the year-long process, Kevin believed that his teaching was influenced by the process in that he felt that he devoted more time and energy to evaluating his instructional program. Kevin found his seminar discussions with his peers important as the group expanded their discussions beyond the limits of the portfolio process to more general discussions of teaching; Kevin found these discussions to be professionally stimulating; they “helped me be more conscious of what I was doing in the classroom.” Despite the focus on portfolios, Kevin found that discussions with his peers in the portfolio group found “its way back to what was happening in the classroom . . . It would be nice if we forced ourselves to arrange to have that type of a forum on a regular basis, without the portfolio necessarily . . . to come together as a group and discuss what’s going on in your class.” Kevin
found that his regular team meetings with his grade level teaching colleagues were usually devoted to administrative tasks and his chats with peers "on the playground" were very informal; he thought that he would find regular meetings with peers, on a more "formal" basis, to be beneficial to him and contribute to development of his teaching.

"As I was going through the reflection process and thinking about what I think a teacher should be doing," Kevin found himself engaged more consistently in reflecting "on a day to day basis." He found that he was less inclined to feel as though he was "in a rut" because he was consistently measuring his actions against his "standards" of what kind of a teacher he believed that he "should be." His reflections included self-assessment of his lessons and the activities he presented to his students "to some extent," but, more importantly in his eyes, Kevin found himself consistently considering "how I came across to the students in my class." This included his presentation in class, his interpersonal interactions with his students, and the nature of the feedback which he provided for his students. "I ended up trying to spend more time in small groups and with individual students . . . trying to find the time to be working individually with kids," which he believed is a direct result of his reflections while engaged in the portfolio development process.

Kevin believed that he had continued to be sensitized to these issues in his classroom during the year following his portfolio project. He remained focused on "relationships" with his students as an important aspect of his life as a teacher. In his work with his students in the school year subsequent to the portfolio project, Kevin continued his efforts to make frequent individual contacts with each of his students. He believed that he has achieved closer relationships "with individual students," which "helps in everything you do" in the classroom. Kevin felt that this shift in emphasis had allowed him to become more aware of individual needs and strengths among his students.
Kevin felt that the portfolio process had helped him to “look differently at what I do.” He believed that he had taken a more holistic view of his teaching, considering “all the different angles” to a greater extent than he did previously. Another outcome was the realization that he would like to “strive for” greater consistency in his teaching and his classroom; “doing what I think I should be doing.” Kevin felt that he had adjusted his teaching to become more consistent with his values as a result of his reflections in the portfolio process.

To teachers who would consider engaging in the teaching portfolio process, Kevin would advise them “to put some other things on hold and go for it . . . it really is worthwhile but you really have to have time to do it well.” Kevin found the year-long process allowed adequate time for completion of the portfolios and considered that a second year might have been helpful in continuing the relationships and in continuing to develop the teaching portfolios. Kevin acknowledged that he “wouldn’t have done it” if he had decided to pursue his portfolio on his own without the support of his portfolio group.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Three elementary school teachers independently made their decision to participate in a year-long project in which they would develop their own teaching portfolios. At the outset, each teacher came to the project with a different conception of what a teaching portfolio consisted of, what purpose a teaching portfolio might serve, and why the development of his/her own teaching portfolio might be an engaging, worthwhile project. A larger group of teachers initially gathered for the year-long project, organized by the school district in which the three teach. A facilitator was provided and the project was organized as a graduate level course for which academic credits would be awarded to those successfully completing the course. Several potential participants left the group following the first meeting; the three subjects of this study remained and completed the process by the end of the school year.

Each of the three developed teaching portfolios which met the requirements of the course / project; requirements which were partially established by, and partially negotiated with, the facilitator, a professor of education who met with the group at periodic intervals throughout the school year. A menu of twelve common portfolio entries was agreed-to; one of the three teacher subjects included all twelve entries in her portfolio; the other two teacher subjects included all but one of the twelve agreed-upon common entries. Each of the three teachers permitted the researcher to examine their
portfolios and each provided a descriptive explanation of their portfolios. About ten months following the completion of the project, the three teachers were engaged in a series of three structured interviews each in which they (a) discussed their experiences, beliefs, and practices as public school teachers; (b) described the portfolio development process from their individual perspectives; and (c) reflected on the process and its effects from a distance of about one year following the completion of the project.

As stated in Chapter 1, “the primary emphasis (of this study) is to consider the utility of teacher portfolios in engaging those who develop portfolios in a process of reflection, self-assessment, and personalized professional development.” Perrone (1991, p. 86) asserted the importance of reflection, “stepping back, looking again, gaining added perspective and insight, greater understanding,” in teacher development. And Green and Smyser (1996, p. 20) observed that, despite the varied approaches to and significant time and money devoted to professional development, “the professional development of a teacher is essentially an interior process.”

Reflection and “the interior process” of teacher professional development: What did the process of portfolio development mean for these three teachers?

Additionally, a secondary emphasis of this study had also been identified: A consideration of the portfolio development process itself. Included in an examination of the process is consideration of the reasons for engaging in such a process, items selected for entry into the portfolios, the importance of the support group to the participants, factors which supported the participants in the development of their portfolios, growth experienced by the participants, disposition of the portfolios following the year-long project, and suggestions for others considering engagement in such a process. In the traditional sense, “portfolios” may be considered to be collections of a person’s “best work” or of evidence of a person’s competence. Green and Smyser,
however, asserted that the value of teaching portfolios lies in their conception as "a process more than . . . a product" (p. 19). If so, an examination of the process of portfolio development along with a cataloging of the items included in documents themselves may inform the interdependent processes of teacher development and school change.

**Summary of Findings**

Eight questions guided this study of teacher portfolio development and the effects of the portfolio development process for three elementary school teachers. A summary of the findings is organized around these eight questions. The questions are initially articulated in Chapter 1 and are repeated below as they appear above in Chapter 1:

1. Did the development of individual teaching portfolios support reflection, self-assessment, and professional development on the part of the participants?

To varying degrees, each of the three participants seemed to agree with Susan's observation about the portfolio development process: "It is important, worthwhile work that challenges you to grow, set goals, interact, and remember why you are a teacher." By their own assessment, the three participants believed that they have engaged in increased reflection on their teaching and that they have continued to assess their teaching at an increased level and on an ongoing basis as a result of their participation in the project. The participants believed that they were able to state that development of their teaching (both identified here and in #6 below) had occurred as a result of their work to construct teaching portfolios.

Karen's comments on different entries suggested her reflection which occurred throughout the portfolio development process. Her quilt-square-as-teaching-metaphor ("I was amazed to see all of the varied approaches to a similar task in one room"), her photo journal ("portfolios are for learning and..."), etc., all reflect the process of reflection and self-assessment that the participants engaged in.
growing, not a display of your best work”), and the videotape of a teaching
episode (“it was almost as if I were critiquing someone else’s lesson”) provided
context for Karen’s reflection on her teaching. Karen also reported that her
portfolio project created a context for professional goal setting; Karen set two
long-term goals (relative to special education and student behavior
management) and two short-term goals (relative to record keeping and
planning) which she believed resulted from a self-assessment of her work; “it
actually forced you . . . to actually look at why you’re doing what you’re doing .
. . if it’s effective and where [you] go from here.” She stated her desire to
continue to set goals for development through continuation of the process
begun during the project year. Of the process, Karen concluded, “it has
revived my desire to learn and has made me crave a change in my work to
challenge my abilities.”

More specifically in considering change in practice as an outcome of
the project, Karen reported that she felt a greater sensitivity for her students
as they worked to develop their own portfolios. Importantly, in her mind.
Karen also reported that she believed that the process helped her to support
her first grade students to write deeper reflections about their own work.
Karen felt that her students’ increased ability to reflect contributed to their
learning and that she felt that they were especially able to articulate
shortcomings and address such shortcomings. She stated that she believed
that, of all the curriculum areas, her teaching of writing was most influenced
as a result of her own work.

Additionally, Karen stated that she felt that she had become more
sensitive to the individual differences of her students as they engaged with
learning tasks presented; “I think I have really kept the word ‘fragile’ in my
mind this year.” Additionally, Karen stated that she felt that she had worked
harder to address individual student learning issues and had consciously to

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lower her own "frustration level" in working with her struggling students.

Karen also observed that she had become much less inclined to send home completed student works on an as-completed or weekly basis. Instead, she had begun to collect student products over the course of her teaching units. She found that this practice had better enabled her to assess student progress over time and provided parents with a less-fragmented view of their children's learning activities.

Susan's self-analysis stated that "throughout this year I have thought a great deal about what I might want to accomplish in the next few years. This portfolio course was a wonderful impetus for me and has somehow given me a feeling of confidence and eagerness to become involved in some new ventures." Susan established goals for her professional development in three broad areas: "Practical goals" (hosting an intern, completing her degree, and organizing her curriculum materials), "research goals" (relative to brain research and supervision of interns), and "creative goals" (initiatives relative to a peer workshop, a children's story, continued portfolio development). Susan's reflection on her artifact also served as an opportunity for Susan to articulate her beliefs about children and learners as well as her role in her student's lives. Additionally, Susan's reflection on her curriculum entry (her spelling program) resulted in a modification of the program for her subsequent group of students. In considering the process of reflection for her different entries, Susan observed that she felt "rusty" when expected to reflect on her teaching: "Being in that reflective and analytical mode is very different from what I have to do . . . for other kinds of writing." Susan concluded that her participation in the portfolio development process had resulted in her more consistently thinking "about what is important to me as a teacher and a learner . . . I think much more carefully now about what I'm doing with the children . . ." as she went about her teaching activities. She
stated that she had become much “more reflective during the course of the year” and was more likely to “write down right away what I was thinking about what I was doing and what I was asking the children to do.”

Susan felt that her experience with portfolio development provided a greater sensitivity to her students’ experiences with their portfolios. Her deeper understanding of the process, from a student’s point of view, had served her students well, Susan expressed. Her work with student portfolios had taken a new priority in her classroom in the year following the project. She had broadened her use of student portfolios to include photographs and had increased the types of student entries, using photocopies to permit easy collection of important student works.

Susan had also found herself taking many more photographs in the year subsequent to the project, due to her increased interest in documenting her work with her students. Importantly, she also found that she asked students for feedback on the learning experiences which she had arranged more frequently, on a daily basis at the least. Student feedback had been used to increasingly individualize instruction for her students. “I need more than just my own thoughts” in planning for instruction, observed Susan.

Kevin’s entry reflections also revealed his engagement with reflecting on practice. His entries included consideration, for the first time for him, of his growth and experiences through his twenty-year career; consideration of the significance of a specific experience with a student; and an explicit articulation of his beliefs and values. In discussing the development of his entries, Kevin observed that “the more components I had finished up, especially the reflections on what I had done, the more of those that were completed, the more convinced I was that it was very worthwhile.” He believed that he was more consistently engaged in reflection “on a day to day basis,” regularly measuring his performance against his values and beliefs.
made more visible for himself through the portfolio development process. He felt that he had looked “differently at what I do” by taking for himself, what he believed was a more holistic view of teaching his sixth grade students.

Kevin stated that he felt less “in a rut,” owing to his increased reflection “on a day to day basis.” He found himself devoting more time to individual and small group contacts in his classroom, believing that he had devoted increased energy to personal relationships. He stated that he was increasingly concerned about how he “came across” to his students. Kevin felt that his increased attention to personal relationships with his students helped him to know their strengths, weaknesses, and interests better and to more effectively address his students’ individual learning needs.

In response to interview questions, all three teacher participants stated that they felt that the process had increased their reflection in practice. All three felt not only that reflection did occur during the portfolio development process relative both to broad conceptions of teaching and public education but also to their day-to-day intimate work with their students. They all stated that they believed that this increased level of reflection had continued beyond the project year and into the following year.

Beyond their belief that they had increased their inclination to reflect on their teaching and to make adjustments as a result of their teaching, the three participants did not identify changed classroom practice when questioned directly about changes in their classroom practices which may have resulted from their participation in the portfolio development process. However, specific changes were identified by each participant in formative statements. For example, both Karen and Susan reported an increased ability to utilize student portfolios in their classrooms. Karen and Kevin reported a greater sensitivity to their students and their individual needs. Kevin also reported that he later placed a stronger emphasis on relationship-building
with his students and increased the frequency of writing opportunities for his students. Whether these changes in their classroom practices were a direct result of the teachers' participation in the portfolio development project or due to other factors remains beyond the limits of this study.

Finally, both Karen and Susan utilized the portfolio development process as an opportunity for self-assessment and setting goals for both personal and professional development, for organizing their own professional growth in the years to come. Specifically, Karen's reflective writing, her photo journal, and her video-taped lesson all provided a context for self assessment; she identified four goals, two long-term and two short term goals, for her continued development as a teacher. Susan found that the project itself provided a context for more global thought about "what I might want to accomplish in the next few years." Susan went on to articulate specific goals organized in three broad areas for her personal and professional development. Specifically, the opportunity for reflective writing centering around her spelling program led Susan to redesign the program to be more responsive to student needs in the year following the project. Kevin, on the other hand, while also observing that he believed himself to be increasingly reflective during his teaching did not identify any specific professional development goals through his work with his portfolio.

2. Why did the participants choose to develop their teaching portfolios?

At the outset, all three participants had hoped that the process would provide them with an opportunity for self-examination and reflection on their teaching. All three participants also wanted to preserve and document their work as teachers. Additionally, two participants - Karen and Susan - were hoping to learn more about the portfolio development process so they could better engage their students in the use of portfolios to support their students' learning.
Karen's interest in this project included "learning and growing . . . to take a closer look at myself as a teacher;" Karen hoped to focus her plans for continued development through the portfolio development process, "almost 'this is where I've been; this is where I am; this is where I want to go.'" Karen was also interested in developing practical knowledge of the portfolio development process for application to her teaching, "have a portfolio of my own to share with my students" as she worked with her primary students to develop their own portfolios; Karen desired to develop a deeper understanding of "what a portfolio really was." She also expressed her enthusiasm about having the opportunity to begin to document her teaching at an early point in her career. Susan also expressed interest in engaging in a process which allowed her to "put together a vehicle for reflection and documentation of my teaching philosophy and practices." for goal setting, and for learning more about the portfolio development process to support her work with her students. Susan envisioned herself passing on her portfolio to her daughter as a representation of her life's work at some point in the future. Kevin was interested in engaging in the practice of "reflect[ing] on my work and on the act of teaching," as well a preserving and sharing his work.

At the outset, both Karen and Susan expressed an interest in gaining a good deal more from the project than did Kevin. Karen and Susan expected to "do something" with their reflections, to engage in a growth experience as a result of their year-long commitment to their portfolios. Additionally, they expressed an expectation that they would gain practical knowledge of the portfolio process as participants which would help them become more informed and skillful facilitators of the process for their students.

Again, like Karen and Susan, Kevin had hoped that his portfolio would provide a context for reflection and preserving his work as a teacher. Unlike Karen and Susan, Kevin did not express an expectation that the portfolio would
provide him with a vehicle for planning his professional development in subsequent years. Neither did Kevin express an interest in engaging in a process which would inform his utilization of portfolios with his students. Like Karen and Susan, Kevin eventually shared his portfolio with others, including his students; he did not, however, express an interest in identifying from a student's point of view in the construction of his portfolio. Again, all three participants had hoped that greater reflection would be an outcome of the process.

3. What issues were addressed and what artifacts were included in the participants' portfolios?

The facilitator and the participants agreed to include twelve entries in each of the portfolios:

1. table of contents: included by all three participants;
2. resume: included by all three participants; generally standard resumes by all three participants;
3. self-analysis: included by all three participants; articulated near the end of the year-long project, reflected on their engagement with the process;
4. philosophical or reflective statement on teaching: included by two of the three participants; not included by Kevin;
5. timeline: included by two of the three participants; not included by Karen; Susan - both personal and professional in nature which included descriptive annotations for major life events; Kevin - reflected his twenty-year teaching career, mainly professional in nature with limited personal references;
6. professional development: included by all three participants; annotated itemization of recent workshops, seminars, training opportunities, courses, etc.;
7. curriculum: included by all three participants; Karen - a literature
mini-unit; Susan - her approach to teaching spelling; Kevin - a social studies activity;

8. community or professional service: included by all three participants; Karen - development of a math assessment tool for use in her school; Susan - use of her classroom as laboratory by university teacher education students; Kevin - community service project engaged in by Kevin and middle school students;

9. an artifact: included by all three participants with reflective essay describing personal metaphoric significance; Karen - a student-created quilt square; Susan - a flowering cactus; Kevin - a student-created ruler sleeve;

10. a creative item: included by all three participants; Karen - a photo-journal intended to be descriptive of her classroom environment; Susan - a photo-journal intended to be descriptive of Susan's teaching and her classroom environment; Kevin - a story which Kevin had created for instructional use with his students;

11. journal entries: included by all three participants; submitted as course requirements, reactions to seminar meetings, readings, and a videotape viewed during a seminar meeting;

12. other items: included by all three participants; Karen - an autobiographical introduction to her portfolio, a "resources" entry which included books, individuals, a course, and a program viewed as influential to her teaching; a reflective entry entitled "teacher as reader, writer, and thinker," a videotape of a teaching episode accompanied by an analytical observation, and an untitled "works-in-progress" section; Susan - a section of letters from parents and students, a section which included letters of recommendation from previous and present supervisors as well as college and university transcripts, and an untitled "works-in-progress" section; Kevin - a photocopy of a religious statement with his written reflection.
With slight variations, all three participants generally conformed with the expectations for common items to be included in their portfolios. All three participants worked within the general expectations of the course to personalize their entries; an examination of the entries revealed that the personalizing seemed to be important to the teachers. The three did differ, however, in the additional material which they choose to include beyond the common item requirements of the course. Karen included several items related to her teaching, including a videotape of a teaching episode and additional reflective writings. Susan included personal letters from students and parents; both Karen and Susan included “works-in-progress,” indicating their intent to continue the development of their portfolios beyond the limits of the year-long course. Kevin, however, did not; his addition beyond the agreed-upon common items was a photocopy of a religious statement. His portfolio contained no indication that he expected to continue to its development beyond the time limits of the course.

4. Did the portfolio development group which met regularly under the guidance of a facilitator support individual portfolio development?

All three participants spoke to the value of group engagement in the process as well as the value of being guided and supported by a knowledgeable facilitator. Karen expressed appreciation for the diversity in the group and the support which she felt from the group throughout the process. Susan stated that “I guess I knew that I needed guidance and I needed motivation” provided by the facilitator and the group structure and also found that she counted on the support of and feedback on her various entries from group members (regarding the sharing of entries within the group, Susan observed that “I didn’t know how important that would be”). Kevin found that the formal structure of the group provided focus which he believed was essential for his completion of the project, he found that the interaction and support
within the group was also important.

Karen considered the facilitator's role in creating the expectation for a structured approach for all participants to be important; additionally, she also believed that the facilitator supported growth in the participants through the background readings provided, the presentation of useful models, the positive feedback on entries, and the leading of seminar discussions. Susan characterized the facilitator's role as "very key to the process . . . we couldn't have done it without her," in that the facilitator provided an important service in guiding the both individuals and the groups as well as coordinating the practical aspects of the project. Kevin characterized the facilitator as "fantastic," at least in part because of her knowledge about the portfolio development process and the sharing of journal readings through which she helped participants build their own knowledge of teaching portfolios.

In summary, all three participants agreed that membership in a group which was dedicated to the development of teaching portfolios and which met regularly throughout the year with a facilitator who worked with the group to establish norms was helpful and supportive to them as they constructed their own teaching portfolios. In considering potential recommendations to other teachers thinking about developing teaching portfolios, the participants were unified in their strong recommendation that a similar course be followed as opposed to individual teachers attempting to accomplish the same on their own, without the support of a facilitator and a study group.

5. What factors motivated and supported teachers in the development of their portfolios?

In addition to the observations of the participants summarized in #4 above, the participants identified several other factors which they believed motivated and supported them during the portfolio development process. These factors, which varied by participant, included meeting with a partner
outside of the group, the opportunity to gain feedback from others, the structure of the approach, and the small size (eight participants) of the seminar group.

Karen observed that her meeting with a support partner (also a member of the group) outside the regularly-scheduled seminar meetings helped her to consider creative approaches to her entry development. "I needed it," is how Karen described her interaction with the structure of the project which included timelines and regular meetings of the group. For Susan, the opportunity to share and receive feedback were important to her as was her knowledge that others in the group had also struggled with their portfolio work. Like Karen, Kevin found the structure to be important to him in completing the project. The modeling of others and the small size of the group also supported Kevin's portfolio development, according to his observations.

Each of the three participants were individual and unique learners. Each were able to find paths to individual expression through a common process which was negotiated with the facilitator at the beginning of the process. In considering what kept them going throughout the year-long project, each identified factors which gave meaning to their own work and which supported their own learning and progress. While all acknowledged that the structure was important, each also identified their own, personalized, series of less formal support systems which contributed to their successful completion of their projects.

6. What changes, if any, did the participants experience as a result of their participation in the portfolio development process?

Participants experienced a number of changes, according to their observations about one-year following the completion of the project, as a result of their engagement with the seminar and the portfolio development process. Some results were related to expected outcomes, some were surprises.
In general, participants found, in addition to observations noted above, that they had gained important, deeper knowledge about the process of developing portfolios which may be applicable to their work with their students; that they had formed new, stronger relationships with teaching colleagues; and that they had developed practices of student assessment of learning tasks which they believe contributed to student learning and their development of more responsive learning activities.

Karen found that the process provided her with an opportunity to come to better know several of her teaching colleagues with whom she had experienced only a casual acquaintance prior to the project. She also felt that she had achieved one of her aims in learning more about the use and application of student portfolios to her classroom, growing beyond her initial understanding of portfolios as being “all about you” to an appreciation of the potential of the reflective aspects of portfolios for personal and professional growth. In her work with her students and their own portfolio development process, she found herself becoming more sensitive to their struggles as well as developing a greater skill in helping her students realize deeper thinking through the creation of higher quality reflective statements about their own work; she believed that this has contributed to student learning in important, new ways for her students.

Karen has also developed her own approach to using student portfolios from an approach which was little more than a random collection of samples to a more structured approach intended to demonstrate student growth. She found, for example, that instead of sending home student products as they are completed, she now collects the products over the course of particular units and sends the products home as, according to Karen’s viewpoint, a more complete picture of student engagement with topics which also demonstrated student growth over time. And, more generally, Karen believed that the
process has also helped her to become more sensitive to individual differences among her students and believed that she had come to develop lessons which address different needs among her students than she did prior to her engagement in the process.

Susan found that her conception of a portfolio had changed considerably from her art school experience, recognizing that the reflective element of portfolio development had expanded the utility portfolios significantly in supporting student learning. Susan also believed that she had gained a greater understanding of the portfolio development process which supported her students in the development of their own portfolios; she believed that she now can better support student efforts. She found that her work with student portfolios has become a stronger priority for her in the year following the project than it had been prior to the project. Additionally, Susan found herself taking many more photographs of her class over the course of the year; this, she believed, was helpful to her in documenting her own work as it mirrored her beliefs and values. Importantly, in her eyes, Susan also had found herself asking her students for their assessment of learning activities more frequently than she did in the past and she also had sought more specific feedback from her students on her presentation of activities. Interestingly, Susan observed that her work with the “professional development” entry had resulted in her not participating in any workshops or seminars in the year following the project owing, she believed, to her recognition that these activities had been of limited help to her in her own development as a teacher.

Like Karen, Kevin found that his participation in the process had resulted in stronger relationships with his peers in the portfolio development group; he viewed this as a positive and unexpected outcome. In practical terms, Kevin had also found that he provided his class with more time to write
than he had previously devoted to this activity and thought that he would work with his future students to develop their portfolios, although this had not yet occurred. Additionally, Kevin felt that he had come to place a stronger emphasis in "critiquing my own units" than he did previous to his portfolio experience. Kevin believed that his reflections had resulted in his greater awareness of the quality of his interactions with his students. Finally, Kevin had found that completion of his portfolio had been a "self-esteem builder" for him.

In summary, each participant found themselves changed as a result of their participation in the process. Again, as noted in #5 above, each participant was an individual and unique learner; so too, was each participant an individual and unique teacher. Each found their own meanings in the process and each was changed in an individual way as a result. A common outcome was the belief held by each participant that they had become more reflective in their teaching, at least in the year following the project, than they had been prior to their engaging in the process.

7. What will the participants do with their portfolios once they have completed the guided process?

All participants stated that they viewed their portfolios as works-in-progress, open-ended projects which would not likely ever be considered finished products. They seemed to value portfolios as process and all expressed a desire to continue to share their portfolios with others. Karen's portfolio was "just a start," from her viewpoint; she expected to add a goal-setting section to which she planned to contribute regularly; she saw herself adding items but not culling older items, desiring to create an ongoing story of herself as a teacher. In addition, Karen expressed an interest in revisiting some of her reflections, to develop further as she has given some issues further thought. Susan saw her portfolio as "ever evolving; it's not a finished
piece" and had added notes and other documents as well as source items for a new section on her experience as a cooperating teacher; Susan had also identified several topics for future entries yet to be started. She believed that it would be important to include reflective essays to complement her added documents. Kevin, too, had identified topics for future entries but acknowledged that continuing to develop his portfolio in the year following the project has not “been a priority” for him.

In the year following the completion of the project, all three participants had shared their portfolios with others, both students and adults. Additionally, all three participants expressed an interest in continuing to develop their portfolios. However, as noted in #3 above, both Karen and Susan had actually added items to their portfolios in the subsequent year to the project while Kevin did not.

8. What suggestions do the participants have for others in considering the development of teaching portfolios?

Participants identified several suggestions for teachers who may be consider developing their own portfolios. Suggestions offered by one or more participants include organizing into a group rather than attempt the process as individuals, arranging for the services of a knowledgeable and capable facilitator, meeting and sharing entries with the group regularly (every three weeks, Susan suggested), planning to devote a good deal of time to the project, remaining faithful to a regular work schedule to complete entries on a periodic basis, meeting with a support partner outside of and in between seminar meetings for ongoing support, and varying support partners over the course of the project to allow for personalized feedback from different points of view. The assessments of all three participants agreed with Susan’s statement: “It’s worth it!”
Discussion of Findings

In a school district employing about seventy teachers and other certified employees, the opportunity to engage in a year-long teaching portfolio development project was presented. The project could fulfill the district's requirement that teachers complete a university course at least once during the three-year recertification cycle and would potentially help a teacher move across the salary guide, in which case it would also contribute to receiving a higher salary. The seminar course associated with the project, offered as a course, met immediately after school for approximately eight times during one school year. Approximately twelve teachers attended the first meeting of the course; five teachers (and two administrators) completed the course, developing teaching portfolios. Three of these teachers have been included in this study. The prospect of developing a teaching portfolio appealed to a small minority of teachers in this school district and to those to whom it had some appeal, a very small number actually completed the project and developed their own teaching portfolios. The limited appeal of developing a teaching portfolio, even in a context in which some incentive existed for participation, is apparent for the particular school district in this case.

The three teachers participating in this study all approached the teaching portfolio development project hoping that it would provide them with the opportunity to examine their own teaching and reflect on their work as teachers. None of the participants stated an expectation that their teaching would change in any way as a result of their participation in the project; they did state, however, that they wanted to think more about their teaching and that the course would provide them with a context for doing so. By the end of the experience, they all believed that they were able to do so and all believed that they had been changed in some way as a result of their participation. The participants reported that they had engaged in a self-examination of their
teaching and that they had reflected on various aspects of their teaching, both during the year-long portfolio development process and during the year subsequent to the year of the project.

The three teachers participating in this study reported that they believed that they had become more reflective in their teaching as a result of their participation. They believed that this increased inclination to think critically about their teaching continued beyond the year of the project to the subsequent school year. One teacher reported a greater sensitivity to the diversity of needs among her students; one teacher reported seeking student assessments of her performance on a deeper level and on a more regular basis; and the third teacher considered that his teaching had become more consistent with his personal beliefs and values, and sought to develop and maintain stronger relationships with his students.

Once reflection and self-assessment had occurred, what actions follow? Karen, in her third year of teaching during the year of the project, identified several very specific needs for her own performance as a teacher. She considered that these needs persisted because of a lack in her teacher preparation program and a subsequent lack in opportunities to address these needs in her teaching. Karen set broad goals for developing these areas which, if addressed, Karen believed would make her a better teacher. Susan, in her seventh year of teaching during the year of the portfolio project, also set goals during the process. However, Susan's goals didn't seem to address needs in her teaching so much as they represented interests in various aspects of her teaching which she stated that she would like to develop or explore. Joan's goals appeared to address self-actualization on a personal level as opposed to the development of competence on a professional level. Kevin, a twenty-year teaching veteran who had also worked outside of education for two years and had stated that he would consider future employment outside of
education, had not set goals for either personal or professional development through the portfolio development process.

Additionally, all three teachers identified changes in classroom practice which they believed were a result of their portfolio development. Karen and Susan reported that they had placed an increased emphasis on the use of student portfolios which they believed resulted in greater student reflection and self-assessment. Karen also reported that her teaching of writing was directly influenced by the project. Susan reported that she had redesigned her spelling program as a result of her reflection on her previous program which she included as an entry in her portfolio. Karen and Kevin reported an increased sensitivity to the individual differences and needs of their students in their classrooms while Kevin also reported an increased emphasis on relationship-building with his students.

All three teachers, in considering the reasons why they had decided to participate in the project, expressed an interest in documenting their work. Additionally, all three had shared their portfolios with others, both individually and in groups, following the completion of the project, reporting that this sharing was important to them in a most positive way. Does the portfolio, and subsequent sharing, offer a way for teachers to negotiate in some small way around the isolation in which they work, opening a small window to what they may believe to be unseen (and unappreciated) and complex work? Participants also gave importance to the seminar group to the process of developing their own portfolios, the deepened relationships among peers in the group realized during the process, and one participant expressed an interest in continuing the group beyond the completion of the project, meeting regularly to discuss teaching and classroom issues. These teachers (and others?) seem to be seeking to extend the unfortunately shallow professional engagements with peers which now seem to characterize their
work places. How deeply these teachers seem to hunger for collegiality; how greatly they value it when it is a part of their experience.

Two of the teachers participating in this study also sought to learn more about the portfolio development process so they could better engage their students in the process. Each of the teachers who were motivated to participate with the interest of better engaging their students in the portfolio process stated their belief that the process had helped them to understand the potential for student learning to be gained by engaging students in reflection, self-assessment, and goal setting. Both teachers also expressed the belief that they were able to become more effective in this aspect of their teaching as a result of their participation and as evidenced with their work with their own students in the year following the project. How important is it for teachers to have actually tried out the processes with which they seek to engage their students? In the cases of these two primary teachers, it seemed important indeed. Both believed that they were more able to contribute to their students' learning through a more informed use of student portfolios than they were able to realize prior to their own experience with developing portfolios.

Of the three participants, Karen and Susan seemed to be more strongly engaged in the process than Kevin. Both initially expected more from the process and both included more material in their portfolios than did Kevin. Both included a "works-in-progress" section in their portfolio and added to their portfolios in the subsequent year while Kevin did not. And both Karen and Susan utilized their own portfolios as tools to learn more about the process of portfolio development as participants, intending their work to inform the practice of portfolio development with their students while Kevin did not. Several factors external to the process set Kevin apart from both Karen and Susan. It is not known which of these factors, if any, mitigated against Kevin's engagement in the process to the extent that Karen and Susan
engaged.

All three participants also expressed an intention to continue to develop their teaching portfolios. In fact, within one year of the conclusion of the seminar series, two of the three had added new material to their portfolios and both expressed their intention to develop whole new entries and new reflections. One of the participants expressed her intention to utilize the portfolio process as a structure to develop annual performance improvement goals, as required by her school district. The three certainly viewed their portfolios not as completed projects but as an ongoing process with which they expect to remain engaged over time - a format for continuing change and development.

Clearly, all three participants found the process of creating teaching portfolios to be meaningful. Given this value of portfolio construction, the participants were able to identify factors which supported their work to develop their portfolios. A structured approach, which standardized the nature of the entries, was viewed as positive by the participants, although at least two of the participants had a negative reaction to such standardization initially. In the end, the participants found value in their ability to work with and support each other as they addressed these common elements of their portfolios; in other words, the dialogue between the participants was enhanced as an outcome of the process.

The importance of a facilitator was recognized by all three participants. The teachers participating in this study spoke to several important functions that the facilitator fulfilled. First, she helped the participants develop a common knowledge base about teaching portfolios by providing journal articles which were read and discussed by the participants. Second, she set standards for entries, placing an emphasis on entries directly relevant to the participants’ teaching. Third, she standardized the process by presenting
proposed menus of entries and negotiating the menu with the participants. Fourth, she provided models for the participants. Fifth, she managed a timeline which helped to keep the portfolio developers on schedule for completion within the project year.

The participants also addressed the importance of the seminar group in the project. Feeling that they were not likely to complete such a project on their own, all three teachers spoke about their need to receive regular feedback while two participants expressed an interest in a stronger relationship with others in the process; one teacher expressing an interest in more frequent seminar group meetings and one teacher expressing an interest in a closer relationship with her support partner.

In the end, all three teachers believed the experience of developing teaching portfolios to be worthwhile in itself. All three teachers reported that, at least within the first year following the project, they believed that they had become more thoughtful and more engaged in ongoing reflection and assessment of their teaching. Certainly, if such an effect can be realized, the process of developing teaching portfolios seems to be a worthy project for teachers interested in the professional development. Teaching portfolios, it seems, do present a potential structure for individual teacher development.

The works completed by the participants illustrated Wolf's (1994) definition of a teaching portfolio as "purposeful and selective collections of a person's work and reflections (p. 108)" while they avoided becoming mere "scrapbooks" or "resumes on steroids." According to the participants, the process permitted them a context and occasion to "reflect on their own work and on the act of teaching" (Wolf, 1991, p. 136). The experience of the teachers in this study seemed similar, at least as an initial step, to Langer's (1996) vision of portfolio development as action research in which problems and goals could be identified and followed by an action plan, data collection, and reflection.
As adult learners, the participants in the portfolio development course / project were presented with an opportunity to “confront their beliefs and assumptions (Licklider, 1997, p. 13),” keys to reflection and self-assessment. While working within an agreed-upon format, each participant exercised a good deal of the “individualizing” of approaches to learning that Brandt (1996, p. 33) advocated in considering self-assessment approaches to staff development. Rather than take a traditional approach to staff development, the participants chose “experiential learning” (Osterman and Kottkamp, 1993) which shifts the emphasis in staff development from knowledge acquisition to a reflective practice model.

On a broader landscape, this shift from a one-size-fits-all approach to staff development in which a set of knowledge is presented to practitioners toward an approach in which teachers are empowered, active participants in their own learning represents a potentially powerful change for school cultures. As Guglielmino (1993) observed, staff development initiatives in schools have begun to reflect what has been considered such hallmarks of quality as have been recognized in successful adult education programs in general. This is not an insignificant shift; in terms of staff development, the view is changing from the “teacher as taught” to the “teacher as learner” (Fullan, 1990, p. 18). This shift has encouraged a conception of staff development as a move from “getting other people to change” to the notion that “growth starts from within, the most effective forms of staff development begin with the self” (Levine, 1989, p. xv).

It is such “reculturing” (Hargreaves, 1997, p. 1) at the school level that is vital to school reform. Reform is not about bringing the latest innovations and policies to a nation, state, district, or school. Rather, it is about “what would it take to make the education system a learning organization - expert at dealing with change as a normal part of its work” (Fullan, 1993, p. 4). At least
a part of this challenge is Fullan's (1996) later question, “what kinds of work communities or school cultures are most supportive of teacher growth and school improvement” (1996, p. 37)?

In this context, then, have teaching portfolios been shown to have potential to contribute to school improvement? At the level of the individual teacher working in an individual classroom, it seems as though the development of a teaching portfolio can contribute to school improvement through the work of that teacher. Greater collegiality among teaching portfolio developers may also hold some power for developing cultures of reflection, self-assessment, and personal improvement in schools. The experiences and insights provided by the three teachers participating in this study suggest that portfolios can provide an authentic, useful tool for professional growth.

**Conclusions**

The findings of this study suggest several implications for educators:

1. Development of teaching portfolios is viewed as a valuable experience by participants who recommend such a process to other teachers.

2. Development of teaching portfolios may contribute to reflection and self-assessment among participants.

3. Development of teaching portfolios may contribute to greater reflection on professional practice, an aspect of professional development. In addition to reflection, there is some evidence that indicates that the subjects of the study altered some of their instructional practices. The degree of influence that teacher portfolio development had on the decision to change instructional practices is unknown. Similarly, the effectiveness of the changes is unknown.

4. Teachers who are interested in developing teaching portfolios may want to consider arranging to do so under certain conditions; these include:
a. agree on a standard menu of entries to be included;
b. form a support / study group;
c. meet frequently;
d. consider working more closely with a partner for support outside the group meeting schedule;
e. enlist the services of a knowledgeable, capable facilitator;
f. develop and adhere to a timeline for completion of entries;
g. provide and accept feedback regarding portfolio entries in the support group.

5. Development of teaching portfolios by a group of teachers may provide a context for collegiality.

6. Once developed, teachers may view their teaching portfolios as an ongoing process which would be continually developed over time.

7. Teachers who are interested in implementing the use of student portfolios may gain insight to the process from their students' viewpoints through the development of teaching portfolios.

**Recommendations for Further Study**

Several questions remain or have been suggested by this study. These include:

1. What effects of participation in such a project would a longitudinal study reveal?

2. What impact on classroom practice might result from the development of teaching portfolios?

3. What types of entries have other developers of teaching portfolios found to support teacher reflection, self-assessment, and development?

4. Does the age and/or experience level and/or gender of teachers
engaging in the portfolio development process have any bearing on utility of portfolios for development or other outcomes?


162


163

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