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THE MEANINGS OF TEACHING FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EXEMPLARY
AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

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by

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ABSTRACT

A qualitative narrative inquiry that explores the meaning of teaching and the development of that meaning throughout the career of exemplary and experienced teachers in kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade (K-12) public schools was conducted. Exemplary teachers were operationalized in this study as any of the 12 teachers chosen each year by the state of Pennsylvania as finalists for Teacher of the Year. The research questions that guided this narrative inquiry are: Which, if any, of Kegan's (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus can be identified as current or prior meaning-making systems for these exemplary and experienced teachers? What are the current meanings of teaching for these exemplary and experienced teachers? If these meanings have changed, what was the process of change as the meanings of teaching changed throughout their career? Was this process of change developmental? What contextual influences have supported or hindered the teachers' meaning-making?

Literature that explores constructive-developmental theory, connects it to adult education, and advocates a context for learning with an appropriate mix of challenge and support is reviewed. The theoretical framework for this dissertation is Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental model. To contrast the recent application of constructive-developmental theory in K-12 teacher professional development to prior perspectives, five traditional and alternative lenses in the literature are reviewed: skill-acquisition, cognitive-developmental, life cycle, caring, and life history. The literature on exemplary teachers is explored, and the review finds a gap in the literature for a study that goes beneath the descriptions and behaviors of exemplary teachers and into the meanings of teaching and the ways of knowing of the teacher.

Narrative inquiry within a qualitative research paradigm was the method of choice for this study. Narratives were compiled from the data collected (two interviews and application documents) from 21 participants. Each participant was one of the 12 Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year finalists each year from the years 1999 through 2009. The individual narratives (not the reflections) were shared with the participants as a check on the validity of the narrative. A rubric was created and used in assessing each of the teacher participant's meaning-making according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory. Five meanings of teaching for the teacher participants were found: making a difference, learning within a community, learning for a lifetime, finding challenges in constraints, and receiving from teaching.

This narrative inquiry with a retrospective look at prior events was not able to answer the question of the process of change in the five meanings of teaching or change in the meaning-making structure. The contextual influences on meaning-making viewed the professional context of the teacher in the day-to-day classroom environment and also from the perspective of the expectations of the local school and the state of Pennsylvania. Context was examined both from its characteristics and from its match or mismatch with the teacher's developmental plateau. Implications and contributions from this study for Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory, for adult education, and for teacher professional development are proposed.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the foundation for a qualitative narrative inquiry that explores the meaning of teaching and the development of that meaning throughout the career of exemplary and experienced teachers in kindergarten-through-twelfth-grade (K-12) public schools. An experienced teacher means at least 10 years of experience in the classroom; exemplary teachers are operationalized in this study as any of the 12 teachers chosen each year as finalists for the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year (PA-TOY) award.

The first section of the chapter includes a story from such a teacher. Next, background information is provided to document the increasingly complex societal expectations of teachers, discuss the issue of teacher retention in the United States, portray the K-12 school culture for teachers, and describe the status of teacher professional development in K-12 public schools. This section is followed by an outline of the major tenants of constructive-developmental theory as related to adult development.

The next part of the chapter justifies the need for and possible contributions of a study of exemplary and experienced teachers, provides a problem statement, the purpose of the study, and the research questions for the interpretation of the lived experience of teaching using Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) model of constructive-development as a theoretical framework. Next, the fit of a qualitative paradigm, a social constructivist epistemology, and a narrative inquiry methodology for this study is justified. The next section defines key terms, states the limitations, and identifies the primary assumptions of the study. The chapter concludes with a statement of the significance of the study and a summary.

Teaching as a Balancing Act

A hint of the complex and multiple expectations for the teaching profession can be found in this segment of an interview with a middle school teacher who had been teaching for more than 20 years. She stated:

I feel like a clown in the circus at some times, riding a unicycle, trying to juggle and also to balance at the same time. I think that this is a phenomenon that not only I experience but many teachers today, because of the demands of the 21st century as well as new demands in our profession – not only to be a lifelong learner and to be technologically literate and to do WebPages and..., but also because we are living in highly accountable age and we're living in an age of rapid change and transition and so we are constantly riding that unicycle and juggling things in order to keep up. Teaching is a profession that not only demands your presence in the classroom and polished lessons and guidance for students and discipline, but it also demands that you interact with your community, interact with your parents, become a member of professional organizations that demand some of your time and to which you want to give some of your time. (Doris [name changed], personal communication, April 14, 2008)

Background Information

Throughout the last three decades, from *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) to *A Nation Still at Risk* (Bennett, 1998) to *Building a 21st Century U.S. Education System* (Wehling, 2007), the national policy of the United States has called for more accountability from and higher standards for the schools and teachers. Conditions recently have combined to create a “‘perfect storm’ in education” (Johnson & Donaldson, 2004a, p. 14), and evidence is mounting that not only is the nation at risk, so is the

teaching profession (Grossman, 2003). These conditions include increased expectations for the work of teaching, increased demands for accountability, low status for the profession, the isolation of teachers from other adults throughout the day, the lack of opportunities for advancement, and typical professional development that focuses only on skill development.

Teacher Retention and Attrition

The overall attrition rate of 14 % for teachers in the early 1990s is significantly higher than a fairly stable 11% rate for other professions in the same decade (Ingersoll, 2002). In examining the attrition data, it has not been teacher retirements that have been the major contributing factor. Instead, a “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2002, p. 21) or a “leaky pool” (Merrow, 1999, para. 8) exists in the schools as teachers flow into the school and out of the school as they leave the profession in the first 5 years of teaching. If not leaving the profession entirely, a significant portion of teachers change schools within the first few years. The movers are generally dissatisfied with the current school and generally move away from poor or urban schools to openings in other school districts (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010; Johnson, 2002). Reports of the cumulative percentage of teachers who leave the profession within 4 years range from 20% (McCreight, 2000) to 33% (Ingersoll, 2002); another summary of the literature from the late 1980s reports 33% to 50% of newly hired teachers leave the profession within 5 years (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996); and the National Education Association (NEA) (2010) reported that 32% of the teachers surveyed in 2005-2006 are undecided about staying, staying unless something better comes along, or planning to leave teaching before retirement.

The most recent National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data is based on a 2007-2008 Schools and Staffing Survey and the 2008-09 Teacher Follow-Up Survey (Keigher, 2010). Retirements are not the major factor in teacher turnover; it is the turnover in prior years

(Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010). They include teachers who are moving between schools as well as those who leave the profession in evaluating turnover and the rate has been increasing since the early 1990s.

Two other factors exacerbate the need for new teachers to not only enter the profession but also stay in the profession – the decline in the number of teachers who leave and then return a few years later and the increase in the percent of teachers approaching retirement age. Some of the early loss of teachers is a temporary attrition, where teachers leave with an expectation of returning in a few years. For example, teachers who become parents may leave the schools and expect to return in a few years. However, the percent of new hires that are reentering the profession has declined in the early 1990s compared to late 1980s (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Murnane, Singer, Willett, Kemple, & Olsen, 1991).

Moreover, it is expected that attrition because of retirement is expected to increase significantly, as 39% of the teachers in public schools in the United States in 2006 had been teaching for over 20 years (NEA, 2010). The distribution of teachers by years of experience is U-shaped with equal numbers with over 20 years and under 9 years of experience (Johnson & Donaldson, 2004a). The percentage of teachers in public schools who leave the profession has increased from 5.1% in 1991-1992 to 8.4% in 2004-2005 (Marvel, Lyter, Peltola, Strizek, & Morton, 2006) as the wave of expected retirements began. These retirements are expected to reach a high in 2011-12 according to Ingersoll and Merrill (2010) who report a bimodal age distribution for the most common age for teachers in the 2007-08 NCES data – either late 20s or mid 50 years (in 1987-88 there was one most common age at 41 years). The number of teachers in schools has increased significantly particularly in elementary and special education (Ingersoll & Merrill, 2010) and this contributes to the number of younger teachers. Since teacher attrition

is high in the first few years, and fewer of these teachers are only leaving temporarily, a less stable teaching force is anticipated, particularly as the teachers retire. The growing teacher work force, the increased retirements, and the younger teachers who leave the profession or move to other schools contribute to the need for new teachers and the increase in teacher turnover within the schools (Johnson, 2002).

Other factors that contribute to this early attrition include inadequate resources, difficult work assignments, unclear expectations, sink-or-swim mentality, reality shock (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007) and isolation (Ingersoll, 2003). Beyond the schools in the work force, the labor market now provides more opportunities for women and minorities in professions other than teaching than it did in the 1970s and 1980s. It also gives teaching less status than a generation ago. Both factors contribute to teacher attrition (Johnson & Donaldson, 2004a).

Attrition of teachers is of concern, not the initial supply (Cochran-Smith, 2004; Ingersoll, 2004; McCreight, 2000). Twenty-seven percent of the teachers who left public schools after the 1999-2000 school year did not intend to leave the profession when they were surveyed during that school year (Luekens, Lyter, & Fox, 2004). If the attrition rate could be addressed, then there would be no need for sending more and credentialed novice teachers through the “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2002, p. 21).

School Culture

Educational reform has been about fixing teachers and fixing schools (Cochran-Smith, 2004) and there is a focus in the research on why teachers leave (Ingersoll, 2002; McCreight, 2000). Those who set policy for public education do not usually consult with teachers (Kozol, 2005). Many of the policies for reform have focused on the need to improve the teachers and

their qualifications or increase the supply of teachers (Darling-Hammond & Sclan, 1996; Ingersoll, 2003) without understanding the role of the school culture and the working conditions of teachers.

Working conditions in schools are a frequently named factor (Ingersoll, 2003; Luekens et al., 2004, Marvel et al., 2006) in the literature on why teachers leave the profession. At least 60% of the teachers who left public school teaching for a non-teaching position after the 2004-2005 school year reported that general working conditions, workload, autonomy, and life and work balance were better in the new position (Marvel et al.2006). Exploring the environments of teachers in the schools and how teachers who remain maintain their commitment to teaching in spite of a challenging context can inform practices or policies that could lessen the numbers of teachers going out through that revolving door.

Some of these conditions are part of a unique school culture for teaching as a career that has been highly resistant to change compared to other credentialed professions. First, first-year teachers and experienced teachers have nearly the same job; there is no vertical mobility. In 1975, teaching was a “relatively unstaged career” (p. 99), according to Lortie’s foundational study. It remains so (Glickman et al., 2007; Johnson & Donaldson, 2004b) and has actually been characterized as careerless (Shen, 1997).

A second factor is that teachers are relatively isolated in their classrooms, unlike other careers where adults have contact with other adults throughout the day. The history of school design is a “cellular” pattern, “composed of multiple self-contained classrooms” (Lortie, 1975, p. 14). Little has changed since Lortie’s description; today’s schools still function as a series of one-room schoolhouses grouped into one location, and teachers remain isolated from other adults (Glickman et al., 2007; Hargreaves, 1992; Ingersoll, 2003; Wagner et al., 2006). The cultural

image of the good teacher remains a “loner who makes a difference in the lives of students” (Lieberman & Miller, 2008a, p. 24). A landmark study in 1989 indicated that teachers worked alone in their classrooms, “tending one’s own private garden, pedagogically speaking” (Huberman, 1989, p. 51). Nearly 20 years later, traditional schools still have cultures that value privacy in one’s own classroom (Lieberman & Miller, 2008a).

The two sociological factors from the macroenvironment—the very limited career ladder and the isolation of the teacher from other adults throughout the work day—contribute to working conditions for teachers that are not particularly supportive of professional growth in general. Yet, individual teachers have found ways to grow personally and professionally in spite of this school culture. Attrition data that examines teachers who leave and why they leave misses the teachers who stay. Exploring the environments of teachers in the schools and how teachers who remain maintain their commitment given the school context can provide insights that may lessen the numbers of teachers who flow into the school and then so quickly flow out of the profession. This study proposes to explore these exceptions—this part of the chapter justifies the need for and possible contributions of a study of exemplary and experienced teachers in the schools. What can we learn from the journey of these teachers – about context and also about effective teacher development opportunities?

Teacher Professional Development

What are the meanings of the term *development*? Development may mean training, as in professional development and career development. The focus from this perspective is acquisition of necessary information and expertise. Development may also mean growth or change in a particular domain, as it means in adult development, or in a developmental approach. Further, from a constructive-developmental view, development is a process of sequential

progression to more complex ways of knowing. This development is not cognitive complexity and does not have a goal of critical thinking: it is development of an epistemology, the structure and “how” of knowing (Hammerman & Mitchell, 2006). It is this latter constructive-developmental understanding that informs this study and the question of development of the meaning of teaching.

Traditional career phase models only examine the exterior tasks for developing competence in the career (development as training) and not interior development of the person (Kegan, 1994). These nondevelopmental models lead to “one-shot, atheoretical, passive professional development” (Fischer, 2004, p. xi) that is often skill and behavior-based instruction, even though the literature notes the need for teachers to be able to think and reflect on their own about practice, assess the needs of the individual students, and adapt their teaching strategies (Glickman et al., 2007). Teachers, often as a survival technique, prefer professional development that is practical (Lieberman & Miller, 2008a). Dissatisfaction with professional growth activities has been reported by teachers who chose to leave the profession (Luekens et al., 2004).

In the teacher development literature, Huberman’s (1988, 1989, 1995) work is foundational to teacher career cycles. He proposed a model that began with career entry and stabilization, was followed by multiple pathways of experimentation and reassessment, and then converged to a disengagement phase. Fessler (1992) also proposed a teacher career cycle model, a series of options in responding to personal factors and the organizational environmental. Both Huberman’s and Fessler’s models recognized multiple pathways throughout the teacher lifespan, reported on behaviors or attitudes of the teacher, and called for personalized approaches to teacher development, instead of viewing the teacher as generalized and generic and responding

to some biological or psychological clock (Huberman, 1995). These models did recognize the diversity of teacher behaviors. However, they did not explore the reasons for the reported behaviors, the thinking and way of knowing of the teacher, or consider the teacher as an adult learner (Drago-Severson, 2004; 2007a; 2009).

Teacher Development and Constructive-developmental Theory

An embedded assumption of this study is that the professional and personal development for exemplary teachers involves changes in the way they made sense of their teaching and changes in their understanding of themselves and their profession. Thus, professional development is just not increased knowledge in the content area or in pedagogical techniques. This is a constructive-developmental view where professional competence is connected to developmental learning (McAuliffe, 2006) and the goal of education is growth in ways of meaning-making or ways of knowing (Baxter Magolda, 1999).

The epistemological changes in meaning-making across the life-span that are explored in the constructive-developmental models (Kegan, 1982, 1994) are not changes in what information is known, but a change in how one knows that grows more complex over time (Baxter Magolda, 2004a; McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006). Kegan's (1982, 1994) model, based on empirical data, postulates that adults move to increasingly complex epistemologies.

This development occurs as the underlying structure of meaning-making changes: the "subject-object relations" (Kegan, 1982, p. 85) is rebalanced as what was once subject becomes object in the next developmental plateau. The developmental movement from one plateau to another was graphically represented by Kegan (1982) with a helix to show the oscillation between inclusion and autonomy (see Figure 1); each is equally valued. As a person spirals through, there is a move to an increasingly complex way of knowing as subject becomes object.

FIGURE 1: Kegan's (1982) Helix of Evolutionary Truces

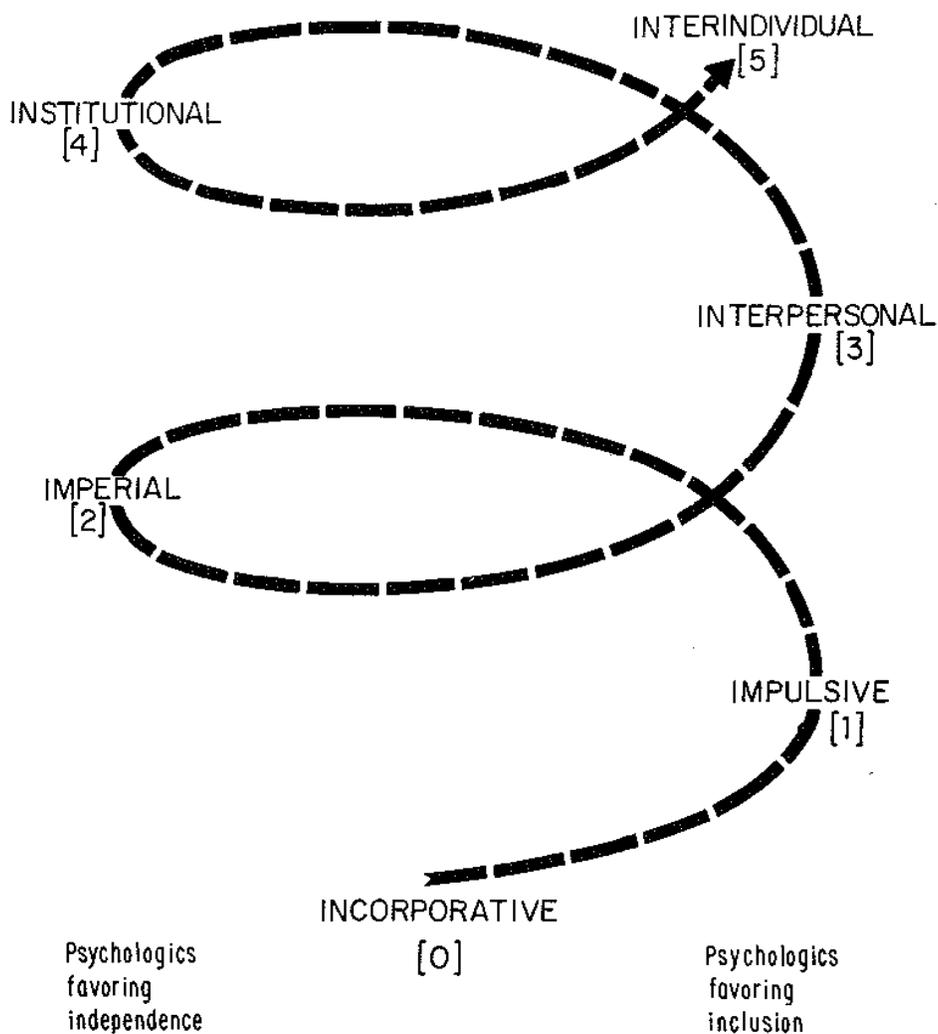


Figure 4 A helix of evolutionary truces

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What is subject is embedded and taken for granted, and what is object can be noticed, questioned, and changed. Subject is what is looked through; object is what is looked at. In each plateau, meaning-making is “both a triumph and a constraint; it represents a broader organization than the last, and a constraint of mind with respect to developments that may follow” (Kegan, 1980, p. 376). Thus, development is a journey, a progression of moving an embedded perspective that is assumed to be true (subject) into view where it can be identified, observed, and controlled (object) (Berger & Hammerman, 2004).

Kegan (1982) provided a framework of a “universal on-going process” (p. 264) of meaning-making and defined adulthood as “a vast evolutionary expanse” (Kegan, 1994, p. 5) instead of an endpoint. All people have the potential to continue to develop these changes in meaning-making throughout their lifespan. Not all people reach the potential, however, since context is an influence. A context which is a holding environment is necessary to foster development change, according to Kegan (1982, 1994). A context that fosters development will offer both support and challenge with a mix of both holding on and letting go, and some continuity during the times of change and transition (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Kegan’s model will be used as the theoretical framework for this study.

In the adult education literature, there is some use of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental model, particularly in connection to transformative learning (Drago-Severson, 2007a; 2009; Erickson, 2007; Kegan, 2000; Taylor, 2000). These are exceptions; however, as traditionally adult development and adult learning have not been integrated with each other (Granott, 1998; Hoare, 2006), even though constructivist-developmental theory complements adult learning theory (Drago-Severson, 2007a).

There are some empirical studies in the teacher development literature that used a constructive-developmental lens (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2007a, 2009; Drake, 2002; McAuliffe, 2006), but the framework is underutilized in teacher development models (Drago-Severson, 2007a). Some of the recent literature in K-12 educational administration uses the constructive-developmental theory as a theoretical framework for recommendations to school leadership (Drago-Severson, 2007a, 2007b, 2009; Wagner et al., 2006).

The literature in teacher professional development, K-12 educational administration, and adult education provides some beginning evidence that a constructive-developmental view is appropriate for adult development within the complex environment of schools and teaching. However, the general practice in schools does not recognize experienced teachers as adult learners. This was recently expressed by Kathleen P. King (2008), professor of education at Fordham University, as “a radical idea—thinking of teachers as adult learners! Getting this idea into schools is like pushing against a giant wall.”

The Need for a Study of Exemplary Teachers

The top-down approach to school reform and teacher development has not been successful in changing our schools nor in retaining as many of the beginning teachers as are needed to meet the demand for experienced teachers. However, there are teachers like Doris who stay in teaching for a long career and are lifelong adult learners who not only teach their students but learn from them. These are the teachers who remain committed to their profession and dedicated to their students in spite of a context with considerable challenges (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Johnson, 2004; Kegan et al., 2001; Nieto, 2003). By studying the meaning-making of these exemplary teachers, perhaps aspects of these teachers that enable them to

maintain their enthusiasm for teaching “*in spite of the constraints and in the midst of the slow process of systematic reform*” (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 27) can be identified.

There are several recent collections of teacher stories, either remembrances of teachers who made a difference (Pajares & Urdan, 2008) or teachers writing about their teaching (Nieto, 2005; Stone & Cuper, 2006). The remembered teachers are as varied as the individual authors; the teachers writing about their teaching “know that they make a difference” (Nieto, 2005, p. 11). Beyond that, there is no consensus, no “template teachers” (Nieto, 2005, p. x).

A list of the professional characteristics for the career of an exemplary teacher can be written, but such a list of the characteristics of a teacher is not sufficient. The person in the career, the teacher as person (Kegan, 1994) is a necessary factor to consider in teacher effectiveness. “The master teachers I have known and watched love all three: their subject, the act of teaching, and their students” (Chapin, 2009, p. 12), as they help to build human beings. His analogy is that exemplary teachers know students need more than inert luggage to carry with them on the journey; they need the ability to change their own itinerary.

The literature suggests that beyond professional expertise, exemplary teachers are resilient (Milstein & Henry, 2000), hopeful (Fullan, 1997), committed (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Day, 2000; Day et al., 2005), caring (Noddings, 1984, 2005), and able to maintain their core values (Day et al., 2005; Hammerman, 2002). There is a need to understand the meaning behind the behavior or characteristics of the teacher. It is this meaning that determines the likelihood of exemplary status, not the behavior or characteristic itself. For example, a resilient teacher may persist only because the commitment is to completing a task.

None of these studies of exemplary teachers uses a constructive-developmental approach. The narrative study of this dissertation intends to foreground the voices of exemplary teachers

and use Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental framework to probe behind the expertise, commitment, and resilient descriptions into the meaning of teaching, the ways of knowing of the teacher, and the development of the ways of knowing throughout the lifespan. The investigation of the meaning of teaching, from the integrated view of the epistemological development of teachers as adult learners, could contribute to the understanding of the role of context in teacher retention, contribute to more effective teacher professional development, and perhaps enhance school reform efforts.

Problem Statement

The following trends have been identified: student performance improves with more than 5 years of teacher teaching experience; teacher attrition is high in the first 5 years; fewer teachers are returning after leaving temporarily for family reasons; and a bubble of teachers hired in the 1970s is approaching retirement age. Two sociological factors of the conditions of schools contribute to teacher attrition – the very limited career ladder and the isolation of teachers from other adults throughout the work day – and these are expected to have an increasing effect on teacher attrition given the preference for working with others of the current generation of graduating credentialed teachers.

All of these trends highlight the need to retain quality teachers and the difficulty in doing so in the K-12 public schools. The educational and work force literature exploring teacher retention and attrition has focused on reasons teachers leave and the deficiencies in the teacher education in higher education, the problems of the hierarchical organizational structure of the public school monopoly, and the inadequacies of the current teachers. The literature parallels the educational reform policies since the 1980s that attempt to improve the educational system in the United States by fixing the schools and fixing the teachers.

There are, however, exemplary and long-term teachers, but studies beyond teacher demographics are scarce. There is value in examining these exceptions, those teachers who stay, “the most enthusiastic and unbeaten” (Nieto, 2003, p. 7). Practitioners could build on what is learned from the journey of these teachers and the meaning of teaching for them throughout their lifespan. Their insights could inform teacher development practices specifically, and adult development and adult education practices in general.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the meaning of teaching throughout the lifespan of exemplary and experienced K-12 public school teachers. The research questions that support the purpose for this narrative inquiry are:

1. Which, if any, of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus can be identified as current or prior meaning-making systems for these exemplary and experienced teachers?
2. What are the current meanings of teaching for these exemplary and experienced teachers? If these meanings have changed, what was the process of change as the meanings of teaching changed throughout their career? Was this process of change developmental?
3. What contextual influences have supported or hindered the teachers’ meaning-making?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this narrative study of exemplary and experienced teachers is constructive-developmental theory. This theory postulates not only that persons construct meaning or interpret experience (constructive), but also that a pattern exists to the gradual change in meaning-making (developmental) toward greater complexity. In social-

constructivism, the environment or context is not just an influence; it is an integral part of the situated learning (Olsen, 2008). Development, however, focuses on the individual person, while recognizing the environment or context as an influence on the pace, though not the sequence, of development. Constructive-developmental theory synthesizes the dialectical ideas of social construction of meaning and individual inner psychological changes in ways of knowing – meaning is socially constructed and meaning-making systems are developed and the process of development can be supported. Of the constructive-developmental theorists, Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) model will be used as the theoretical framework.

Kegan's (1982, 1994) model is appropriate for this study first, because it integrates the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains, and teaching is a complex activity which involves not only what the teacher knows, but who the teacher is (Hamachek, 1999). Second, Kegan's developmental framework proposes a lifelong process of meaning-making, and this study examines the teachers' narratives throughout the lifespan. Third, Kegan's model proposes epistemological ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004) that change qualitatively in a particular pattern, and the process of any change in the way teachers make sense of their teaching is of interest in this study. Finally, Kegan's model does not associate development with particular life phases or ages. Instead, he recognized context as an influence on the pace of any developmental progression in meaning-making, and this study will explore the macroenvironmental and microenvironmental contextual influences on the meaning-making of the teachers.

Since Kegan's (1982, 1994) model not only focuses on the developmental plateaus but also on the process of change between them, the "developmental movement" (McCauley et al., 2006, p. 649), it contributes to an understanding of teachers as "changing adults" (Glickman et

al., 2007, p. 51) or evolving meaning-makers. The developmental movement from one plateau to another was graphically represented by Kegan (1982) with a helix to show the equality of and oscillation between inclusion and autonomy (see Figure 1). The spiraling indicated the increasingly complex ways of knowing or “ways of organizing experience” (Kegan, 1994, p. 9) as the balance between the two was revisited and renegotiated throughout the lifespan. The helix also indicated that in revisiting the balance, the person did not return to the prior meaning. As a person spirals through, there is a move to an increasingly complex way of knowing, a change in “what is taken as subject or self and what is taken as object or other” (Kegan, 1982, p. 81).

This study uses the theoretical framework of Kegan (1982, 1994) to characterize the teachers according to developmental plateaus and uses this theoretical framework of changes in epistemology as a lens in understanding the teachers and the journey of their lives with respect to the experience of teaching and the influence of context on that journey. The change in meaning-making follows the sequence that has been outlined by Kegan (1982, 1994), but the pace of the developmental progression is expected to be unique and variable (Popp & Portnow, 2001) and dependent on context and the conditions of the prior and current lives of the individuals, resulting in developmental diversity (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009) among adults. It is in keeping with the model itself, which emphasizes developmental progression as rebalancing of boundaries of independence and inclusion, to use an upward spiraling helix (see figure 1), not a ladder, to picture the growth.

Methodology

The purpose of exploring the meaning of teaching throughout the lifespan of exemplary and experienced K-12 public school teachers requires a paradigm that looks for particulars, recognizes the role of context, and values the diversity of possible meanings. The purpose of the

study is the understanding of the meaning of teaching from the perspective of exemplary experienced teachers. The intent of the study is not to develop a generalized prescription to follow if one wishes to become an exemplary teacher, but to retain the voice of the individual teachers within their context. The educational process is a complex affair where decisions about teaching and learning are highly dependent on the situation. The complexity of the naturalistic setting means it is difficult to control for variables in research design. Attempts to generalize fail to account for the influence of distinctive and complex contexts. Inquiry that accomplishes the goal of understanding how teachers understand their practice requires detailed description not only of the story, but of the situated context. The purpose of understanding the meaning of teaching, the uniqueness of each teacher, the complexity of the naturalistic setting and context, and the need for rich, detailed, and situated information require a qualitative research method (Patton, 2002).

This qualitative inquiry uses a social constructivist epistemology with the following assumptions about knowledge (Bredo, 2006; Bruner, 1986, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 2004). First, knowledge always has a point of view, so the point of view must be acknowledged. Second, knowing the context is essential for understanding meaning. Third, knowledge is jointly constructed between the inquirer and the teacher, and the relationship between the inquirer and the teacher will influence the meaning-making. Fourth, the culture of both inquirer and teacher will influence which experiences count and how the experience is represented and interpreted.

Of the variety of qualitative research methods with a social constructivist view of knowledge, narrative inquiry is the choice of method for this study because of its fit with the meaning of teaching from the perspective of exemplary, experienced teachers who have sustained their commitment over time. There are three elements for the inquirer to explore in

this study: what happened, what does the event mean, and how did the meaning develop? Elliott (2005) listed five themes in social science research for which a narrative approach has been a methodology. The research questions proposed fit two of these: “an interest in people’s lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience” (Elliott, 2005, p. 6) and “an interest in process and change over time” (Elliott, 2005, p. 6).

Since a narrative shares the lived experiences of the teacher in all of their complexity, it provides a naturalistic and rich description of the events in context. Since a narrative connects the lived experiences into a sequence and a plot and includes the teacher’s understanding of how things are now, how they used to be, and how they should be (Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, & Horner, 2004), it is also well-suited for the determination of the meaning of teaching for the teachers. Since a narrative is “retrospective meaning-making—the shaping or ordering of past experience” (Chase, 2008, p. 64), it is also well-suited to exploring the development of meaning.

Significance

Quality standards for research studies require the functions of confidence and relevance, according to Gaskell and Bauer (2000): the researcher must establish confidence that the results are the outcome of an actual encounter and demonstrate the relevance of the results. The relevance standard is addressed in this section; the confidence standard is addressed in Chapter 3, the Methodology chapter.

This constructive-developmental study is of interest to teacher professional development practitioners in higher education, school administrators responsible for planning and implementing professional development, and educational policymakers at the local, state, and federal levels. These findings can inform the relationships between adult learning and adult development and the influence of context from the lens of teacher as a developing adult learner

and meaning-maker. The study may also provide insights for each of the teachers and for the inquirer into their own growth and development as educators as meaning is co-constructed as the inquiry progresses.

Exploring both the meaning of teaching and the development of that meaning for exemplary and experienced teachers fills a gap in the literature. It also provides insights for teacher professional development practitioners. This study, instead of the usual remediation model, provides a view of teacher professional development with a goal of ongoing development of the teachers as adult learners. Further, it values the teachers as expert practitioners and recognizes that teachers have different learning challenges at the different developmental perspectives. Teachers make meaning in a variety of ways throughout their lifespan. A developmentally diverse group of learners has implications for designing teacher development opportunities and provides evidence to support the idea that teachers could be developing and designing their own professional growth (Lieberman & Miller, 2008b).

The context in which these teachers live and work is an influence on the pace of their developmental growth. The narratives of teachers in this study provide insights into influences that supported or hindered their developmental growth, and the findings suggest how these teachers avoided the more typical “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2002, p. 21) of attrition. This is particularly of interest because the limited career ladder and the isolation from other adults that is experienced by the teacher throughout the work day contribute to working conditions that are not particularly supportive of growth and development. Though the findings cannot be generalized, the developmental journeys of these teachers contribute to an understanding of alternative frameworks for educational policy and reform initiatives that usually proceed from a deficit model.

In the fields of adult learning and adult development, this study contributes to understanding of the fit between the complexity of teaching, the complexity of the ways of knowing, and the complex context in which the teachers work. The study provides a holistic and integrated, though not generic, view of adult learners from the narratives of these teachers. As such, it contributes to our understanding of the process of learning in adulthood.

The narrative inquiry methodology keeps the focus on the particular and unique developmental journey of the person (Daloz, 1999) in context with all of the implicit complexity. Which meaning-making system was in use at a particular time provided a lens for understanding the different contextual barriers and supports for adult learning at each developmental plateau.

Finally, though not last in importance, the study assisted each of the teachers and the inquirer in their own growth and development as educators in this complex and changing activity of teaching in this complex and changing world. As quoted in the introduction, “Teaching is a balancing act and I just want to make sure that I don’t get out of balance because then I could lose my vision. I feel like a clown in the circus at some times, riding a unicycle, trying to juggle and also to balance at the same time (Doris, personal communication, April 14, 2008). Learning, understood as a developmental journey, provides both balance and vision to the adult learners in this study – the inquirer and the teachers as co-constructors of new meaning and perhaps taking steps toward different ways of knowing.

Definition of Terms

1. “Exemplary teachers” are operationalized in this study as any of the 12 teachers chosen each year as finalists for the PA-TOY award.

2. Constructivism is an epistemology where knowing is the active process of meaning-making, of making sense of an experience. That is, the meaning does not reside in the experience, but is construed by the person.
3. Constructive-developmental is the way that persons construct meaning or interpret an experience, and that way is understood to “change qualitatively in predictable ways throughout the lifespan” (Taylor, Marienau, & Fiddler, 2000, p. 20).
4. Development is a sequential process and implies a pattern in changes that occur over time.
5. Epistemology is defined as “*how we know what we know*” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) and relates to the structure of meaning-making.
6. “Experienced teacher” is understood to mean at least 10 years of experience in the classroom. Other terms in the literature are veteran teacher (Hoover, 1996) and mid-career (15 through 31 years of teaching and 35-55 years of age) teacher (George, 1992).
7. “Interpret” means to apply a particular meaning or significance to a lived experience; in other words, “sense is made” (Ochberg, 1996, p. 112) of the experience.
8. “Meaning-making” is interpretation of experience.
9. Narrative in this document is not synonymous with story, although some literature uses the terms interchangeably. Here, a narrative is a “movement from a start point to an end point, with digressions, which involves the showing or telling of story events. Narrative is a *re*-presentation of events and chiefly, *re*-presents space and time” (Cobley, 2001, pp. 236-237).

10. Narrative inquiry is “the study of experience as story” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477) and an exploration of the way persons impose meaning and order on their life experiences (Bamberg, 2006).
11. Sequential implies that the next developmental change builds on the prior change and does not occur unless the prior development has occurred (Smelser & Erikson, 1980). That is, development does not skip steps.
12. Way of knowing is “the meaning-making system through which all experience is filtered and understood” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 186).

Assumptions

This study assumes that

1. The meaning of a lived experience changes over time.
2. Development continues throughout adulthood, and persons are active agents in constructing meaning. Adults do not emerge like a butterfly and remain stable until dying (Merriam & Clark, 1991).
3. Ways of knowing or meaning-making systems develop over time. The process of making sense of experience is the “engine of development” (Popp & Portnow, 2001, p. 50). Adult development is not correlated to life phases or age categories.
4. Each person’s meaning-making and pace of development is unique, depending on the personal, organizational, and social-cultural context, though there is an overall pattern to the sequence of ways of knowing.
5. The nomination and selection for Teacher of the Year finalists is a process that identifies exemplary teachers. At the time they were nominated and selected, teaching was an

important meaning-making activity. This importance may or may not be sustained in the subsequent years as the participants continue to construct meaning.

6. Teachers are sharing their stories authentically with the inquirer and not strategically either to please the inquirer or because a hidden agenda is suspected (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

Limitations

1. As a qualitative narrative study, the focus of this study is the particular circumstances where the school organizational context, the socio-cultural context, and the personal experiences of the teacher are all possible influences on the meaning-making and the developmental progression of the teacher. As such, the findings cannot be extended to adult learners in general, or to all teachers. It is further limited by type of school and geography since all the teachers in the study are in public schools and in the same state, Pennsylvania.
2. Exemplary teacher is a concept that is operationalized in this study by the selection as a finalist for the PA-TOY award. There are no known empirical studies that verify that selection as a Teacher of the Year finalist is a measure of exemplary teaching.
3. The narrative inquiry method involves retrospective interviewing and the meaning of the experience as it is presented by the teacher is retrospective; it is the meaning of a past event as the teacher understands it at the time of the interview. The study does not document the original interpretation of the event and relies on the teacher to disclose the original meaning when the event first occurred and any differences in meaning for that past event from the context of the present (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001; Moreira, 1996).

Summary

In Doris' story, teachers are lifelong learners who not only teach their students but learn from them. Doris is balancing multiple and competing demands in an increasingly complex world. What can we learn about the meaning of teaching from exemplary teachers like Doris? How has the meaning she finds in her teaching developed over time? What can we learn about context from exploring the development of exemplary teachers like Doris who are successful within the current school culture? The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry is to investigate these questions from the constructive-developmental framework of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994). The purpose is also to record the narratives of these teachers as more than data, but as stories that need to be shared (Thompson, 2008).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature for a qualitative narrative inquiry that explores the meaning of teaching and the development of that meaning throughout the career of exemplary and experienced teachers in K-12 public schools.

The first section of the chapter provides an explanation of constructive-developmental theory which synthesizes the dialectical ideas of social construction of meaning and the inner psychological changes in ways of knowing. Next, the literature that connects constructive-developmental theory to adult education, and advocates a context for learning that has an appropriate mix of challenge and support, is discussed and critiqued. This section concludes with a brief outline of the constructive-developmental models other than the work of Robert Kegan (1982, 1994).

The next part of the chapter explores the theoretical framework for this dissertation, Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental model, which describes the epistemological

changes in meaning-making systems. He envisioned, and his empirical research supported, adults as evolving meaning-makers. His model of meaning-making integrates multiple domains, extends throughout the adult lifespan, and recognizes context as an influence on the pace of any developmental progression. As such, it is a fit for the study of the complex activity of teaching, teachers' narratives throughout their lifespan, the process of any change in the way teachers make sense of their teaching, and the influences of context on the meaning-making of the teachers. Kegan's theoretical model and the empirical research related to it are reviewed. This review is followed by a section that establishes the implications of Kegan's model for adult education in general.

To contrast the recent application of constructive-developmental theory in K-12 teacher professional development to prior perspectives, five traditional and alternative lenses in the literature are reviewed: skill-acquisition, cognitive-developmental, life cycle, caring, and life history. This chapter concludes with a review of the literature on exemplary teachers and the gap in the literature for a study that goes beneath the descriptions and behaviors of exemplary teachers and into the meaning of teaching, the ways of knowing of the teacher, and the development of the ways of knowing throughout the lifespan.

Constructive-developmental Theory

Constructivists envision knowing as an active process where a person makes sense of an experience, or makes meaning. This understanding of experience is rooted in John Dewey's theory that experience is a transaction and also is temporal, continuous, and relational (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The person is not objectively describing an experience or subjectively creating meaning, but interpreting or constructing meaning from the interaction with the environment. This interactional/constructivism paradigm is also called transactional (Bredo, 2006), or

contextual (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2002). Knowledge is based in experience and situated in the immediate context; knowledge is located in the process of knowing, not the product.

The construction of meaning gives a “glimpse into the how and why” (Krauss, 2005, p. 764) of a behavior. Thus, meanings do more than describe behavior—they interpret or make sense of the observed behavior. In addition, meanings move beyond behavior because the absence of an activity or object can also signify a particular meaning. Meaning does not come from the experience by itself, but is made by the person in interaction with the world (Merriam & Heuer, 1996) and is constructed from the person’s interpretation of the experience.

In contrast, developmentalists envision universal elements or structures that are inherent in being human and provide the potential for growth. The cognitive-developmental stage models of Piaget and Perry are foundational (Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Development in these models means a pattern in changes over time, beginning in infancy and progressing to more mature thinking. The changes follow a sequence where the next step builds on the prior step and does not occur unless the prior development has occurred (Smelser & Erikson, 1980). The developmental theorists contribute to a lifespan model of continuous and orderly development (Keller & Werchan, 2006); however, development is somewhat plastic, and the timing of the development culturally influenced (Keller & Werchan, 2006). Thus, development is not correlated with age, adulthood is not a single construct, and adult learners are not generic.

How is it possible to reconcile the fluid and multiple interpretations of an experience possible in constructivism and the influence of the environment in social constructivism with the implication of a sequential pattern in developmentalism? In 1982, Kegan wrote *The Evolving Self*, which explored meaning-making and the evolution of consciousness in a lifespan model of personality. Kegan was the first theorist to connect the two separate “Big Ideas” (p. 8) of

constructivism and developmentalism. He credited William Perry's 1970 work, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme*, for the foundation of constructive-developmental psychology as well as the work of Piaget, who connected biology (developmental) and philosophy (constructive) into a "genetic epistemology" (Kegan, 1982, p. 15).

Developmentalists and constructivists are connected when the way that persons construct meaning or interpret experience is understood to "change qualitatively in predictable ways throughout the lifespan" (Taylor et al., 2000, p. 20). The qualitative change is in "how we interpret our experiences (i.e., 'make meaning')" (Taylor, 2006, p. 201). This is not a change in what information is known and not a change in the complexity of cognitive thought, but a change in how the information is known, an epistemology "about the nature of knowledge and the nature of knowing" (Pintrich, 2002, p. 390). While the change in meaning-making follows a sequential progression toward more complex ways of knowing (Kegan, 1982, 1994), the pace of the developmental progression is variable (Popp & Portnow, 2001), and dependent on context and the conditions of the prior and current lives of the individuals. Differences within individuals and cohorts, of expected roles, different educational levels, cultural norms, and available resources all contribute to different development pathways for an adult (Hoare, 2006) within the sequential progression, and both "time and support are important factors" (Merriam & Heuer, 1996, p. 251).

Thus, epistemological development is a social construction, bound in context, and experiences are open to multiple interpretations (Baxter Magolda, 2002). It is not, however, exclusively social and contextual, but also depends on aspects of the person (Pintrich, 2002); the individual is an active agent in the interpretation, not simply responding to the context.

Constructive-developmental theory synthesizes the dialectical ideas of social construction of meaning and the inner psychological changes in ways of knowing.

Adult Education and Constructive-developmental Theory

One's epistemology influences one's view of how people learn (Pintrich, 2002).

Constructive-developmental theory contributes an understanding that growth and learning in adulthood are not predetermined, but the learning process and the conditions for learning can either foster or frustrate the development of the learner (Ullrich, 1999). The implication is for the adult educator to provide just the right mix of support and challenge (Cameron, Berger, Lovett, & Baker, 2007; Daloz, 1999; Kegan, 1994; Rodgers & Scott, 2008) for each particular learner.

Historically and traditionally, learning and development have been presented as dichotomous, a divide partly resulting from different research traditions and methodologies (Granott, 1998; Hoare, 2006; King & Baxter Magolda, 1999). Adult development has psychological (internal and individual) roots while adult learning arose from adult education. As recently as the decade of the 1990s, the traditions remained largely separated. In a review of the content published in the *Adult Education Quarterly* from 1989 to 1999, the ratio of accepted articles with a subject of adult development compared to those with a subject of adult learning was 1 to 6 (Taylor, 2001). Similarly, Jarvis (2006) in *Towards a Comprehensive Theory of Human Learning* does not mention constructivism or the constructive-developmental theorists.

Kegan (2000) connected his constructive-developmental theory, the psychological lens, to transformative learning, the adult education lens. Likewise, Mezirow (1991, 1994) connected his transformative learning theory to adult development. The perspectives particularly overlap in the importance of experience, reflection, and meaning-making (Taylor, 2000; Taylor et al.,

2000), a change in the way of knowing, not what is known (Kegan, 1994). Recently, constructive-developmental models have been identified as a “psychodevelopmental” (Taylor, 2008b, p. 7) view of transformative learning, emphasizing the epistemological changes that involve the whole individual and the context; Baxter Magolda, Abes, and Torres (2009) conclude that their individual longitudinal studies show the intersection of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) psychological and Mezirow’s (1991) transformative learning theories.

It is not the experience itself but the meaning that is constructed that determines the possibility of learning from the experience (Merriam, 2005). “Engagement with experience” (Merriam & Clark, 1991, p. 195) is learning; significant learning requires that the experience is both attended to and valued by the potential learner. Therefore, not all experiences are noticed, and not all experiences that are noticed are significant. Further, not all significant experiences result in learning that is developmental (Granott, 1998).

It is learning that changes the way we make meaning that is developmental; learning that changes what we know is additive (Merriam, 2005), instrumental (Mezirow, 1991), or informative (Kegan, 2000), and is typically not developmental (Merriam & Clark, 2006). However, learning that initially only adds to the information known may precipitate a change in self-perception that can lead to transformative change in perspective (Cranton, 2006; Kegan et al., 2001; Merriam & Clark, 1991) or add knowledge and skills that can be used at a later time to deal with future experiences in a more developmental fashion (Merriam, 2005; Merriam & Clark, 1991). Imagining learning as a two-dimensional space, with increased skills and content knowledge on one axis and increasingly complex meaning making systems on the other axis (Kegan et al., 2001) is a helpful picture in contrasting the two related types of learning and the possibility of change in either or both of the dimensions.

Understanding that meaning-making is contextual and also a process links adult learning and adult development (Merriam & Heuer, 1996). Constructive-developmental models focus on the process of change, understood as “developmental movement” (McCauley et al., 2006, p. 649). Daloz (1999, 2000) is a constructive-developmental theorist who emphasizes the process and a “steady, cumulative effect” (2000, p. 106) in epistemological change, and who says the aim of education is the development of students of any age.

Constructive-developmental theories include behavior, experiences, and relationships in context, but go beyond the event to the meaning and interpretation of the behavior, experience, or relationships. They also reject a purely random and chaotic construction of meaning by proposing a common developmental pattern in the ways of knowing and an inward and integrated look at the epistemology of the teacher as an adult learner. They have been critiqued for their assumptions about adults, the bias for autonomy, the implication that all growth is positive, and the attempt to normalize from studies that were not representative of the population.

Critiques of Constructive-developmental Models in Adult Education

Given the developmental diversity in adulthood that constructive-developmental models imply and that the empirical literature supports, it is problematic to assume that an adult learner is self-authoring, as is typical in adult education. But, assuming the learner should be self-authoring, which reflects adult education’s Western bias for autonomy (Flannery, 1994), is also problematic. Kegan’s highest plateau of complexity in meaning-making systems is beyond self-authoring—an order of interdependence and intimacy (1982), of relationships between different systems (1994).

Developmental theories with this implied upward trajectory toward maturity create an ethical dilemma for the adult educator: where should an adult be on this developmental sequence

and who decides (Courtenay, 1994)? Rossiter (1999) asked if it is an appropriate role of the adult educator to create an imbalance or tension for the learner with a goal of encouraging growth. For example, if the adult educator thinks adults should be self-authoring, what happened to valuing what the learner wants from the experience? Taylor (1996) implores the adult educator to avoid confusing worthiness and development and to honor the decision of an adult who chooses not to change; a student may be either unable or unwilling to grow developmentally (Taylor & Marienau, 1997). There is a difference between support and promoting development (Merriam, 2005). An adult educator who provides opportunity for, and assists in the student's growth, but allows the student answer to be "no" is supporting developmental change; an adult educator who campaigns for and insists on development, and expects the student answer to be "yes" is promoting development. The following quotation from *The Evolving Self* was written as a caution to therapists and counselors, but extends to adult educators as well: "Among the many things from which a practitioner's clients need protection is the practitioner's hopes for the client's future, however benign and sympathetic these hopes may be" (Kegan, 1982, p. 296).

Developmental theories have been critiqued as one-dimensional and presuming a continual increase, always linear and upward (Granott, 1998). While the critique of a continual increase is moderated somewhat by a consideration of context and culture which was part of Erikson's theory as early as 1980 (Erikson, 1982; Smelser & Erikson, 1980), the hierarchy of universal growth toward a defined endpoint remains. Are a priori constructs a foundation for meaning-making (Burston, 2007)? Is there really a universal underlying structure? Is there a preset schedule and an orderly upward progression? To answer an exclusive yes denies that an individual can function at different ways of thinking in different domains, and denies the possibility of pauses, cycles, and reversals. Hoare (2006) emphasized that adult development is

a “move toward complexity” (p. 9) with multiple developmental paths that include times of decline as well as growth.

Another critique is that even the most integrated models of constructive-development include only mind, self, and others and miss spiritual development. Sinnott’s (2009) model of complex postformal thought in cognitive development is a recent example that explores the connection with the transcendent.

The constructive-developmental theories are also critiqued for their humanistic tendencies and their idealism. Any determination of a goal or end-state for development is a value judgment (Rossiter, 1999; Tennant, 1993). Though often development is defined as change in the adult development literature, the perspective is humanist and implies that change is positive (Courtenay, 1994; Merriam & Clark, 2006). This critique is related to the concern that the development theories make a statement of what ought to be, disguised as a description of what is. What is good is linked to what is natural and normal. The critical theorists ask, who defines natural and normal and good?

If the theory is originally based on a particular population, can it really be generalized to other populations (Flannery, 1994; Gilligan, 1982/1993)? Are attempts to normalize human nature, to find the universal, really an attempt by those in power to maintain the dominant position? According to Flannery (1994), this critique applies to developmental theories and also to adult learning theories that presume a type of adult learner. The subtext of this question is that historically the particular sample for the psychological developmental theories was a group of “advantaged adults” (Magen, Austrian, & Hughes, 2002, p. 260) who were white, male, middle-class, and Western, as was the researcher. This sample then became the group that set the standard for normal within the population. Racism and sexism are implicitly imbedded in such

research (Flannery, 1994), as are other biases. In the construction of meaning, it is valuable for the adult educator to ask, as did Carol Gilligan, “who has the building permit” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 414).

Epistemological Development Models

Epistemology is defined as “*how we know what we know*” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8), a decision related to deciding “who has the building permit” (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 414). This is the difference between meaning-forming, “the activity by which we shape a coherent meaning out of the raw material of our outer and inner experiencing” (Kegan, 2000, p. 52) and revising our meaning-forming, “the very form by which we are making our meanings” (p. 53). The lens is focused on structure, the “how” one knows, and not the belief itself, “what” one knows (Hammerman & Mitchell, 2006). All people have the potential to develop changes in their meaning-making systems, but the conditions of their prior and current lives affect whether they will change (Daloz, 2000). It is generally accepted, and sometimes assumed, that education is an important condition in epistemological growth (Daloz, 1999; Taylor, 1996), but the empirical literature is mixed and indicates that education is not a sufficient or exclusive condition (Kegan, 1994). Adult educators should not assume that increased skill and content knowledge and more complex ways of knowing are positively correlated (Kegan et al., 2001).

Models of epistemological change in higher education include Perry’s (1970, as cited in King & Kitchener, 1994) foundational work in exploring the underlying assumptions about knowledge in college students (King & Kitchener, 1994) and the Reflective Judgment Model of King and Kitchener (1994, 2002, 2004). Perry’s (1970) model focused on cognitive development and King and Kitchener’s work is also cognitive-developmental and focused on only one domain of cognition, reflective thinking. Yet, both go beyond critical thinking to

making judgments and can therefore be considered epistemological. Even though focused only on the cognitive domain, their work shares with the constructive-developmentalists the emphasis on individual development that is sequential, and the assumptions that knowledge is constructed, that interaction with the environment may result in development, not simply change, and that development is not automatic, but depends on the environment (King & Kitchener, 2004). Other constructive-developmental models in higher education are Baxter Magolda's (2002, 2004a, 2004b) longitudinal study and her epistemological reflection model and Ammon and Black's (1998) study of teachers in a master's program.

The empirical work of these four constructive-developmentalists has primarily focused on the development of young adults either in college or recently graduated. It supports the argument that an important developmental task is the balance between independence and interdependence (Keller & Werchan, 2006) and a progression from external to internal references. Baxter Magolda's (2002, 2004b) model was a holistic view of the individual; King and Kitchener's (1994, 2002, 2004) was not. More recently, Kitchener, King, and DeLuca (2006) have noted the value of an integrated approach to development that involves more than reflective thinking. This literature review turns to the work of Robert Kegan, who joins Kitchener, King, and DeLuca (2006) in their most recent work and Baxter Magolda in an integrated model and a holistic view of development, but extends the model of development throughout the entire lifespan. This is just a bit of contrast to William James's (1890) claim that one's "character has set like plaster" (p. 52) by age 30!

Kegan's Constructive-developmental Model

Constructive-developmental theorists postulate that persons not only construct meaning or interpret experience (constructive), but also that a pattern exists to the gradual change in how

this meaning is constructed (developmental). Of the constructive-developmental theorists, Robert Kegan's (1982, 1994) model will be used as the theoretical framework. His model is appropriate for this study of experienced and exemplary teachers for five reasons: it integrates the cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal domains; it proposes a lifelong process of meaning-making; it proposes epistemological ways of knowing (Drago-Severson, 2004) that change qualitatively in a particular pattern; it recognizes context as an influence on the pace of any developmental progression in meaning-making, and it postulates that the difference between the current meaning-making system and the expectations from the context cannot be too far out of balance if adults are to be supported in their developmental journey.

Conversely, the following five aspects of this study of teachers make Kegan's theoretical framework a fit: teaching is a complex activity which involves not only what the teacher knows, but who the teacher is (Hamachek, 1999); this study examines the teachers' narratives throughout the lifespan; the process of any change in the way teachers make sense of their teaching is of interest in this study; this study will explore the macroenvironmental and microenvironmental contextual influences on the meaning-making of the teachers; and it also explores the fit of the school's expectations with the developmental journey of the teacher.

Kegan (1982) explored meaning-making and the evolution of consciousness in a lifespan model of personality. He proposed that development included affect and cognition and a "succession of renegotiated balances" (Kegan, p. 81) between inclusion and independence, the two "greatest yearnings in human existence" (p. 107). Each of the six (numbered 0 to 5) stages, "evolutionary truces" (p. 109), in his model involved the lifelong need to find a balance between these two differing needs. He drew parallels to integration and differentiation from biological

evolutionary theory. The balancing between the two needs in Kegan's model was a departure from the traditional developmental models of the time that equated autonomy and maturity.

Kegan (1982) used a graphical representation of a helix (see Figure 1) to show the equality of and oscillation between inclusion and independence. He named six stages: Incorporative, Impulsive, Imperial, Interpersonal, Institutional, and Interindividual. The last three correlate with the more recent language of socialized, self-authoring, and self-transforming (Kegan & Lahey, 2009). The spiraling indicated an increasingly complex meaning-making system as the balance between inclusion and independence was revisited and renegotiated throughout the lifespan as individual development spiraled toward increasing complexity in meaning-making systems. The helix also indicated that in revisiting the balance, the person did not return to the prior meaning. As Kegan said, "We will never restore the balance – but there is a *new* balance that can be achieved. We are not going back, but we are coming through" (pp. 266-267). As we spiral through, we move to increasingly mature ways of knowing, that integrate the cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal domains, an "interweaving of cognitive, identity, and relationship dimensions" (Baxter Magolda, 2004b, p. 5).

As a person spirals through, there is a move to an increasingly complex way of knowing, a change in "what is taken as subject or self and what is taken as object or other" (Kegan, 1982, p. 81). What Kegan named object, according to Hammerman (2002), are the "aspects of ourselves and our world that we can work with, relate to, and have some control over" (p. 16) and what Kegan named subject are the "aspects of ourselves and the world we are made up by, that provide the lens or frame through which we see, that we don't have perspective on because they constitute what we *are*" (p. 16). Thus, development is a journey, a progression of moving an embedded perspective that is assumed to be true (subject) into view where it can be identified,

observed, and controlled (object) (Berger & Hammerman, 2004). The rhythm is that a subject lost becomes an object created (Kegan, 1982) as a person moves from one meaning-making system to another.

Kegan provided a framework of a “universal on-going process” (1982, p. 264) of meaning-making and defined adulthood as “a vast evolutionary expanse” (1994, p. 5) instead of an endpoint. He envisioned adults as evolving meaning-makers, the “concept of person is more verb than noun” (Merriam & Clark, 1991, p. 198). What does it mean to be meaning-making? According to Kegan (1982),

Meaning is, in its origins, a physical activity (grasping, seeing), a social activity (it requires another), a survival activity (in doing it, we live). Meaning, understood in this way, is the primary human emotion, irreducible. It cannot be divorced from the body, from social experience, or from the very survival of the organism. (pp. 18-19)

Kegan (1982) showed how the developmental theories of Piaget, Kohlberg, Loevinger, Maslow, McClelland/Murray, and Erikson fit into his six stages, using the relationship between subject and object as the underlying comparison; what is subject is embedded and taken for granted, and what is object can be noticed, questioned, and changed. In each plateau, meaning-making is “both a triumph and a constraint; it represents a broader organization than the last, and a constraint of mind with respect to developments that may follow” (Kegan, 1980, p. 376). The equal weighting of both inclusion and independence was not true of other developmental models of the time. Kegan (1982) recognized this and saw his model as “corrective” (p. 108) of all of these prior models where differentiation as growth was favored and integration was seen as immature.

Kegan (1980) outlined a constructive-developmental perspective that was not only cognitive since it included emotions. He did not reduce adult meaning-making to a response to early childhood experiences, but considered the adult as an adaptive individual. In Kegan's view, the process of meaning-making is fundamental to development, and stages are simply a way of following the process of development.

Kegan (1982) used the term *stage* to describe the ways of organizing reality according to what is "subject" and what is "object." In 1994, Kegan's term was *order of consciousness*. Kegan and Lahey (2009) use the term *plateau*. Researchers using his theory have used *ways of knowing* (Helsing et al., 2001; Drago-Severson, 2004, 2007a) and *Orders of Mind* (Hammerman, 2002; Berger & Hammerman, 2004). In response to my question about his preference for terminology, Kegan (personal communication, March 10, 2009) responded that his terminology depended on the audience; he disliked the term *stages* because it is so misunderstood; and he had used *plateaus* in his most recent publication, *Immunity to Change* (2009). This dissertation will, therefore, use the term of *plateau* to describe each of the different epistemologies or meaning-making systems, unless matching the terminology used in the original publication. Plateau is used to mean an area of stability, a resting place, without implying a fixed or permanent position. This dissertation will also use the language of socialized, self-authoring, and self-transforming ways of knowing from Kegan and Lahey (2009) to describe the three different epistemologies called Stage 3, 4, and 5 in Kegan (1982) and Order of Consciousness 3, 4, and 5 in Kegan (1994).

In 1994, Kegan wrote *In Over Our Heads: The Mental Demands of Modern Life*. In this integrated model, there are five plateaus or meaning-making systems, named orders of consciousness (Kegan, 1994). Order One is impulsive and occurs in childhood, and knowing is

linked to perceptions. Orders Two through Five are the basis for the meaning-making systems for adults although most adults in the empirical studies are Order Three or Order Four.

Order Two is an instrumental way of knowing, an external and concrete orientation to the world, reliance on rules, and a mentality of tit-for-tat with others. Order Three is a socialized way of knowing, an internal and abstract orientation to the world, a reliance on external authority and others, and a mentality of obligation to others. Order Four is a self-authoring way of knowing, a dialectical orientation to self and the world, a reliance on internal authority, and a mentality of respect for differences in others (Popp & Portnow, 2001). Order Five is a self-transformation way of knowing, an interdependent world view (Kegan, 1994). Berger (2010) describes these Orders as Third Order persons have no sense of what they want apart from another's expectations; Fourth Order persons have their own system for decision-making; and Fifth Order persons have a sense of the limits of their internal system.

While all adults have the potential to progress from an instrumental to a socialized to a self-authoring to a self-transforming meaning-making system, not all people reach the potential. Context is an influence. A holding environment is the terminology used by Kegan (1982, 1994) for the context, credited to D. E. Winnicott (1965). The environment that makes growth possible must provide appropriate supports and challenges.

In the 1994 book, Kegan extended his prior work to "culture's claim on our minds" (p. 2). These plateaus of meaning-making did not just apply to individual development, but also applied to the development of an increasingly complex cultural mentality. He drew parallels between Order Three, Order Four, and Order Five, and traditionalism, modernism, and postmodernism in the culture. He argued there was a gap between the expectations of the contemporary culture and the capacity of most adults to meet those expectations. He called the

cultural expectations for meaning-making for adults the ““hidden curriculum”” (Kegan, 1994, p. 9). In effect, he argued that modern culture has changed in such a way that we are *In Over Our Heads*. The title indicates Kegan’s conclusion that the developmental plateau of most adults is not a match for these cultural expectations.

It is, therefore, not the developmental plateaus that are the determinant of effectiveness in adulthood. Instead, it is the fit or match between the contexts of the particular adult’s life and the developmental plateau of the particular adult that is important. There is a loss when an adult is in a situation that is either “over one’s head” or “under one’s head” (Kegan, 1998, pp. 214-215). A plateau of greater complexity in ways of knowing is not necessarily better (Drago-Severson et al., 2001); it depends on the match between what the cultural demands, the ““hidden curriculum”” (Kegan, 1994, p. 9), and the meaning-making system of the adult.

In *Immunity to Change*, Kegan and Lahey (2009) connect adult development to organizational learning and make the case for a “*developmental stance*” (p. 308) for leaders and within the organizational culture. The book is directed for those who “lead, manage, supervise, consult, counsel, train, coach, or teach” (p. xiii). They map the growth in “adult mental complexity” (p. 16) as an upward sloping line with three plateaus as complexity increases over time. The line gets thinner and thinner as time increases, indicating “fewer and fewer people at the higher plateaus” (p. 15). These three plateaus are the socialized mind, the self-authoring mind, and the self-transforming mind. While the description is about the mind, Kegan and Lahey are clear that development is not simply cognitive. Instead, both thinking and feeling are involved, again in keeping with the prior holistic theoretical model. Where the previous writings (Kegan, 1982, 1994) focused on identifying the different plateaus and describing them, Kegan and Lahey (2009) turn the focus to fostering developmental transitions by overcoming the

limitations of the current meaning-making system, the “hidden competing commitments” (p. 43). This is an internal look at the person; previous models examined the influence of supports and challenges in the holding environment.

Thus, while the change in meaning-making follows the sequence that has been outlined by Kegan (1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009), the pace of the developmental progression is variable (Kegan & Lahey; Popp & Portnow, 2001), and persons of similar age or within a similar life phase (Kegan et al., 2001; Kegan & Lahey) are likely to be at different developmental plateaus. Development is not an unalterable and independent process (Daloz, 1999), but a dynamic process. The potential for growth along the developmental plateau is context dependent and not an inherent capacity of the adult learner (Berger, 2002).

What prompts or fosters the developmental progression in meaning-making according to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) theoretical framework? First, this progression is cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal (Kegan, 1994) or involves the “head, heart, gut, and hand” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 7). A second consideration is the characteristics of the holding environment or context. A context that fosters development will offer both support and challenge with a mix of both holding on and letting go, and some continuity during the times of change and transition (Kegan, 1982). A third influence is an inward look to the learner’s current meaning-making system and the limitations of the framework that they look through (subject) instead of look at (object).

All three aspects are included in the definition of “*optimal conflict*” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 54) for overcoming *Immunity to Change* or fostering developmental progression:

- The *persistent* experience of some frustration, dilemma, life puzzle, quandary, or personal problem that is ...
- Perfectly designed to cause us to *feel the limits* of our current way of knowing...

- In some sphere of our living that we *care about*, with ...
- *Sufficient supports* so that we are neither overwhelmed by the conflict nor able to escape it or diffuse it. (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 54)

The consequence of variable developmental progression is that adults may have any one of these meaning-making systems, or be in transition between them; that is, “developmental diversity” (Drago-Severson, 2004, p. 29) in meaning-making is likely. Growth and transition from one plateau to another is a process, not an event, analogous to the gradations of color within a rainbow (Berger, 2002). Understanding the “developmental continuum along which every student travels will greatly enhance an educator’s efforts to create an environment than can provide a good balance of challenge and support” (Popp & Portnow, 2001, p. 65). Therefore, exploring the fit of the teachers’ development to the expectations of the context in which they work has implications for teacher retention and also for design of appropriate professional development (Hammerman & Mitchell, 2006). Professional development from Kegan’s (1982, 1994) model would involve viewing the teacher as an adult learner where: development continues to occur throughout the lifespan; the developmental process is separate from ages or life phases; what changes as the teacher develops is the way of knowing; and development may or may not occur from the experiences of the teacher within the social, cultural, physical, and psychological context (Popp & Portnow, 2001).

Empirical Studies

Kegan’s (1994) own longitudinal research and his review of 13 other research studies using his model indicated that changes in meaning-making are gradual, directional, and sequential. Frequently, adults begin in adulthood at Order Three (external sources the primary source of meaning) and slowly change from Order Three to Order Four (the self is the primary

source of meaning). The evidence suggested this pattern of epistemological change regardless of the educational level, gender, or socioeconomic status of the adult. There is not enough evidence to make a statement about Kegan's model extended to multiple cultures and ethnicities. Kegan's model is a Western model and only one of the empirical studies (Kegan et al., 2001) involved non-white, non-native English speakers and these students were in an American classroom.

From his longitudinal study over 4 years of 22 "relatively privileged, middle class" (p. 188) adults, Kegan (1994) estimated that "one-half to two-thirds of the adult population appear not to have fully reached the fourth order" (p. 191). In a composite analysis of 12 dissertation studies (N=282, 33 % male and 67% female, age range of 19 to 55), a few (14%) of the adults in the composite sample were not yet at Order Three. Only a very few (6%) showed any evidence of some development beyond Order Four.

Three of the 12 dissertation studies (N=75) cited by Kegan (1994) involved adults in a wide range of socioeconomic status and educational levels; the other 9 studies (N=207) involved highly educated (pursuing or holding a graduate degree) adults. Education did contribute to fewer persons below Order Three than in the composite sample (5% for the highly educated compared to 46% in the composite) and a higher percentage of adults (7% for the highly educated compared to 3% for the composite) of the adults at Order Four, but over 50% of the persons in the highly educated category were at orders less than 4. An additional study (Bar-Yam, 1991) of highly educated adults (N=60) showed a pattern similar to the highly educated studies. Education is clearly an influence in developing to Order Three; beyond that order, education does appear to be an influence on the pace of the developmental progression for some, but not all, of the persons with the opportunity to be highly educated. Of the few persons (5 to 10% in the studies) who developed beyond Order Four, all were at least at mid-life (Kegan,

1994, 1998). Bar-Yam's (1991) study indicated no significant difference between male and female participants in developmental orders.

In a study of three sites of Adult Basic Education/English for Speakers of Other Languages (ABE/ESOL) classrooms (Kegan et al., 2001), students who were mostly non-white, non-native English speakers from around the world, and of low socio-economic background brought the three ways of knowing—instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring—into the classroom on a continuum that was similar to native English speakers of like socioeconomic background in prior studies. These ABE/ESOL students demonstrated significant changes over one year in three areas: acculturation, what they knew, and how they knew. The study also found that the learning cohorts at each site were an essential component of the holding environment that provided support for academic learning, emotional support, and challenges in broadening perspectives.

The self-authoring way of knowing fits the demands of an adult in today's modernist culture better than a socialized way of knowing because it provides an internal authority that allows us to accept or refuse the expectations of the cultural context that is increasingly diverse and complex (Kegan, 1998). The empirical literature as cited in the prior paragraph indicates that we are *In Over Our Heads* (Kegan, 1994) even without considering the demands of postmodernism (Kegan, 1998), for which a self-transforming way of knowing would provide a better fit.

Kegan's theoretical framework has been used in a wide variety of contexts: college student development (Baxter Magolda, Abes, & Torres, 2009; Hobbs, 2005; King & Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2004), business organizational change (Rooke & Torbert, 1998), business leadership (McCauley et al., 2006), executive development (Laske, 2002), leader effectiveness

(Eigel, 1998), and assessment in higher education (Taylor & Marienau, 1997). In adult education, instructors of Learning in Retirement programs (Erickson, 2007), as well as the learners in ABE/ESOL programs (Popp & Portnow, 2001) have been studied from this framework.

Implications for Adult Education

First, it is clear from the empirical studies using Kegan's (1982, 1994) theoretical framework that an adult educator must expect a variety of developmental plateaus within a group of adult learners, even among groups with high educational levels. In a group of adults, the group will be comprised of "some people who are primarily looking to authorities outside themselves to provide expertise and guidance, others who are more self-authoring and internally generative, with the possibility of a few who are primarily focused just on the concrete consequences of attending or not" (Hammerman, 2005, p. 16).

Assuming autonomy or independence is a characteristic of a self-authoring mind (Kegan, 1994), and that autonomy is one component of self-directed learning (Candy, 1991), Kegan's research indicated that learners are not necessarily as self-directed as much of adult education practice assumes. Asking a learner to be self-directed shifts responsibility for learning and authority to the learner; this may require an epistemological shift for the learner (Hammerman, 2002; Kegan, 2000). Kegan (1994, 2000) cautioned the adult educator to be aware of the assumption that all adult learners have a self-authoring way of knowing. Kegan (1994) reminded the adult educator of Kierkegaard's statement that the educator must "understand what he [the student] understands and in the way that he understands it" (p. 278).

The assumption of the adult learner as self-directed comes from the use of Knowles' (1980) andragogy model. However, Knowles's concept of adult learners has been

misunderstood in this regard. He did not say that adults are self-directed, but that they had a preference for or were moving toward self-direction (Cranton, 2006; Merriam et al., 2007), and this progression is a fit with the constructive-developmental framework.

The second major implication for adult learners is the structuring of the holding environment for them. Daloz (1999), in describing the journey of adult learners as they return to education, uses the work of Levinson (1978), Kegan (1982, 1994), and Perry (1970) as three possible “maps” (p. 43) of the question of growing wiser with “increasingly integrated and differentiated ways of making sense of the world” (p. 48). Daloz’s writing in exploring the adult educator as mentor is clearly using constructive-developmental theory. His analysis of a holding environment (Winnicott, 1965) with a mix of challenge and support argues that low challenge and low support lead to a static situation; high challenge and low support lead a learner to retreat; low challenge and high support only confirm the learner; and a combination of high challenge and high support leads to growth or development.

Kegan (1982, 1994) joins Daloz (1999, 2000) in an understanding of adult meaning-making as a dialectic process of development. The oscillation between inclusion and independence (Kegan, 1982) and the helix metaphor remind the adult educator that development is not “*abandoning* the old longing on behalf of the new” (Kegan, 1982, p. 154) but an integration of the new with the old.

Walking across a series of bridges is a metaphor for learning from Kegan (1994, 2000) with implications for adult educators; learning is

the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly more elaborate bridges. Three injunctions follow from this image. First, we need to know which bridge we are on.

Second, we need to know how far along the learner is in traversing that particular bridge.

Third, we need to know that, if it is to be a bridge that is safe to walk across, it must be well anchored on both sides, not just the culminating side. We cannot overattend to where we want the student to be—the far side of the bridge—and ignore where the student is (Kegan, 2000, pp. 60-61).

The adult educator can be intentional in creating support structures that foster development, (King & Baxter Magolda, 1999), and developmental curriculum can be designed as a set of experiences that begin close to the current meaning-making plateau and then include more complex goals over time (Baxter Magolda, 1999; King & Baxter Magolda, 2004). Their integrated model of learning for college students had the following four key elements: what individuals learn is dependent on how they construct knowledge, how individuals construct knowledge is related to their sense of self, the process of meaning-making evolves developmentally over time, and educators who understand development will include personal development and cognitive development in their definition of learning.

Using Kegan's (1982, 1994) model, the following strategies for adult educators in supporting development for students in higher education were outlined by Ignelzi (2000): first, know and value how the person currently makes meaning; second, provide "incrementally-structured supervised practice in developing one's own ideas" (p. 13); third, provide options that include collaborative learning; and fourth, attend to the affective responses of the students as the change occurs by celebrating the change but also acknowledging the losses in each transition. The challenges for the learner at each of Kegan's middle three plateaus are: instrumental learners will find abstraction and multiple perspectives a challenge; socializing learners will find setting their own standards and questioning the experts a challenge; and self-authoring learners will find recognizing their own ideological assumptions a challenge (Taylor, 2006).

One of the possible uses of constructive-developmental theories is to highlight that it is typical for adult learners to experience apprehension and tension during their developmental learning and transitions (Taylor, 1996). An awareness of the process of change as outlined in the developmental theories can help adult learners recognize that their experiences are a process and that others have previously navigated a developmental journey. However, it must be clear that while adult learners share a developmental journey, the pace of that journey and the transitions within that journey are quite variable (Merriam, 2005), so as not to marginalize those adults at the different plateaus of development.

Merriam and Heuer (1996) highlighted the threat of developmental change, “a rocky road” (p. 254), to the learner and encouraged adult educators to provide a variety of experiences, structure a safe environment, and to not only model the process, but mentor the students in the process. Kegan’s bridge metaphor (1994, 2000) gives guidance to the adult educator as mentor; support and challenge are both needed. This requires holding on, letting go, and some continuity during the times of change and transition (Kegan, 1982) where the adult educator as mentor is “intentionally fashioning. . . a setting rich in the elements that permit one to run the risks of leaving behind a familiar way of composing the self” (Kegan, 1998, p. 213).

The constructive-developmental model of Kegan (1982, 1994) as outlined here can provide insight into the developmental diversity of, and the structural changes in, the meaning-making systems of adults throughout their lifespan. There is a risk, however, in using a model that proposes developmental plateaus. The risk is to emphasize the fit to a category instead of the unique person, to focus on “tables more than the people” (Daloz, 1999, p. 42). Kegan’s model can easily be misused in this way. However, even the workshop (Berger & Hammerman, 2010) that teaches researchers how to score not only the different plateaus, but the various steps

in the progressions between plateaus – a total of 21 possibilities (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, 1988) – focuses on the developmental process, not the endpoints. The gradual progress is analogous to the gradations of color within a rainbow (Berger, 2002); there is a definite order of primary colors but a continuous and gradual range of color between each of the primary colors.

Thus, a constructive-developmental perspective contributes to an understanding of adult learners as “changing adults” (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 51) or evolving meaning-makers, and explores the process of the dialectical change and the influence of context. The importance of this internal meaning-making structure of the adult learner and the adult educator is relatively recent in the teacher professional development literature. In order to provide the context of this recent development, this review now turns to an outline of five alternate perspectives within the traditional teacher development literature.

Traditional Professional Development Literature for K-12 Teachers

Does it matter what the teacher does? Does it matter who the teacher is? Is teaching an art or a science? Is teaching a vocation or a skill? Do teachers develop expertise through experience? Do teachers develop personal maturity as they progress through psychological and physiological stages? Do teachers develop in a fluid manner through a life cycle from their personal and career experiences? Do teachers develop as a result of caring for and connecting with their students? Is teaching such a complex activity that the life history or narrative of the teacher is necessary to begin to understand teaching? There is not a single answer to these questions and teacher professional development literature has explored the question from five different perspectives (skill-acquisition, cognitive-developmental, life cycle, caring, and life history).

It is necessary to explore the variety of meanings of the term *teacher development* before turning to a more detailed look at these five perspectives. Teacher development may mean training for professional and career development; the focus from this perspective is acquisition of necessary information and expertise. A developmental approach to teacher thinking typically implies an internal process of increasingly complex meaning-making systems; typically these models are linear psychological stages. Development may also mean any growth or change (unrelated to any sequential phase, age, or cycle) in response to the teacher's interpretation of personal, professional, and cultural experiences.

The Skill-acquisition Perspective: Teachers Develop Expertise

The skill-acquisition perspective has behaviorist roots where teacher behavior is examined and focuses on what teachers do. It is also termed a “*craft*’” (Huberman, 1992, p. 136) or a process-product approach (Fang, 1996; Shulman, 1986, 2004) in the literature. Knowledge is considered on two levels: both domain-specific subject matter and the ability to teach the subject matter to others (pedagogical knowledge). Viewed through this perspective, what develops as the teacher develops is expertise.

In skill-acquisition, the focus is on the “tasks and skills specific to teaching . . . a cognitively complex and demanding task” (Moreira, 1996, p. 52). Teaching requires the teacher to function as an “executive, as high-level decision maker” (Brandt, 1986, p. 5). The goal of professional development, in this view, is to teach the teacher the most effective behaviors for student learning; teachers “learn to act on their students” (Shulman, 2004, p. 371) effectively.

The work of Berliner (1986) on expert teachers is foundational for this perspective. He observed expert and experienced teachers and compared them to ordinary or novice teachers. Berliner's understanding of the progression is described by Levin (2003) as novice to advanced

beginner to competent to proficient to expert. Berliner showed pictures to teachers and asked them to describe the scene. He noted that expert teachers did not just report what they saw, they inferred from that data and they “have extraordinarily fast and accurate pattern recognition capabilities” (Berliner, p. 11). This is an information processing view where expert responses have become automatic. Berliner used the analogy of expert musicians or athletes who do not have to think about what to do; they just do it. Teachers who have expertise also have this capacity. The analogy is extended to show that experts—whether musicians or athletes or teachers—frequently know what to do, but often cannot explain how they know or the basis for their actions.

To be labeled expert in this view, the teacher needs both domain and pedagogical knowledge, that is, knowledge specific to the content area and flexibility in teaching strategies. Huberman (1996) advocated that pedagogy enriches understanding of content when he wrote that “‘knowing how’ or ‘knowing when/where’ is empowered significantly by ‘knowing about.’ I am claiming that the converse is also true. Further still, I am claiming that authentic expertise in a specific domain has to contain both components” (p. 12).

Sternberg and Horvath (1995) also examined expert teaching and described expert teachers as those who have more domain knowledge than novices, are efficient at problem solving, and have depth of understanding. In their analysis, experts not only had more knowledge, they organized it differently in memory. According to Sternberg and Horvath, efficiency developed as some procedures became routine and automatic and then brain resources could instead be used to develop solutions and higher-level thinking.

Berliner himself and others (Hamachek, 1999; Levin, 2003; Moreira, 1996; Sternberg & Horvath, 1995) recognized the problem with using the terms *expert* and *experienced* as

interchangeable. Clearly, some experience is needed to develop expertise. However, as Berliner asked in an interview, “Why do some experienced people not become experts?” (Brandt, 1986, p. 8). There is no proposed answer in Berliner’s work, but he did point to the need to explore beyond actions and “go inside teachers’ heads and ask them why they do the things they do” (Brandt, 1986, p. 9). While experience is necessary to develop expertise, not all teachers with experience have become experts.

The Cognitive-developmental Perspective: Teachers Develop Mature Thinking

The cognitive-developmental perspective focuses on how teachers think and has roots in cognitive and humanistic views of learning. Viewed through this perspective, the teacher develops mature thinking as evidenced by increasingly complex rational analysis. Moreira (1996) outlined the cognitive-developmental perspective as a sequence of stages that were universal to all. In this perspective, teachers transition from one stage to another in a hierarchal sequence that does not vary. There was no conception of decline in this perspective; that is, people did not regress to a lower stage. In this view, the goal of teacher professional development is to promote progress to the next stage of complexity in thinking.

These developmental models were either physiological or psychological. A teacher was a generalized and generic individual responding to some biological or psychological clock (Huberman, 1995). Moreira (1996) noted the work of Piaget, Kohlberg, and Loevinger as essential to this perspective. In the literature, the terms *stage* and *phase* are sometimes used interchangeably (see Sikes, 1985, and Steffy, Wolfe, Pasch, & Enz, 2000, for example) although the physiological literature refers to stages of development.

The work of Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1983) is foundational in applying the cognitive-developmental perspective to teachers as adult learners. They did not investigate

learning how to teach; instead they correlated flexibility of response in teaching to higher stages of development in the cognitive, moral, and ego dimensions. The correlation was derived from administration of a test to determine the cognitive development stage. In the tradition of Piaget, stages increased in complexity of thinking, and adults learned new skills as they interacted with the environment and progressed to more complex stages. Their work presumed a reliable instrument for measuring each developmental stage and the ability to classify persons into a specific stage. This perspective emphasizes rational cognitive dimensions without considering emotional and affective factors.

The Life Cycle Perspective: Teachers Develop from Life and Career Experiences

The life cycle perspective focuses on the age or years of experience of the teacher and notes the different developmental needs at each phase. Viewed through this perspective, the teacher develops in response to career and life phases, with multiple possible pathways that depend on teacher choice at each crossroads.

Life cycle models connect personal experiences of the teacher to the development of professionalism or career. The life cycle models borrow from the career cycle literature and develop career phases specific to teaching and also borrow from the adult developmental stage theories. What all of them have in common, whether cycle or not, is the exploration of life history factors, both personal and sociological influences. A historical summary of the career-stage models is provided by George (1992).

Life cycle analysis explores how “the personal experiences we have affect the professional person we become” (Robertson & Murrphy, 2005, p. 6). In this model, it is not possible to undo the linkage between the person and the professional. Instead of what the teacher does or what the teacher thinks, this view locates the teacher in a context and a culture.

The goal of teacher professional development, in this view, is for teachers to reflect on themselves and their teaching praxis—to understand how they make sense of the professional and personal experiences.

The emphasis shifts from fixed stages in the life cycle perspective. Instead, development is dynamic and has multiple pathways. Teacher choice influences the outcome, and multiple factors influence the teacher. The change in language from hierarchical stages or phases to a cycle highlights the change in understanding. Cycles are not a linear series of events, but a process that can involve both growth and decline, “a process filled with plateaus, discontinuities, regressions, spurts, and dead ends” (Huberman, 1995, p. 196).

Sikes, Measor, and Woods (1985) and Sikes (1985) identified phases grouped by age, with developmental tasks associated with each phase, in their research with 48 art and science secondary teachers in England. The teachers ranged from 25 to 70 years old. Levinson’s work, a sequential model, was used as the framework for the analysis where transitions are correlated with age. In analyzing the influence of aging, Sikes considered the increasing difference in age between teachers and the fixed age of their students as teachers remained in classrooms year after year a major influence. According to Ben-Peretz (2002), Sikes emphasized the “importance of time and maturity in gaining professional wisdom” (p. 320). The Sikes et al. research considered the influence of the generational cohort and also noted gender differences. The influence of personal, historical, and political influences were acknowledged, but examined in light of maturity that was dependant on age.

Huberman’s (1988, 1989, 1995) work is foundational to life cycle understanding. He noted that “‘age’ is essentially a hollow variable” (Huberman, 1989, p. 31) for social and historical factors. He extended the psychological understanding to include these other

influences. Huberman (1989) studied 160 secondary teachers (primarily male) in Switzerland in the 1980s during a time of school reform. He used a cross-sectional group of teachers in different age groups. He used the professional life cycle research in general and proposed a model that began with career entry and stabilization (the first 6 years). Beginning the career was categorized as relatively easy or painful. After the career entry and stabilization, Huberman found multiple pathways of experimentation and reassessment that led either to serenity or conservatism. These pathways then converged to a disengagement phase which was either serene or bitter.

Huberman (1989) reported two factors that were predictive of satisfaction throughout the career—experimentation within the teacher’s own classroom and efficiencies in managing the classroom. Both are related to classroom interactions where the teacher was “tending one’s own private garden, pedagogically speaking” (Huberman, 1989, p. 51). Huberman (1995) also reported on three factors that predicted satisfaction late in the teacher’s career: a change in grade level or subject or school (i.e., some role shift) initiated by the teacher every 4 or 5 years; specific classes in prior years that were remembered as special; and a sense that the teacher had enabled the students to achieve.

Hargreaves (2005) interviewed 50 Canadian teachers about their emotional responses to change. One of his conclusions was that teachers in the latter part of their careers are resilient, resistant, and pragmatic in the face of an externally imposed change. Instead of focusing on the change, these later career teachers instead concentrated on their relationship with students within their classroom. His findings supported Huberman’s studies of multiple pathways for the life cycle.

Glatthorn and Fox (1996) listed eight behavior categories where principals could evaluate the teacher from a basic to an advanced level. Principals needed to understand teachers' cognitive development, level of motivation, and stage of career development to design professional development. Their analysis of career development was based on the Huberman model. They concluded that teachers differed and their concerns differed at differing stages within the life cycle.

Fessler (1992) proposed a teacher career cycle model that was developed from interviews with 160 teachers, case studies, and a literature review. This model emphasized the influence, either positive or negative, of external environmental factors. Environmental factors are either personal or organizational in his model. Induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit are the stages of career that Fessler named. In this usage, stage does not mean a linear progression, but a series of options, as clarified by Fessler and Christensen (1992) when they described an "ebb and flow, moving in and out of stages in response to both personal and organizational environmental influences" (p. 249). These influences affect the teacher's "confidence, enthusiasm, and commitment" (Fessler, 1995, p. 171). This model called for personalized approaches to teacher development.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) did not develop a life cycle model but emphasized the need to see the total teacher, not just a stereotype of teacher in teacher development planning. The authors claimed that schools and professional development planners typically treat the teacher as generic and suggested that planners should take "age, stage of career, life experiences, and gender factors" ((Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 5) into account.

The Caring Perspective: Teachers Develop Connections with Students

Explicit in the skill-acquisition and cognitive-developmental perspectives and implied in the prior life cycle model is the ability to rationalize and explain teacher development by analysis of factors – psychological, historical, social, contextual, etc. The focus remains on the teacher. However, the caring perspective adds a perspective that is missing from these prior modes. It focuses on the relational component of teaching, as exemplified in this quote from Robertson and Murrphy (2005): “We need to teach not just with our minds but with our hearts and souls” (p. 3). Here, the focus is not just on the teacher, but the interrelationships between the teacher and each student. Rational analysis of factors to explain development is not the interest of this perspective, instead the focus is on emotion and connections. Viewed through the caring perspective, what develops as teachers develop is the capacity to care for their students.

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) noted the need for caring as well as cognition. Noddings’ (1984, 2005) work is foundational for the investigation of the ethic of care in education. She included not just the relationship between the teacher as the one caring and the student as the one cared for, but the need to teach children the ability to care. Relational knowing, where both teacher and student are learning from each other and constructing knowledge, follow this ethic of care (Owens & Ennis, 2005).

What does it mean to care as a teacher? Caring teachers not only focus on their students, but they expect that they can make a difference in doing so, according to Agne (1999). An expert teacher is not just experienced, but has “care-driven commitment and dedication” (Agne, 1999, p. 178) to students. Agne explored the beliefs of Teachers of the Year and compared them to other teachers. The increased caring of the Teachers of the Year was an essential and

important factor for these teachers and arose from an underlying belief that teacher actions would make a difference to the students.

Nias (1999), in a longitudinal study of 54 primary teachers in England and Wales, wrote that caring teachers “act in the children’s best interests” (p. 227) even when they do not like the child and even when the action is contrary to the best interest of the teacher. Nias’s work noted that caring teachers see themselves as morally, not just legally, accountable to their students. Caring teachers could not separate their professional and personal selves: “The persons they perceive themselves to be go to work and the teachers they feel they are come home, often to occupy their sleeping as well as their waking hours” (Nias, 1999, p. 224).

There is a risk in so closely aligning one’s self with one’s profession. Nias’ research fits the profile of other care-based professions (usually predominately female) where the workers ignore their own needs to focus on others and are unable to maintain boundaries between work and self. Cohen (1991) cautioned that “years of this kind of psychic self-sacrifice take an enormous toll on a teacher” (p. 105). If the balance is achieved for teachers, how is the balance achieved? Agne’s (1999) work gives a clue to this. It is not self-sacrifice; teachers are not ignoring their own needs if making a difference in the lives of the students provides the teacher with meaning or purpose or contributes to their sense of self.

The Life History Perspective: Teachers Construct Their Voices

The life history perspective explores multiple factors that influence the teacher and the connection between the personal, the professional, and the cultural experiences. These experiences include political, historical, social, and organizational factors that influence the teacher. The person of the teacher cannot be separated from the task of teaching. Much of the literature within the life history perspective is social constructivist where “education and

educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). This perspective does not imply a stage, phase, or cyclical pattern of development; it does imply a developing and changing sense of self over time. Viewed through the life history perspective, the teacher develops through interpreting lived experiences.

Sometimes, in research about teacher lives, an individual teacher’s story is told, a personal biography where we know the events that happened and what the events meant to the teacher. These stories give the teacher voice and honor the teacher as practitioner (Goodson, 1997). However, more than a story can be narrated if the story is placed into context. Where was the story located? What was the personal situation? What was the socio-cultural context? What was the historical time? Biography and story become a life history or narrative when placed in context.

For example, Measor (1985) used a “sociologically read biography” (p. 61) approach in the study of 48 secondary school art and science teachers in England. Her work contributed to an understanding of critical phases and incidents in examining how external and personal factors cause the teacher to decide to change. Likewise, Goodson (1992) noted that a teacher’s understanding of self was influenced by a prior positive classroom experience, the teacher’s personal characteristics and positionality, the lifestyle, career stages, critical incidents, and historical time. In doing so, he advocated the need to locate teachers’ stories within their life history.

Kelchtermans’ (1993a) biographical study of individual teachers in Belgian/Flemish schools added “critical person” (p. 446) to critical phases and critical events. She emphasized that the identification of critical events, phases, or persons was retrospective in teacher biography

and therefore, the meaning depended on the way the teacher interpreted the experience. A critical situation should not be interpreted as an abrupt change: the changes of the teachers were gradual, but these critical situations were remembered as having a great influence (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Kelchtermans, 1993b).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990, 1991, 2006) used narrative inquiry in their educational research to understand how teachers make sense of their experiences in a study of the teacher's personal and professional experiences. The narrative included what happened as well as the interpretation of what it meant. Reflection and construction of meaning were essential components of the teachers' interpretation of the experience, either individually or socially.

The life history or narrative view is a much more complex view of teaching than the other teacher development models that have been examined. Instead of examining one or two dimensions and the possible relationship between them, the life history is comprehensive, holistic, and complex. Instead of a search for universal patterns and structures, the search is for local and particular knowledge. The shift is an epistemological one from a descriptive paradigm of knowing to an interpretive one.

As the lens in teacher development shifts from what teachers do to who teachers are, knowledge shifts from generalized to local and contextual. Inquiry shifts from mainly empirical to increasingly narrative. The skill-acquisition and cognitive-developmental and life cycle perspectives provide prescriptions, and have an underlying assumption of universal development; the life history and caring perspectives provide descriptions, and have an underlying assumption of sociocultural development.

Summary of the Traditional Professional Development Literature

The five perspectives presented—skill-acquisition, cognitive-developmental, life cycle, relational, and life history—have moved along a continuum from completely descriptive to more and more complex ways of interpreting and constructing meaning. Teacher knowledge is increasingly obtained through experience, rather than being taught by an expert. Teacher learning develops over time and in context, not only in formal education (Feiman-Nemser, 2008). Knowledge is constructed from action in context, what to do and when (Florio-Ruane, 2002). Quality teachers are those who are “able to engage in appropriate performances in practice” (Shulman & Shulman, 2004, p. 263).

Hargreaves and Goodson (1996) cited Donald Schön (1983) when they stated: “The heart of professionalism in this perspective is the capacity to exercise discretionary judgment in situations of unavoidable uncertainty” (p. 12). This is a very different stance than research provided by an expert that asks “what works?” and then disseminates to the teachers this research based prescription on what to do in the classroom. Instead, there is an implicit value of the personal or practical knowledge (Carter & Doyle, 1996; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996) of the teacher in the complex work of teaching.

The debate in education about where knowledge is located has not been resolved. As an example of the conflict, an eighth grade teacher reported the following conversation with an administrator who wanted him to follow the research-based textbook: “It’s taken me 30 years to really get this right, and now you want me to just follow the book!” (G. L. Smith, personal communication, 2006).

The view of the teacher changes implicitly as the perspectives shift from doing teaching to being a teacher: Do teachers deliver curriculum or do they construct curriculum? Do teachers

perform in the classroom or learn in the classroom (Tickle, 2005)? Is the teacher “an instrument in the production of school achievement” or “an intelligent agent in educating children” (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 120)?

There are two questions to consider about effective teachers: “What behaviors are associated with teacher excellence?” (Hamachek, 1999, p. 190) and “Where does the idea of a teacher’s self fit here?” (Hamachek, 1999, p. 208). Florio-Ruane (2002) advocated for “a bit of both the computer and the poet” (p. 207) in research on teaching. “Classroom situations are always new and never twice alike” (Greene, 1979, p. 28), yet often “teaching” or “learning to teach” is regarded as is a single profession, rather than subject, grade level, student, and school-specific (Nespor, 1985). Yet, policy and school reform is generalized and standardized where the same means are expected to achieve the same ends (Craig, 2007) instead of recognizing the complexity of teaching and learning.

Teaching and teacher development require cognition and emotion, both expertise and caring. Growth may occur through individual reflection, within community, from an underlying universal pattern, or from a combination of these. Teaching is too complex to reduce it to a single perspective, and how these different perspectives are balanced is rooted in the type of knowledge that is valued. Teachers both teach by what they know and who they are (Clandinin & Huber, 2005; Hamachek, 1999). The question of who is teaching should be asked in addition to what, how, and why (Palmer, 1998).

Constructive-developmental Professional Development for K-12 Teachers

Is there a framework for teacher professional development that integrates these diverse perspectives? Presuming that teachers are adult learners, a metaphor that Kegan (1993) applied to education of children can be extended to teacher development. He illustrated the diversity

needed within a single mission of education of the mind, with the metaphor of five different lamps in a room. Are there five sources of light or only one source, the electricity for the room? Likewise, if education of the mind is the single source, each perspective can be valued for the different light it provides. The multiple perspectives (skill-acquisition, cognitive-developmental, life cycle, caring, and life history) in the teacher professional development literature can also be valued for the different light they provide. Is it possible to go behind the perspectives to find the single source?

Several authors find hope for school reform in teacher professional learning within the school community, not in traditional teacher professional development (Fullan, 2007; Ganser, 2000). Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental framework supports the argument that teacher professional learning cannot be separated from teacher personal learning; thus hope for the schools resides in teacher learning, with professional and personal learning intertwined. If a teacher's personal professional knowledge is to be valued, then it becomes essential to explore how the teacher knows. If professional development is to affect change, then it is likewise essential to know how the teacher knows and learns. It is important to understand, not just describe teacher practice (Nespor, 1985).

Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental framework explores the sequential progression of epistemological plateaus, the way in which meaning is constructed, the process of change, and the role of the environment in change. Teachers can "be grounded in their own life stories but not be prisoners of their own experiences" (Carter & Doyle, 1996, p. 136) in this constructive-developmental view.

The lens is focused on the process of constructing meaning or interpreting experience. The change in "how we interpret our experiences (i.e., 'make meaning')" (Taylor, 2006, p. 201)

is not entirely socially constructed, but is a developmental sequential progression of change in how the information is known. Viewed through the constructive-developmental perspective, what develops as teachers develop is an increasingly complex way of knowing.

This is not the only dimension of learning in professional development; the other dimension is increased pedagogical skills and content knowledge. A helpful graphic is to place what is known on one axis and how one knows on the other axis (Kegan et al., 2001) to highlight the two dimensions of learning and the possibility of change in either or both of the dimensions. Traditional professional development is focused on the first dimension, growth in the fund of knowledge.

The constructive-developmental perspective provides a second dimension - individual development in ways of knowing, the construction of meaning, and the influence of an environment that can foster or block the development. The individual develops “both as a natural unfolding as well as in response to the limitations of existing ways of making meaning” (McCauley et al., 2006, p. 635). It connects integrated cognitive, interpersonal, and intrapersonal plateaus of epistemological development with the meaning-making and interpretation of lived experiences, the constructive-developmental perspective.

A developmental process does not choose curriculum that only transmits a fund of knowledge or that only assumes the need for learners to develop more complex ways of knowing. It is a “both/and” (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 24) curricular view, that matches the approach to the developmental needs of the learner and engages learners from multiple ways of knowing. In any group of adults, there are differences not only in what the group members believe, but also in how the group members structure their beliefs (Hammerman, 2005).

Hargreaves (1997) argued that “what is worth fighting for in our schools is ultimately meeting the learning needs of *all* students and caring for them effectively as well” (p. 22). Adopting this common goal for schools implies the need to also meet the learning needs of all teachers and to also care for them effectively as “changing adults” (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 51), as adult learners. While the purpose of schools is to help children and youth grow (expand their personal capacity), this is only accomplished when the adults working within the school are also able to grow (Cameron et al., 2007; Wagner et al., 2006). The need is to apply what is known about adult learning to teacher professional development (Drago-Severson, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

The individual teacher’s learning and development is influenced by adult learning and development, by the work environment of the school, and by the characteristics of the teaching profession (Glickman, et al., 2007). Kegan’s (1982, 1994) theory postulates that adulthood is characterized by change and that each person has the potential to change. However, the pace of the developmental progression is variable (Popp & Portnow, 2001) and the process is dependent on the holding environment which may either hinder or support developmental change. Therefore, when change does not occur, what is needed to support the individual teacher in reaching the potential for change? The developmental view of teacher learning shifts from a deficient view of the teacher to an examination of the holding environment. This exploration includes the match or mismatch between the teacher’s plateau of meaning-making and the mix of support and challenge that is found in the work environment of the school and within the teaching profession.

Kegan’s (1994, 2000) metaphor of a developmental bridge suggests the adult educator can be intentional in creating support structures and developmental learning experiences that foster development (King & Baxter Magolda, 1999, 2004). The fostering of development

requires beginning at the meaning-making plateau of the learner and a mix of support and challenge. “The magnitude of the change expected of individuals should be enough to be engaging but not so great as to encourage resistance arising out of fear of change” (Ganser, 2000, p. 9).

In K-12 schools, Kegan’s (1982, 1994) framework has been used for research on principals as professional development leaders (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2007a, 2009). Not only is the principal responsible for educating the children in the school; the principal also provides for the education of the teachers in the school. In a study of principals from public and private schools ranging from elementary to high school schools and located in urban, suburban, and rural areas (N=25), Drago-Severson found four practices for supporting teacher learning: teachers teaming with colleagues inside or outside the school; opportunities for teachers to assume leadership roles; time and space for collegial inquiry and shared reflection; and mentoring of teachers. From these findings and her understanding of constructive-developmental theory, she outlined how teachers with instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring ways of knowing (Kegan’s [1994] Order Two, Order Three, and Order Four) would experience each of the four practices. According to Susan Moore Johnson writing in the Foreword of *Helping Teachers Learn: Principal Leadership for Adult Growth and Development* (Drago-Severson, 2004), “Instrumental knowers” (p. xviii) want to follow the rules; “socializing knowers” (p. xviii) want to please the principal; and “self-authoring knowers” (p. xviii) will to take responsibility for and reflect upon their own work.

Drago-Severson (2004, 2007a) also delineated the supports and challenges for each of the four practices for each plateau of knowing, the needs of the holding environment within each of the practices for each way of knowing. Her research is centered on teacher learning as a

developmental process and principals as “professional *learning* leaders”(Drago-Severson, 2007a, p. 24) who need to match their expectations for change with the way of knowing of the teacher—what is appropriately challenging for one teacher may be too risky for another. This research provided the principal perspective; it did not interview teachers. Few public schools are currently organized in a way with sufficient resources to permit the practices that are recommended by adult education practice and by Drago-Severson’s work.

A study that followed four teachers into their classrooms the year after their participation in a summer mathematics teacher professional development institute found Order Three, socializing way of knowing, and Order Four, self-authoring way of knowing, teachers (Hammerman, 2002). He concluded that Order Three teachers adopted reforms as a package initially, but whether the reform was sustained depended on the school context and its support. Order Four teachers did not adopt a package; they need to be convinced for themselves that any proposed changes were better for their students, and these teachers made that decision based on their prior experiences and by trying out ideas within their classroom. Those parts of the reform that these teachers did integrate used different practices adapted to their specific contexts, convinced other teachers in their schools of the value of the change, and maintained these changes regardless of the school support.

Exemplary Teachers

Defining exemplary teachers, finding objective criteria for “excellent personal-professional competences” (Laursen, 2005, p. 205), is hard to accomplish. In the local schools, however, these teachers are generally known by reputation among parents and school colleagues. These are the teachers who remain committed to their profession and dedicated to their students in spite of a context with considerable challenges (Day et al., 2005; Johnson, 2004; Kegan et al.,

2001; Nieto, 2003). By studying the meaning-making of these exemplary teachers, perhaps qualities of these teachers that enable them to maintain their enthusiasm for teaching “*in spite of* the constraints and *in the midst of* the slow process of systematic reform (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 27) can be identified.

Moore (1984) used the title of *Master Teacher* for describing exemplary teachers. Master teacher derives from a view of teaching as a craft, where the exemplary and experienced practitioner models and passes on the craft. Although the term *master* evokes authoritarian and masculine images, it continues to be used in education in awarding master’s degrees and in recent books (Chapin, 2009; Ryan, Cooper, & Tauer, 2008). This literature review, however, will use the term *exemplary* for this group of teachers to avoid the authoritarian, masculine, and content-expertise connotations of master.

In 1984, the discussion was about a potential new rung on the career ladder for teachers (Allen, 1987; Moore, 1984), in response to *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). In 2009, the discussion is exploring the patterns that are common for those “teachers to get up morning after morning and make a genuine, positive difference in students’ lives” (p. viii) or teachers who “provide information and inspiration in equal and abundant measure” (p. xii) as written by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. in *Teachers Have it Easy: The Big Sacrifices and Small Salaries of America’s Teachers* (Moulthrop, Calegari, & Eggers, 2005).

There are several recent collections of teacher stories, either remembrances of teachers who made a difference (Pajares & Urdan, 2008) or teachers writing about their teaching, (Nieto, 2005; Stone & Cuper, 2006). The remembered teachers are as varied as the individual authors; the teachers writing about their teaching “know that they make a difference” (Nieto, 2005, p. 11).

Beyond that, there is no consensus, no “template teachers” (Nieto, 2005, p. x): some emphasize leadership, others mentoring; still others focus on involving the community or teaching students how to learn; some make it clear that caring also involves challenging students to strive for excellence. For some, teaching is a vocation; for others it is a political response to inequities.

Is expertise in content and pedagogy characteristic of exemplary teachers? Do exemplary teachers produce gains in student learning? Four characteristics of exemplary (termed master in the original) teachers are: in-depth knowledge of content (subject specific and general), skill in teaching, ability to work effectively with students and colleagues, and producing results (Moore, 1984). Some basic qualities of effective teachers are a general education, content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, communication skills, and organizational skills (Nieto, 2005). Stronge (2007), in a review of the literature, identifies verbal ability, knowledge of teaching and learning, certification status, content knowledge, and teaching experience as factors that are prerequisites for effective teaching.

A list of the professional characteristics for the career of an exemplary teacher can be written, but such a list of the career of a teacher is not sufficient. The person in the career, the teacher as person (Kegan, 1994) is a necessary factor to consider in teacher effectiveness. Stronge (2007) reviewed the literature on the teacher as person and indicated the following characteristics of the teacher were factors: caring, fairness and respect, interaction with students, enthusiasm and motivation, attitude toward teaching, and reflective practice.

“The master teachers I have watched and known love all three: their subject, the act of teaching, and their students” (Chapin, 2009, p. 12), as they help to build human beings. This view of teaching expands beyond transmission of content and skilled behavior to the complexity of the relationship between teacher and student, and includes teaching the whole student, not just

the state content standards. On the other hand, the political terrain defines “highly qualified teachers” according to a subject-matter test and educational credentials derived from the federal No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] of 2001. Chapin (2009) does not oppose content standards and transmission of knowledge and skills; he just knows that they are not enough, a “very limited benchmark” (p. 27), and probably the easiest of three aspects of teaching that also include increasing the students’ social capital and the development of meaning. His analogy is that exemplary teachers know students need more than inert luggage to carry with them on the journey; they need the ability to change their own itinerary.

The caring and committed teachers’ stories (Nieto, 2005) likewise noted that content knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient. Writing from a critical perspective, she suggests five values of caring and committed teachers while cautioning the reader that the list is not comprehensive or applicable in all contexts: “a sense of mission; solidarity with, and empathy for, students; the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge; improvisation; and a passion for social justice” (Nieto, 2005, p. 204).

Is resiliency a characteristic of exemplary teachers? Teachers who remain resilient throughout their careers know the “importance of growing and becoming all they are capable of becoming” (Milstein & Henry, 2000, p. 54), and employ strategies such as role change, content changes, pedagogy changes, and professional development participation.

Is hope a characteristic of exemplary teachers? Fullan (1997) wrote that hope was essential in the schools, a combining of the individual voices into a community that has a vision of hope and purpose. He suggested that hope was the ability to handle emotions and to take action even when it seemed like there was reason to despair.

Is commitment a characteristic of exemplary teachers? In a study of 14 teachers in a time of imposed curriculum reform in England and Wales, Day (2000) found the teachers continued to find ways to keep their commitment to the students and to the moral purpose of education to benefit both the student and society. It is the strength of the value of commitment that enables the teachers to not only survive but grow even in difficult contexts (Day, et. al, 2005). This empirical study of 20 experienced teachers from Australia and England found that commitment to teaching was a commitment to caring for their students (making a positive difference in the learning of their students) and a commitment to ongoing learning and reflection on their teaching practice. In this study, caring was not just looking out for the well-being of the student, not just a warm relationship with the student, but also increasing the learning of their students. Commitment was both personal and professional; work and life were not separated. “Divided no more” (Palmer, 1998, p. 163) is a description for teachers who choose to honor their commitment to their students. Writing about commitment in general, Daloz, Keen, Keen, and Parks (1996) describe the double negative “they could not ‘just say no’” (p. 211) as “a profound yes” (p. 211).

Day et al.’s (2005) research suggests that if there is a conflict between what the teacher values as best for the student learning and a school reform initiative, committed teachers will find “room to manoeuvre [*sic*]” (Day et al., p. 566) to maintain their core values. Other authors support the notion that the teachers change practice only if they are convinced students will benefit (Hammerman, 2002); that teachers will resist external change that goes against their existing values (Johnson-Parsons et al., 2007; Richardson & Anders, 1994); and changes in teacher beliefs precede changes in teaching practice (Richardson & Pacier, 2001).

What is valued by exemplary teachers in their teaching work? A study of the stories submitted by exemplary and experienced teachers (N =55, 85% women, and 75% elementary) found themes of staying connected to their students, making a difference in the lives of their students, and continued learning from experiences and from their students (Nelson, 1993). These themes were not correlated with the demographic variables of gender, grade level, subject, educational degree, or years of experience.

Nieto (2003) studied experienced teachers in a diverse urban public school who were effective in *What Keeps Teachers Going?* Her intent was to build on these teachers' strengths to learn about teaching and learning. She defined teaching not as profession, but "a vocation based on love" where effective teachers respect and affirm students' identities, and care for and respect their students by having high expectations for all. According to Nieto's work, the primary reason teachers remain in teaching is a belief in the students and in the teachers' abilities to "change lives forever" (Nieto, 2007, p. 307).

The literature on exemplary teachers points to the importance of the beliefs of the teacher and a value of continued learning. Good teaching requires the teacher to have inner resources (Palmer, 1998). Yet, teacher voices often excluded from educational research (Dhunpath, 2000). The narrative study of this dissertation intends to foreground the voices of exemplary teachers and use Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental framework to probe behind the expertise, commitment, and resilient descriptions into the meaning of teaching, the ways of knowing of the teacher, and the development of the ways of knowing throughout the lifespan.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of exploring the meaning of teaching throughout the lifespan of exemplary and experienced K-12 public school teachers requires a paradigm that looks for particulars, recognizes the role of context, and values the diversity of possible meanings. The intent of the study is not to develop a generalized prescription to follow if one wishes to become an exemplary and experienced teacher, but to retain the voice of the individual teachers within their context. Therefore, a narrative inquiry within a qualitative research paradigm is the choice of method because of its fit with the meaning of teaching from the perspective of exemplary, experienced teachers who have sustained their commitment over time. Narrative inquiry makes it possible to focus on each particular and unique developmental journey, amid the common sequential pattern that is outlined by the theoretical framework of Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental model.

Research Paradigm

A qualitative paradigm, defined as “analysing [sic] concrete cases in their temporal and local particularity, and starting from people’s expressions and activities in their local contexts” (Flick, 2009, p. 21) is appropriate for this study. This statement captures the need to understand from the view of the individual in qualitative work, as contrasted to attaching a particular meaning by observing behavior. The subjective nature of the qualitative paradigm is implied, though not stated explicitly, and this subjectivity requires a reflexive and documented accounting of the inquirer as part of the inquiry process. Key assumptions of qualitative research methods are the meaning of the lived experience of the individual, the uniqueness of each individual experience, and the location of meaning within a naturalistic, complex context (Patton, 2002).

Since the purpose of this study is to understand from the view of the teacher, to investigate how the teachers in the study understand their work, how that understanding develops over time, and how the context influences the meaning of teaching, the study fits the qualitative paradigm. The study aims to “see through their eyes.” The goal is not just know about the actions and choices of the teachers, but to know the meaning behind the actions, recognize that the same action may have different meanings, and even that the same word may have different meanings.

This study also assumes, as does the qualitative paradigm, that the practice of these teachers is different because of their uniqueness. Some of their uniqueness is due to their psychological and personal history; some is social and contextual. Teachers are not generic players with subject matter expertise. Therefore, the intent of the study is not to develop a generalized prescription of an exemplary veteran teacher for others to follow, but to retain the voice of the individual teachers within their context.

The complexity of the context and the critical role of the particular context make this research question a fit with qualitative research methods. The educational process is a complex affair where decisions about teaching and learning are highly dependent on the situation. Therefore, the meaning of teaching must be explored in the naturalistic setting with its distinctive and complex contexts.

To understand the meaning of teaching requires rich, detailed, and situated information that can be acquired only through a qualitative paradigm. Teacher stories document “the richness and indeterminacy of our experiences as teachers and the complexity of our understandings” (Carter, 1993, p. 5). Inquiry that accomplishes the goal of understanding how teachers understand their practice requires detailed description not only of the story, but of the

situated context. Demographic similarities do not provide similar biographies, and even the same biographical profile does not lead to the same meaning (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

In this qualitative study, social constructivism is the underlying epistemological world view. Epistemology is defined as “*how we know what we know*” (Crotty, 1998, p. 8) or what ultimately decides what counts as knowledge (Pallas, 2001). In social constructivism, knowledge is based in and constructed from the interaction between participants in the experience and situated in the immediate context, and the context will evolve as it is shaped by experience. Knowledge is jointly constructed and located in the process of knowing, not the product. Two additional assumptions of this study derive from the social constructivism world view: meaning is located within a particular time and there are multiple possible interpretations of a lived experience.

This interpretation of reality as fluid and open to interpretation and the world as dynamic, not static (Merriam, 1991), is a fit with the constructive-developmental theoretical framework of this study. Any claim of knowledge about the meaning of teaching is situated within a particular time period and within a particular set of circumstances. Multiple possible interpretations are possible as the quest for meaning-making occurs within relationships and within a cultural context. Knowledge always has a point of view (Bredo, 2006; Bruner, 1991; Gergen & Gergen, 2004), prior cultural understandings impact the meaning-making, and the subjectivity of the inquirer must be acknowledged in a reflexive account.

The qualitative research paradigm and the social constructivist epistemology require a methodology that allows for the following elements. First, the individual teacher stories must be explored. Second, the local and particular context must be known as the setting is essential for understanding meaning of teaching. Third, the method must acknowledge that the meaning of

teaching will have changed throughout the lifespan of the teacher. Fourth, the method must acknowledge the influence of the point of view of the inquirer in the interpretation. Fifth, the method must recognize the co-construction of meaning for the participants and inquirer in the inquiry. Finally, the method must allow for the multiple and fluid interpretations that are inherent in the epistemology. Narrative inquiry is a research design that accomplishes these essential elements.

Narrative as the Design of the Inquiry

The research design of this study is narrative inquiry, one method of qualitative research. Narrative inquiry is “the study of experience as story” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006, p. 477) and an exploration of the way persons impose meaning and order on their life experiences (Bamberg, 2006). Although the foundation of narrative is lived experience, a narrative is not simply a chronological series of story events, and it is not merely a descriptive or literal account of the experience (Smith, 2000).

Though narrative and story are sometimes used synonymously in the literature, in this document a narrative is a “movement from a start point to an end point, with digressions, which involves the showing or telling of story events. Narrative is a *re*-presentation of events and chiefly, *re*-presents space and time” (Cobley, 2001, pp. 236-237) while a story is “all the events which are to be depicted in a narrative and which are connected by means of a plot” (Cobley, 2001, p. 243). Plots link story events in time and give meaning to the narrative (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

The origin of the word narrate includes *narrare*, telling, and *gnarus*, knowing, according to Bruner (2002). The narrative mode is one way of knowing (as contrasted to a logico-scientific mode): a bottom-up knowing that deals in “good stories, gripping drama, believable (though not

necessarily ‘true’) historical accounts” (Bruner, 1986, p. 13). It privileges story as the way humans make sense of their world (Bruner, 1996; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007), and is “one of the central roots” (Plummer, 1995, p. 5) for meaning-making.

The narrative constructed is not only about the meaning of a lived experience at a particular time to a particular audience. The storyteller and the inquirer are situated in a particular context influenced by their historical time, culture, and positionality. This context influences what is observed, what is filtered out, and the interpretation of the meaning of the experience by both the storyteller and the inquirer. The cultural surroundings influence both the stories and the narrative (what happened and why) and the development of the meaning over time. A narrative is “never ‘point-of-view-less’” (Bruner, 1991, p. 3). The partial, selective, and changeable representation of the lived experiences depends on the interpretation of the person who experienced it, the intended audience, and the interaction between teller and listener. Nevertheless, the interpretation must be congruent with the whole narrative (Abbott, 2002).

The questions that guide this narrative inquiry are:

1. Which, if any, of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus can be identified as current or prior meaning-making systems for these exemplary and experienced teachers?
2. What are the current meanings of teaching for these exemplary and experienced teachers? If these meanings have changed, what was the process of change as the meanings of teaching changed throughout their career? Was this process of change developmental?
3. What contextual influences have supported or hindered the teachers’ meaning-making?

Narrative inquiry is a suitable method for exploring these questions with exemplary and experienced teachers. There are three elements proposed: what happened, what does the event mean, and how did the meaning develop? These align with “an interest in people’s lived experiences and an appreciation of the temporal nature of that experience” (Elliott, 2005, p. 6) and “an interest in process and change over time” (Elliott, p. 6), two themes that are appropriate for a narrative methodology.

A narrative method is also well-suited for the determination of the meaning of teaching for the teachers and for exploring the development of that meaning. Since a narrative is “retrospective meaning-making—the shaping or ordering of past experience” (Chase, 2008, p. 64), it connects the lived experiences into a sequence and a plot, and includes the teacher’s understanding of how things are now, how they used to be, and how they should be (Feldman et al., 2004).

Because lived experiences do not stand alone in time, narrative is a particularly appropriate method for exploring development of meaning. The narrative is continuous as it connects to the past and the future from the present (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). Narrative is temporal, that is, it changes as time passes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2002). The meaning as it is presented by the teller is retrospective; it is the meaning of a past event as it is understood now and not the original meaning when the event first occurred. Instead, the present is the context for the past event (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001; Moreira, 1996) as meaning is socially constructed. Narrative is the perception and remembrance of past events that allows the storyteller to plan for the future (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004), the “past and possible” (Bruner, 2002, p. 14) – what has been, and what could be.

The narrative methodology proposed assumes an authentic sharing by the teachers within the inquiry. This is a limitation, however, since narrative is a performance (Chase, 2008; Riessman, 2002) and only a partial window to the storyteller (Hänninen, 2004). In the telling of a narrative, “there are always things left unsaid, secrets untold or repressed, skeletons kept closeted” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p. 612). The sharing by the storyteller may be a strategic communication (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) either to please the inquirer or because a hidden agenda is suspected.

Background of the Inquirer

In this study, the content of the narrative, the meaning to the teacher, and the development of that meaning over time will be in the foreground. However, my values and interests as an inquirer need some clarification, given the social constructivist epistemology of this study.

In my practice as an educator, the value of telling stories about an experience and then developing a narrative about what the experience means is clear. In dialogues among students, among teachers, and between teacher and student, stories are shared. These stories are sometimes developed into a narrative that interprets the meaning of what happened in the story- what it used to mean to me, means to me now, and possibilities the event holds for the future. In that light, I share relevant parts of my own life story.

My interest in this study began with my interest in education and support for public education. I graduated from a public high school, attended a state college for my undergraduate degree, taught in a public school for a few years, and currently work at and attend a public university. I recently completed a third term as a school director for a public school district. To

complete the work and educational history, I did obtain a master's degree from a private school and also worked at a private college in a prior career.

I was a first-generation college student in the 1970s, encouraged by both of my parents who had to leave high school to work on the farm, and by a high school teacher, Mr. Hall, who convinced me that I could do anything I chose. Without public education opportunities, I would not have had access to the learning that has enriched my life. I have met many teachers throughout my career, including my spouse, who has taught middle school for 36 years.

The meaning of my decision to get a college degree has changed over the years, in keeping with the literature on narrative as continuous and temporal. My choice to value education was initially an escape from the rural culture where the only possibility seemed to be farmer's wife if I didn't leave town! It was not far geographically from my home town to my college town, but it was a great distance culturally. Next, my educational choice was valued as the means to a career I liked that paid enough and allowed flexibility to me as a parent. Now, I value my education for what I have learned and continue to learn about myself. I have appreciated the opportunity for continued construction of my own meanings (developmental learning) as I participated in this inquiry.

For example, as part of my exploration of narrative, I interviewed a teacher in a pilot study. I must admit that I was somewhat skeptical that two one-hour conversations would have as much of an impact as the literature indicated was possible in co-construction of meaning. In a whole lifetime, how could there be that much power in such a brief encounter, especially since I had a goal of empathetic listening, not influencing her story? A recent email from that teacher made me realize how naïve I was. The teacher wrote: "Thank you for helping me reflect on my career. Because of your questions, I realized ..." (Doris [name changed], personal

communication, May 30, 2008). Additionally, not only did she realize something about which she was previously unaware, I, too, have constructed new understandings and have realized that no matter what efforts I take to minimize my role in the inquiry process, participation in the process is a lived experience for both of us.

I chose this study, not from some romantic view of teachers as heroes, but with empathy for the hard and complex work of teaching and learning, a passion for my own learning as an adult educator, and a belief in public education as essential in a democratic society. These values made it possible for teachers to share their stories authentically in the inquiry. They, and I also, constructed new meaning as they participated with me in this inquiry. “The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it” (Riessman, 1993, p. v), so as inquirer, I was aware of my own perspective (Eisenhart, 2006) and prepared to participate in a developmental journey as meaning was constructed by participation in the experience of narrative inquiry.

Participant Selection

Participants in this inquiry were selected with a purposeful sampling strategy of “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 230) in keeping with the goal of an in-depth qualitative study of the meaning of teaching. The criteria for selection were K-12 public school teachers in the state of Pennsylvania who are exemplary and experienced. A teacher was defined as experienced only if the teacher had at least 10 years of experience in the classroom in this study. Other terms in the literature are veteran teacher (Hoover, 1996) and mid-career (15 through 31 years of teaching and 35-55 years of age) teacher (George, 1992). The criteria for defining exemplary teachers were operationalized in this study by selecting participants from the teachers chosen each year as finalists for the PA-TOY award since 1998. This study assumed

that the nomination and selection for Teacher of the Year Finalists was a process that identified exemplary teachers and that the teachers meeting these characteristics provided an in-depth understanding of the meaning of teaching.

Nomination and Selection of the Finalists for the PA-TOY Award

The PA Teacher of the Year award is part of the National Teacher of the Year honors program for excellence in teaching. The first awards were given in 1952 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (National State Teachers of the Year [NSTOY], 2009). The criteria for nomination for the PA Teacher of the Year by administrators, teachers, parents, and students are established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). One teacher is chosen each year from 12 finalists. The teacher must be someone who:

Holds a valid Pennsylvania Instruction II certificate; is an exceptionally dedicated, knowledgeable and skilled individual, pre-kindergarten through grade twelve, in any public school; is planning to continue in an active teaching status; inspires students of all backgrounds to learn; has the respect and admiration of students, parents, and colleagues; plays an active and useful role in the community as well as in the school; and is poised, articulate, and possesses the energy to carry out the duties of a State Teacher of the Year. (PDE, 2010a, para. 5)

All nominations are sent to the Selection Chair of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National State Teachers of the Year (NSTOY-PA) in January of each year, divided by elementary or secondary teaching level, and sorted into one of 4 geographical regions in Pennsylvania. Former finalists for the Teacher of the Year award serve as readers for the nominations. The three teacher-readers for each of the four regions and teaching levels (matched by teaching level but never reading nominations from their own region) use a rubric to score

each application. Typically, 30 to 35 semifinalists are selected from the composite scores of these readers, with a least one elementary teacher from each region and one secondary teacher from each region among the semifinalists (L. O'Brien, 2009 NSTOY-PA Selection Chair, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

The semifinalists complete a second part of the application process by writing three essays—"their professional biographies, their community involvement, and their message as a potential state teacher of the year" (NSTOY-PA, 2008, para. 3). Three different readers score the semifinalists submissions according to a rubric; these readers are again matched by teaching level and never score a semifinalist from their own region. The composite score from this reading is added to the score from the first reading and 12 finalists are selected with a least one elementary teacher from each region and one secondary teacher from each region (L. O'Brien, 2009 Selection Chair, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

Each of these 12 finalists submits a videotape that includes an introduction of themselves, a teaching episode, and a talk to encourage people to choose teaching as a career (NSTOY-PA, 2008, para. 4). Six PDE and six NSTOY-PA members form a Selection Committee to view each videotape and score each individually without any committee discussion. This composite score is added to the prior score for each teacher (L. O'Brien, 2009 NSTOY-PA Selection Chair, personal communication, March 10, 2009).

This process for selection has been developed by the NSTOY-PA chapter over the years and has been chosen to ensure that the nominations are a local response to an invitation and that teachers do nearly all of the scoring during the selection process (N. Salvatico, 2009 NSTOY-PA President, personal communication, March 12, 2009).

Although it would strengthen my assumption that the teacher finalists are exemplary teachers if the details of the rubrics used for scoring at each step in the process were known, they are not public information. What can be said about the process of selection is that a volunteer chapter of a national organization defines the process and criteria and PDE is involved only after the finalists have been chosen. This provides some measure of protection against an imposed agenda for selection.

Sampling Strategy

The records of the PA-TOY finalists from the years 1999 through 2009 from the PDE's news release each spring were obtained. Of the 131 finalists (12 each year for the 11 years) current school contact information for 81 of the teachers was available. After obtaining research approval from the Institutional Review Board of Penn State University, each was invited to participate by a letter mailed to the school address. Within two weeks, 24 teachers agreed to meet with me for two interviews; three of them withdrew for personal reasons throughout the 2009-2010 year as the interviews were conducted. Of the 21 teacher participants, 5 of the first interviews and 7 of the second interviews were conducted by phone; the other 30 were face-to-face (see Table 1 for the detailed demographic information of the participants). Their years of experience ranged from 10 to more than 40 years and their ages ranged from the 30s through the 60s. Their years of experience are not directly related to age since six of the participants had prior careers before becoming a teacher. There were 10 men and 11 women who participated. Five of the participants taught grades K-4; 6 taught grades 5-8, and 10 taught grades 9-12. (This reflects the division of the PA-TOY applications into K-8 elementary and 9-12 secondary categories.) The 16 teachers I meet face-to-face were White; the race of the other 5 is unknown.

Table 1

Demographic Information for the Participants

Name ^a	Experience ^b	Age	Gender	Grade/subject ^c
Barbara	10	30s	Female	Elementary/special education
Benita	19	40s	Female	High school/biology
Caleb	21	50s	Male	High school/economics
Dale	40	60s	Male	High school/English
Diana	26	40s	Female	High school/mathematics
Doug	37	50s	Male	Elementary/fifth grade
Dwight	18	40s	Male	High school/English
Edward	15	30s	Male	Middle/English
Edwin	18	30s	Male	Middle/music
Eric	21	40s	Male	High school/media
Irene	30	50s	Female	Elementary/fourth grade
Madelyn	26	40s	Female	Elementary/second grade
Margo	25	60s	Female	Elementary/fourth grade
Matthew	37	50s	Male	Middle/fifth grade
Nikki	17	30s	Female	High school/English
Reta	17	50s	Female	Middle/fifth grade
Sarah	12	30s	Female	High school/English
Tonya	37	50s	Female	High school/special education
Traci	10	30s	Female	Elementary/autistic
Trent	34	50s	Male	High school/English
Vance	15	40s	Male	High school/physics

^aNames changed to protect confidentiality. ^bYears at the time of the interview.

^cAt the time of selection as a PA-TOY Finalist: Elementary = K through 4th; middle = 5 through 8th; High school = 9th through 12th grades

The school districts in which they taught ranged from rural to town to suburb to small city (NCES, 2010) and from about 2,000 students to 20,000 students (NCES, 2010). Eight teachers were in districts of less than 4,000 students; 11 teachers were in districts of 4,000 to 8,000 students, and 2 teachers were in districts larger than 8,000 students. The most diverse

district was 79% white (NCES, 2010) and the district with the highest poverty level had 41% of its students eligible for free or reduced lunches (PDE, 2010b).

It was a goal to have participants who were as different as possible demographically from each other: a mix of genders, ethnicity, locations within the state, level of experience, grade level taught, size of school, and socioeconomic status of the school. In the study, all the teachers that responded positively to the mailing were included. Of the demographics known, they did vary in all but ethnicity. This variation is a fit with a heterogeneous, maximum variation sampling (Patton, 2002) strategy, unlike other strategies which aim to determine the proportion of the population within a certain demographic or context with a particular characteristic. The goal was not to use each unique narrative as an exemplar of a demographic category, but to both preserve the uniqueness of each teacher's journey and identify any commonalities in the process of developing meaning across all demographic categories and context. Any common findings derive their significance because they arose from different genders, geographic areas, levels of experience, grade levels taught, and size and socioeconomic status of the school – a variety of participants and contexts (Patton, 2002).

Data Collection: Gathering the Data to Produce the Narrative

The method involved at least two narrative interviews (each approximately one hour long) and document analysis of the Teacher of the Year applications with the goal of placing the meaning of teaching for the teacher in the foreground. The type of interview was narrative with a goal of creating “space to express meaning” (Brenner, 2006, p. 357) and attempting to “listen people into speech” (Josselson, 2007, p. 547). However, as the inquirer, I not only listened with understanding but also actively inquired; these two roles were in tension with each other in each interview (Lahey et al., 1988). The document analysis informed the interpretation of the

narrative interviews, and triangulated the data from the interview by providing additional data that was from a previous time period. The documents in the application included the educational history of the participant; a statement of the participant's professional philosophy; views of major issues in the teaching profession; and letters of recommendation from a principal, teacher, and parent (PDE, 2010a) and three essays (NSTOY-PA, 2008, para. 3).

Within this broad plan for the interviews, I relied on some practical guidelines about effective narrative interviewing from practitioners and educators in the literature. The phases of a narrative interview are preparation, initiation, main narration, questioning, and concluding talk, according to Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000); their work is used as a framework for the data collection of this inquiry.

In a narrative interview the goal is to minimize the interviewer's influence and to keep the interview unstructured (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) so as to draw out the stories from the participant. However, this is not a "grab a recorder and get started" approach that ignores the preparation phase. The interviewer needs to be familiar with the area of interest and knowledgeable enough to interpret but careful about imposing an a priori meaning (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001; Riessman, 1993). The interviewer must treat the narrative interview as a conversation and allow the storyteller to respond to open-ended questions (Riessman, 1993). Examples of typical open-ended questions for the first and second interviews are included in Appendices A and B. This is in contrast to an interview with a question-and-answer format where the interviewer imposes a structure by selecting the topics, choosing the order, and choosing the language of the questions (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

In initiating the interview, a broad topic that involves the experience of the participant is introduced without the interviewer taking a position on the topic (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

The interviewer needs to be clear that the focus is the meaning of the experience to the person who is being interviewed (Lahey et al., 1988). In the narration phase of the interview, it is essential to listen without interruption until the participant pauses at the end of the story (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000).

In the questioning phase, the interviewer should ask open-ended questions and in doing so should avoid why questions, follow up on themes in the initial conversation using the same order and words as the storyteller, and postpone any clarification of meaning until the storyteller is finished (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The interviewer should use the vocabulary of the interviewee in developing the questions (Brenner, 2006) and keep the focus of the interview on the perspective of the interviewee. To do this requires the interviewer to avoid responses of either blame or praise since they turn the lens to the perspective of the interviewer (Clinchy, 2003).

The initiation, main narration, and questioning phases were recorded and transcribed with the permission of the participant. The concluding talk phase intentionally was not recorded. I turned the digital voice recorder off after the interview and continued the conversation for the concluding talk (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000) phase. The goal was to gather information that was not shared by the storyteller during the more formal and recorded conversation.

The data from the first interview and the document analysis were used to design a plan for the second interview. This plan was not limited to a set of predetermined questions, but included a timeline established from the first interview or a finish-the-paragraph activity with simple sentences as prompts.

Two concepts were of particular interest as the second interview was planned: any changes over time in the understanding of the meaning of teaching and the context that either

supported or hindered the teacher development. These topics were addressed in the open-ended questions of the second interview and discerned from the stories that were shared by the teachers. Were there any changes over time in the understanding of the role of teacher, of the teacher's response to the increasingly complex expectations, or to the pace of change? Did the stories told indicate a teacher who is delivering curriculum or a teacher who is creating curriculum at the time of the lived experience? Could the teacher identify how he or she knows when the teaching is just right? What was the influence of the context in the stories that are told?

Participation in this study was completely voluntary; each participant was provided an informed consent that was approved by the Pennsylvania State University Office for Research Protections Social Science Institutional Review Board. As part of the informed consent process, the participants were notified at the time of each interview that their identities would remain confidential and were asked for permission to digitally record the interview. Participants were informed that they could refuse to answer any question. Participants were also informed that they would be given the opportunity to read the resulting transcript and withdraw any portions. The participants were given the opportunity to read the narrative that was produced and comment on the inquirer's representation. Seventeen of the 21 did so. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time. Three of the 24 did so.

Data Analysis: Thinking with Stories in Producing the Narrative

This narrative inquiry produced a narrative for each teacher participant from the textual data of the interviews and documents. The role of the inquirer was to produce this narrative by telling and interpreting the teacher's lived experiences, in contrast to directly sharing in the experiences within the narrative. The inquirer was telling another's narrative, not living the stories that produce the narrative (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). This

distinction depends on whether the stories of interest have happened prior to the involvement of the inquirer or are happening as the inquirer participates in the events from which the stories of interest evolve.

A narrative inquirer uses text as data (whether the narrative previously existed or is produced in the inquiry) and must choose how to investigate it. A set of three typologies was proposed by Mishler (1995): one a focus on the sequence of the stories that are told and their relationship to the sequence of actual events; another a focus on narrative strategies, how the language in the narrative is structured; and finally, a focus on narrative function, the purpose and effect of the narrative (as it is told in a particular context) for the storyteller and the audience.

Since the question of interest is the meaning of the life events to the teacher, the narrative inquiry was not concerned with the correspondence of the narrative to the actual life experience. Either of Mishler's (1995) other two classifications are possible: a structural analysis of the text or an integrated synthesis of the whole. The former usually produces categories from the data or applies categories to the data; the latter is an attempt to understand the lived experiences and their significance and purpose as a whole unit. The goal of the inquirer is to "learn to think *with* stories" (Cruickshank, as cited in Frank, 1995, p. 23) instead of thinking about the content of the story. Though not quite this dualistic, the two classifications could be contrasted as a focus on language and a focus on the storyteller (Freeman, 2003).

Another set of typologies provides four options for the narrative inquirer. Methods of investigation may be categorical or holistic and may be of form or of content (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). The study of form considers the organization or structure of the language. What is the plot of the lived experiences (holistic form)? In contrast, what does the language structure in the parts of the narrative reveal (categorical form)? The study of content

considers the meaning of the life events for the storyteller. What is the meaning of the part in the context of the lived experiences (holistic content)? In contrast, what categories can be defined from the reduction of the text (categorical content or content analysis)?

The question of the meaning of teaching from the perspective of experienced teachers is a fit with narrative inquiry of the telling stories category (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) since the telling is in retrospect, and the stories are an “explanation that is retrospective, having linked past events together to account for how a final outcome might have come about” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 16).

The goal was not an active intent to influence or change the meaning-making of the teacher, and I, as inquirer, was not a direct participant in the lived experiences that were told. However, my role needs some clarification, since the conversation/interview was itself a lived experience with the potential for meaning-making and knowledge construction. “An interview is literally an *inter view*” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009, p. 2). In this study, however, the content of the narrative in context (i.e., the meaning to the teacher) and the development of that meaning over time were in the foreground. The methodology was designed to minimize the influence of my role as both audience and co-constructor of meaning.

Each recorded interview was transcribed. Listening to the interview before and after reading the transcription were important steps in the analysis. Hearing the voice of the teacher, with all of its paralinguistic features, again and again was an aid to understanding the meaning of the text (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000). The transcript of the first interview was interpreted to find hints of possible overall meaning to the teacher. Are there clues to “an insistent theme,” “a driving current,” and “a central preoccupation” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1994, p. 613)? This interpretation influenced the plan for the open-ended questions for the second interview.

There were three elements for me to explore in this study as the transcripts were interpreted: what happened, what does the event mean, and how did the meaning develop? The development of meaning was interpreted from the constructive-developmental theoretical framework of Kegan (1982, 1994) where the way in which the teacher balances, structures, and organizes knowledge is of interest.

The choice to think *with* stories (Frank, 1995) and use a holistic content approach (Lieblich et al., 1998) – in contrast to a focus on structure, language, and categories – is a fit for exploring the meaning of teaching for the teacher. In order to discern meaning, the narrative “must be preserved, not fractured, by investigators” (Riessman, 1993, p. 4). Parts cannot be interpreted and understood unless the whole and the context are preserved and situated within both the individual and cultural framework (Webster & Mertova, 2007).

In narratives “the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000, p. 68), and they “live beyond the sentences and events that form them” (Jovchelovitch & Bauer, 2000, p. 59). Instead of the inquirer making piles of brick as the house is dismantled, the inquirer viewed the entire house, a metaphor used by Gergen (2004).

Similarly, Alexander (1988), writing from the perspective of psychobiography in attempting to understand personality structure, considered “spontaneous recollection from memory of various aspects of life already lived” (p. 266) more meaningful than “evaluative questions” (p. 267). He recommended two approaches: letting the data reveal itself by looking for “‘principle identifiers of salience’” (Alexander, 1988, p. 269) and “‘asking the data a question’” (Alexander, 1988, p. 268) the inquirer deems as relevant.

Of Alexander’s (1988) 9 identifiers of importance, I found these 4 – primacy, frequency, uniqueness, emphasis – to be useful markers as I choose the stories and language from each

participant to include in each one's narrative. What was the first response of the participant? What themes or stories did the participant repeat within the same interview, in both interviews, in the other documentation? Conversely, did the participant indicate an important happening or understanding that was unique and different? What did the participant emphasize or verbally underline?

The technique of “asking the data a question” (Alexander, 1988, p. 268) was particularly useful in determining which of Kegan's (1982, 1994) plateaus was the world view of each participant as part of the inquiry. I asked the narrative, “What evidence supports seeing a particular plateau operating? What is the evidence that the prior or next plateau is not operating?” I determined the epistemological worldview of the speaker by interpreting the transcripts to see what the speakers knew, what the speakers knew they did not know, and what the speakers did not know they did not know (Lahey et al., 1988). I needed to look not only for evidence that supported meaning-making at a particular plateau but also look for evidence that led to a rejection of other meaning-making plateaus (Lahey et al., 1988).

This questioning method was recommended by Berger and Hammerman (2010), workshop leaders for understanding and scoring interviews from Kegan's (1982, 1994) theoretical framework. While a narrative interview is not a psychobiography or a subject-object interview, the strategy of asking the data relevant questions was useful in interpreting the transcripts and interviews and other printed documentation provided by the participants.

Verification in Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry as a qualitative method is often negatively critiqued because validity and reliability cannot be measured and because the study cannot be generalized, to which the narrative inquirer replies: “Yes, that is what was intended.” A naturalistic, authentic life

experience cannot be repeated. The life experience is so contextual that it cannot be extended from the local to the general population. The intent of a qualitative narrative study is designed to understand the individual's meaning-making and interpretation of the lived experiences, in contrast to describing the experience or investigating its correspondence to the actual events. "Words cannot be compared to worlds" (Czarniawska, 2004, p. 133). No studies are impartial; all have a point of view, and one of the strong points of narrative inquiry is that it acknowledges the inquirer is not neutral.

The critique misunderstands the intent of qualitative studies. Nevertheless, there are quality standards for qualitative studies if the functions of the standard are understood as confidence and relevance, according to Gaskell and Bauer (2000): confidence that the results are the outcome of an actual encounter and the relevance of the results is demonstrated. Only the confidence standards will be addressed in this methodological chapter; the relevance standard was addressed in Chapter 1.

The first quality criterion for qualitative data is verifiability. The inquirer must provide an account that can be verified as a trustworthy representation and interpretation of the data. This primarily requires that I provide enough detail about the methods and enough details from the data that others can decide about trusting the research. *Verisimilitude* was the term used by Bruner (1991). It must be clear to the reader that I was there – "really and fully present-physically, cognitively, emotionally" (Eisenhart, 2006, p. 574). It is not enough to provide a trustworthy representation and interpretation of the data; enough information must be provided so that the readers and public can have confidence in the study. Confidence results when the inquiry is verifiable because it is dependable, credible, and confirmable.

A second criterion is dependability. A study that is dependable is consistent, so this inquiry provides a detailed audit trail of not only the data but the inquiry process so that the reader can assess the dependability and consistency of the study. This includes a strategy of providing an account that is transparent about the methods used, the relationship between me as inquirer and the teacher as participant, and my assumptions about the research (Cortazzi, 1993). Another strategy to ensure dependability is providing an account of the inquiry that is reflexive. I reflected on and critically examined the influence of my own identity on the narrative that was produced (Elliott, 2005). A third strategy for this study was that changes in my understanding as the study evolved, the “natural history” (Erickson, 1986, p. 152) of the inquiry, were noted. All of these strategies provide detailed audits of both product and process so that consistency and dependability for the study can be assessed.

A third quality criterion is credibility, which refers to the believability of the data from the viewpoint of the participant (Taylor, 2008a). In narrative inquiry, it is important to note that credibility does not require that the narrative is an exact record or a mirror of the lived experience (Frank, 1995; Webster & Mertova, 2007). The question is not one of correspondence to the actual event, but of authentic sharing of the meaning of the experience. Credibility requires that the inquiry faithfully portrays the experience as the participant understood the past event at this particular time as shared with me as the audience (Hänninen, 2004), and it is necessary for the participants to have had a voice in assessing whether in my interpretation I got the narrative “right.”

The strategies used to ensure credibility were member checks and triangulation. Member checks occurred when each teacher had an opportunity to read the transcript of the interviews and agree or disagree with the representation of her or his words. Each teacher also had the

opportunity to read the narrative that was produced from the transcripts and other documentation and assess the believability of my interpretation. Triangulation of data sources, collecting and interpreting data at different times and with different qualitative methods (Patton, 2002), occurred with three encounters with the teacher for data collection: two interviews were conducted and interpreted, and the documentation from the Teacher of the Year application was read as a third snapshot of the teacher.

A fourth quality criterion is confirmability. If other inquirers and readers choose to do so, can the interpretations and findings be confirmed, that is, can another person corroborate the findings? To provide confirmability, the findings in this inquiry are supported by providing detailed examples and by maintaining an audit trail of the data collection and methods of interpretation. Any themes identified as the narrative was produced appeared frequently in the transcripts and provided unity within the narrative to meet the quality criteria of correspondence to the data and coherence within the data (Riessman, 1993). Enough detail from the transcripts was provided with the findings so that that the reader can see the “stories apart from their analysis” (Riessman, 2002, p. 701). The richness and depth of the data was maintained (Brenner, 2006; Malterud, 2001) to make it possible to confirm the findings.

However, multiple interpretations are inherent in narrative inquiry, and in exploring the “ordinary lived experience” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 46) of teaching, there cannot be certainty in interpretation. Narrative depends on the storytellers, the time, the context, and the audience. In a different time, in a different context, with a different inquirer, in a different place, and for a different purpose, a different interpretation and a different text would be written. In a rigorous qualitative study, however, this adds depth and increased understanding and should not be understood as a deficit (Malterud, 2001).

One strategy for confirmability is to critique the narrative by including a category for “responses that don’t fit” (Clinchy, 2003, p. 45) and providing examples from the data that do not support the findings as well as those that do (Eisenhart, 2006). Any interpretation of the data that results in “the Hollywood plot,” the plot where everything works out well in the end” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 142), is suspect.

So, for this narrative inquiry to be verifiable, it must be faithful to the fieldwork experience, the choices in interpretation must be transparent to the reader, the evidence must be comprehensive, and I, as the inquirer, must be aware of my own perspective (Eisenhart, 2006). The account of the inquiry must therefore be transparent and reflexive (without becoming my autobiography!). Riessman (1993) models a way to address this quality concern in the preface to *Narrative Analysis* which begins “The construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it. So..., I begin by locating myself and the contexts that shaped the volume and authorize its point of view” (p. v). Therefore, I was aware of the influence of my own social and cultural perspective and the social and cultural perspectives of the participants, without making it the primary focus of the study (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Warren & Webb, 2007). Examining the macrostructure as part of the context was not precluded in the narrative inquiry; instead narrative inquiry foregrounds the lived experiences and how they are understood by the individual.

Dependability, credibility, and confirmability have been proposed as goals in the inquiry to accomplish the task of verifiability, which is one task to address in establishing confidence in qualitative studies. A second task of transferability remains in qualitative narrative inquiry (in lieu of the confidence standard of generalizability in quantitative research). Transferability is the degree to which information produced in the study can be applied beyond the study (Malterud,

2001). The degree to which the findings can be transferred to other contexts will need to be determined by the reader.

To assist the reader in this determination of transferability, detailed and rich description of the context of the study and background of each participant will be provided. The study design also provides detail of the assumptions of the study and the participant selection strategy – purposeful sampling and maximum variation. This information will also assist the reader in determining transferability.

The aim of the study is to keep the study focused on the research questions, to be reflexive and transparent about assumptions and methods, to look for alternate possible interpretations, and therefore, to provide dependable, credible, and confirmable findings for the specific context of the study. The aim of the study is also to provide enough evidence that the reader can decide the degree of transferability to other contexts.

Summary

The question of the meaning of teaching for experienced teachers who have sustained their commitment over time is a fit with narrative. Understanding what happened, what the event meant in their teaching, and how that meaning developed over time requires narrative inquiry for this complex activity that involves the teacher as a professional and as a person.

The narrative method used gathered the teachers' stories by interviewing (and document analysis) and then produced a narrative that linked these stories together. The method was a holistic content approach with the goal of preserving the meaning of the whole among the many parts. The quality standard of confidence is determined by the trustworthiness, dependability, credibility, confirmability, and transferability of the inquiry. The method used was awareness, "*wakefulness*" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p.182), of doing narrative inquiry where the

question of interest fits the interpretive paradigm, the influence of the social and cultural surroundings on both the telling and interpretation of the story is clear, and the difference between the lived story and the representation of it is understood.

Even though I planned to minimize my role in the interviews, the interview was a lived experience for the teacher and me. As such, I, as the inquirer, always had the roles of audience and co-constructor of meaning. As illustrated by the vignette that began this chapter, I was an influence on future meaning-making, and I certainly had my own meaning-making influenced.

CHAPTER 4: NARRATIVES AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter contains the narratives compiled from the data collected from 21 participants. Each participant was one of the 12 PA-TOY finalists each year from the years 1999 through 2009. Each was interviewed twice throughout the 2009-2010 academic year using a narrative interviewing style. Fifteen of the participants also provided the inquirer with the documents they submitted as part of the PA-TOY application process. The two or three data sets for each participant were compiled into a narrative for each one, and then several reflections relevant to the research questions were added. I have selected and grouped each teacher's responses into a narrative. I have preserved the language of each teacher in each narrative; the selection of the phrases and sentences from the transcript, the grouping of these into paragraphs, and the arrangement of the paragraphs are my interpretation of the meaning of teaching for each participant, as faithfully as I can convey my understanding of each one's commitment. Chapter 3 provides more detail of the methodology used in developing the narrative and reflections.

I have shared these narratives (not the reflections) with the participants, and 17 of them have responded that the narrative authentically represented her or his commitment to teaching. The other four have not replied.

The narratives are grouped according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) meaning-making systems (see Table 2). The meaning-making plateaus are identified as socialized, a middle region between socialized and self-authoring, self-authoring, or self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming. Kegan's plateau of instrumental meaning-making is not represented in this group of narratives (see Table 3). Additionally, the teachers in the self-authoring plateau are characterized as either enthusiastic or resolute.

In grouping these participant narratives into the meaning-making systems, I am mindful of the risk to emphasize the fit to a category instead of the unique person, to focus on "tables more than the people" (Daloz, 1999, p. 42) and have, therefore, preserved the language of the participant in the narratives. It is my hope that my interpretation of the most likely meaning-making plateau, however, will provide a framework to the reader for understanding the application of Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory to these narratives. I contend that these narratives provide a glimpse into the structure of the meaning-making of the teacher participant, although narrative interviewing is a different technique from the subject-object interview (Lahey et al., 1988) typically used by investigators using Kegan's theory.

The metaphor of traveling from one place to another illustrates the different plateaus and is perhaps a fit with the developmental bridge metaphor of Kegan (2000) which described developmental movement as "the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly more elaborate bridges" (p. 60). I extend this bridge metaphor to consider the learner walking toward

Table 2

The Narratives' Characterizations into Kegan's Developmental Plateaus

Plateau	Count	Names ^a
Socialized ^b Following one another on the trail	2	Eric, Traci
Between socialized ^b and self-authoring ^b Deciding which trail to follow	2	Matthew, Tonya
Self-authoring ^b Creating a new path	14	
Enthusiastic		Benita, Caleb, Dale, Diana, Edward, Reta, Sarah, Trent, Vance
Resolute		Doug, Irene, Madelyn, Margo, Nikki
Self-authoring ^b with a hint of self-transforming ^b Exploring new ways to travel	2	Dwight, Edwin
Unclear	1	Barbara

^aNames were changed to protect confidentiality. ^bKegan & Lahey (2009) p. 16-17.

the developmental bridge. Is the teacher following another hiker on the trail (socialized)? Is the teacher deciding which trail to follow (middle region between socialized and self-authoring)? Is the teacher either enthusiastically or resolutely creating a new path (self-authoring)? Is the teacher exploring ways other than hiking to travel (self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming)?

Table 3

Rubric to Examine Kegan's Developmental Plateaus

Plateaus	Socialized ^a	Self-authoring ^a	Self-transforming ^a
	Other-focused self ^b	Reflective self ^b	Interconnecting self ^b
	Following one another on the trail	Creating a new path	Exploring new ways to travel
Voice	Adopts voice of another (person, organization, model)	Internal voice; sense of mission	Own voice is one of many possible constructions
Authority	Implements decisions	Manages self; expects a voice in decisions	Sees the ability to influence structure
In the classroom	Delivers what is required	Self-creates what is needed	
Concerns of importance	Protecting relationships; receiving confirmation from others	Maintaining own integrity	
Success	An outcome measured from an external standard or others expectations	An outcome defined by self and context	Participation in the process, not defined by an outcome
Learning	Developing expertise; changing behaviors to fit the model	Creating knowledge; providing tools for lifelong learning	Questioning what one thinks is known

^aKegan & Lahey (2009) p.16-17. ^bDrago-Sevenson (2010) p. 40.

Narratives from the Socialized Plateau – Following Another on the Trail

The two narratives in this section characterize the teacher participants as within a socialized meaning-making plateau according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) framework and use the metaphor of hikers following one another on the trail.

Eric: Achieving Lexus Standards

I left high school, went straight to college, and I had a 4-year degree in communications, and then . . . I received an additional certification in [media]. [I] worked in broadcast television for 5 years for a number 1 station . . . and saw robotics making a big impact on . . . the number of people needed, and I went back to school. My main sight was on acquisition of a master's degree, but I went into education more or less just to try out going back to college. Ended up, I did very well and I enjoyed it, and I had a lot of encouragement from professors . . . [and] I had confirmation along the way that I was doing it relatively correctly. And maybe by comparison to the rest of that group, as well as anybody or better So I stuck with it. I actually was hired into education right out of television – 21 years ago.

There are very, very, very few people qualified to do what I do . . . within the realm of education. I'm in high demand as a teacher [of communication media]. That ultimately helps you in your self-esteem. It gives you a whole lot different perspective on your work. I came out of an era, out of the Rust Belt, where steel industries closed and a lot of the supporting industry closed, and it was a tight job market I've probably had 25 different distinct job moves from the time I was 13 until I was 24. Part of it [a job teaching] is the security of . . . a job to go to, you don't want to jeopardize that.

What I do is a whole lot more valuable now than whenever I was pushing the camera around a studio. I really enjoyed the adrenaline rush of day-to-day broadcasting, but . . . when I

see students come to me and need help, get help, pick up a skill, advance it on their own, come back. . . . At some point, it becomes practical and important and they apply it, and you see them kind of light up. They're just beaming with excitement for something they were able to do and learn to do and figure out; that happens every day. Well, that's kind of like an adrenaline rush— [a] little mini-rejuvenation.

Where I have students now is my personal tabulation. The [former] student response . . . it's particularly rewarding. Four, 5, 6 years down the road they call me and say, "I've done it [career success]" Those kind of milestones . . . well, there's my evidence. That's — nothing beats that. That's the top. [Yet] at some point, you need to hear back from the educational institutions that you're sending kids off to and get an affirmation from them; and then you need to hear affirmation from the job market; and you need to hear affirmation from administrators; and the capstone is whenever you start to receive local, state, and national recognition for what you do. . . .

[In this district] we want to be giving them Lexus standards . . . but at the state level, we are only required to do Ford Focus level. My goal was delivering They gave me a challenge at the very beginning and said, "Here's what we want to see come out of this program. Can you deliver based on that?" Well, that was, at that point, that was my focus. How do you know you're meeting the mark? How do you know you're delivering the product or the outcome that's expected, because that's not been typical of education to establish that?

I remember one time going into the assistant superintendent's office . . . and I said, "You had a vision in mind. You had a result in mind. Are you seeing what you wanted to see, or do I need to make alterations?" I wanted to know. Well, then I got a confirmation, so it let me be more at ease with what I was doing in the classroom every day. [If] we look back at the classical

model of what does it mean to be a principal – a principal classically is identified as a master teacher. Well, yes, I want a master teacher to tell me how I'm doing. If the administration's popping in everybody's room and they're writing, "Good job," on the board and leaving, it doesn't tell you anything. But if you get some honest, direct feedback and criticism, it becomes incredibly valuable.

How you're perceived and how you're valued in your job . . . that has a lot to do with your performance level. If you don't perceive you're valued and what you're doing is right or being considered – I guess being valued is really the best word – properly or fully, it does have an impact on your performance, and you're not maybe as willing to take chances or you're maybe not as willing to get out front, and maybe even to lead, etc., if you don't feel you're on solid footing. . . .

This is something that I try to emphasize with my students: where does the confirmation of what you do come from? Where does the value come from? [If] we give everybody in a class a certificate that says "Best Student" – can we all be the best student, and according to whom? When I talk to my kids, "You want to know how well you're doing, don't ask mom or dad, don't ask your teacher, ask the people outside your environment. When they validate that what you're doing is good, then that should count for something." The validation that I encourage my students to seek is validation from outside sources and higher authorities.

The challenge was bringing my level of expectation and thinking down to reality for a student. . . . So I came at it really with the expectation of, "We're going to do this the correct way. We're gonna do it at the level of taste and sophistication that a professional would do." But what I got was the highest level of achievement my students were capable of. The expectation I set for the students – how it's done in an actual [work] environment.

I expect the most from them. How can I expect that without bringing the most? I expect the best from them; I have to expect the best out of myself. How do I know I've reached the best? Just because you had a success doesn't mean you quit – [I have] continued to develop and continued to reach and continued to strive. In experience, I can say I think all of life, every bit of life, is a trade-off. I think any one of us can be anything we want to be if we're willing to give whatever it is that it takes.

I am, by nature, an inquisitive person. I want to know how things work, and that's what I teach my students largely. I tend to be concrete, linear, sequential in my thinking, and that tends to be the way I teach. I teach things sequentially. I try to start at a common understanding point and work up from that in a linear fashion. However, my personal interests, my personal hobbies, my personal life, are very different from what I do, and that doesn't have a lot of impact in the way I teach. So . . . there is a huge overlap in my personality, in my thinking, in my understanding of people and the way I interact with people. At the same time, I have a whole portion of myself that is very, very, very walled off from education and from my classes and my students.

I think there are education heroes out there, but I think they're more often overlooked. There are educators who day in and day out never receive – I mean, they're truly outstanding. They're giants in our field, and they are never recognized. And someone who has a modicum of talent, but gets really good marketing, gets heralded.

I don't really personally hold a lot of dedication to the profession. I think what holds my dedication . . . is the students and the outcomes. People carry the banner of education as a profession without any regard for the real reason why we're in the classroom. I think it's to promote – it's to better the quality of the students' lives that sit in front of us every day. I'm here

to do the best job I can possibly do to get the best results out of the students that I have before me. I hold anybody who teaches in high regard because of the magnitude of what it is you're doing. You are controlling and shaping and forming lives.

Getting the job title is one thing; living up to the expectations is another. And if you're gonna do it, it's not going to be easy, and it's not gonna be 9 to 5, and it's not gonna be, "Oh, it's my dream job." If you're not panicky at moments and sweating bullets at moments and scared half to death at moments, then I don't think you're putting everything into it that you need to.

Reflections for Eric. Eric has taught communication media for 21 years in a high school that wants to deliver the Lexus model, not the Ford model, of education. He left a career in the television business to "try out" returning to college in education, where he both excelled in and enjoyed the work. From his Rust Belt heritage and his prior career experience, he appreciates the security of his teaching position. Knowing that the quality of his work is valued gives him "solid footing" for continued challenges and growth. Thus, he welcomes, seeks, and needs an assessment of his and his students' work by others, those with professional expertise inside education and more importantly, those outside of education in industry and higher education.

His commitment is not to the profession of teaching, but to the kids - equipping them with needed skills, expecting the most from them, "controlling and shaping and forming" lives. The day-to-day interaction with his students is "an adrenaline rush," and hearing the success stories of his former students is "the top."

Eric sees the world from a socialized plateau. He seeks validation of his own and his students' achievements from local, state, and national organizations. He needs confirmation that he is delivering the best, the Lexus standards, that his district's administration wants to see. Eric can do a better job when he knows that his efforts are valued by these important others. He

knows he has made a difference in his students' lives when he hears about their achievements and technical expertise in the communications and media careers. From this socialized plateau, Eric fits comfortably and securely within his school culture and subject area context of external standards to measure success, of learning as developing content expertise, and of following or exceeding the administration's expectations.

Traci: Excelling in Teaching Autistic Students

I knew as a child [that I wanted to teach]. In high school, I started working with a student with . . . significant cerebral palsy, in a wheelchair, nonvocal; he was 8 years old. At that time I knew, "Okay, special ed is what I want to do."

I actually went to [Name of University] undergrad. I did [both] elementary and special education . . . certificates. I'd always been a reader and a writer and thought, "I might as well do the secondary English too . . ." So I got triple certification. I'm a person who constantly likes to learn and better myself and develop myself. Now [I am] working on my special ed supervisory papers and then a Ph.D. School districts are starting to have autism supervisors, and I think that is . . . a next step for me. I also really, really, really would like to open my own clinic some day, so . . . I could basically . . . run the show how I think best . . .

I think I learned more in [my first] year than . . . during my 4 years of college A situation would come up; I might intervene one way and think to myself afterwards, "The next time . . . I'm going to try something different." And so you learn from day to day what works, what doesn't. Also . . . I would lean on [other] people. My [assigned mentoring] teacher happened to be a learning support teacher who had been there for many, many, many years.

For the most part . . . [that first year was a] little bit of chaos. In my classroom you would see kids at some point engaging in some kind of tantrum behavior. Part of the process in

autistic support is figuring out why . . . , what it is they're trying to achieve . . . , [but] the first year, I was more concerned about getting myself situated I remember going home and crying and saying, "I just can't do this. I don't know what to do with these kids." That first year was a very, very tough year. I wasn't as confident as I am now in my skills.

I wanted to stay, and I wanted to get better. I had to persist and carry on and make it successful. I was thinking, "If I'm struggling with these kids and . . . a lot of other people are [too], maybe I can consider being in the forefront of the treatment of kids with autism in a public school and my experience can maybe help somebody else in the future."

Now, 10 years later, I think you would see a well-oiled machine. I can walk away from this classroom . . . and it will run just as effectively as it does when I'm here. Just through experience and exposure to different kids and a lot of training . . . I've learned how to maneuver what needs to happen in an autistic support classroom – and not only maneuver it, but maneuver it fluently. Different aspects all work together and gel to make it a classroom.

You learn a lot through teaching and modeling . . . having somebody who is already doing [the same thing] watching you So that's been a huge part. A consultant . . . put me in a chair and [said], "That was great how you did that. This wasn't so great. This is what you need to do next time." [That's] taking training to another level, and I think that's what makes you a really effective teacher. (In the world of autism and behavior analysis we refer to working with a student as "in the chair.")

We've actually become a model independent site . . . for the PDE. Receiving that status was really awesome for me. It's to the point now where . . . families are moving into our district for our autistic support program. Now, the administration is trying to prevent . . . an overload of kids with autism . . . [and is] telling me, "What are you doing? Quit talking about it!" That's

kind of frustrating to me. [I am] . . . where I wanted to be at the beginning. I created this program that's effective and that the autistic community is going wild about. It's, "Do you want me to . . . NOT excel and just do mediocre things with students? What is the purpose of education here?" It really, really tears at my heart strings. I just try to focus on the kids that I have right now.

The approach that we use in my classroom . . . is the field of applied behavioral analysis. I'll say, "Okay, let's figure out why it's happening in the first place. Let's not reinforce it any longer. Let's reinforce alternative behavior." [We have started] implementing these principles with typical kids who . . . have some behavior problems [and also] . . . emotionally disturbed kids It's effective. This past school year I actually helped [my principal] to develop a school-wide behavior support plan [where] everything we do is rooted in . . . applied behavior analysis.

I think a lot of people look at [severely autistic children] and write them off and say, "They really can't learn anything . . . just keep them happy." I just don't see that as acceptable. I think they are capable of learning. You just need to know how to teach them. They definitely can learn . . . life skills. They can have lives that are meaningful. It's exciting to be able to . . . better their lives. Having the opportunity to help families get through . . . that is really important to me too. I want their families to be able to have as normal a family [as possible]. I do a lot of stuff in the home settings of our kids. So when I'm typically done with work, I go into the kids' homes. I don't get paid extra for it.

I want to be the best autistic support teacher that exists in the United States or the world. I want to be the one who can do things with these kids that nobody else can do. I need to be in a job . . . where I'm making a difference and I'm being effective. [When] you're working with

kids that most people don't want to work with, and you're making a difference, that's really powerful, to be able to do things with kids that a lot of [other] people . . . haven't been able to accomplish. It makes me really happy and excited

When I'm at home, a lot of times the work comes with me. Teaching is so much a part of who I am. It's very hard for me to separate the two. I set goals; I need to achieve them. I'm a perfectionist. I don't think there is ever a point where you know there is everything there is to know. You may have been able to teach this child X, Y and Z, but now you want to teach them A, B and C, and so you are constantly pushing to continually grow and develop. I'm never satisfied. I think that is probably a driving force behind my dedication.

[Also], I couldn't excel in what I do if I didn't love kids with disabilities; I just find them funny and intriguing. As I mentioned before, it's just the kids that I work with (most people would just walk by . . .). The fact that I can do something to make their lives be a little more productive is really, really powerful.

Maybe [teachers usually] stay away from the word *power* [because it can] mean an overbearing force and has this connotation of being in charge . . . and of being in control . . . [or] because . . . it's almost scary to talk about. It's really hard to [realize] that you are such an influence That being said, I do think that teachers have . . . the power to make a difference You can either choose to better that child's life or you can choose to just be mediocre and just settle for the status quo with a student.

As a teacher you do have days where you struggle I'm physically tired at times – that . . . bogs me down. Sometimes administration asks you to do something [because of] a lack of knowledge of behavior analysis. That really bothers me and eats away at me a little bit.

For example, one of my students was having [bathroom] accidents on the bus ride on the

way home and I was told I needed to come up with a plan . . . , and my response was, “I cannot do that until you put me on the bus [to] observe and . . . analyze his behavior.” Earlier in my career I don’t think I would have spoken up about it, because I just wasn’t as confident [Now] I know what should be done, and I have to do what is right. I can’t just tiptoe around that anymore, and if it makes people angry with me, then it makes people angry.

The other experiences . . . definitely outweigh . . . those kinds of days. [When] one of my students . . . first came into the classroom . . . if you touched any of his things, he didn’t want them anymore. [However] he really loved when we would plug in [a Christmas tree], so we taught him to sign “tree.” He was at his grandma’s house . . . , and he wanted the tree to be plugged in, and . . . he signed, “tree.” That was the first time he had ever communicated with his grandma! Here is this little boy . . . who couldn’t ask for things that he wanted He’s improving, and he is learning; he is benefiting; it is benefiting the family; he’s communicating instead of tantruming. I was the one who taught him how to ask for things, when no one in the past was able to, so he encompasses all the things that get me going.

Reflections for Traci. Traci is driven by a determination to excel in her classroom and beyond with students who are severely autistic, to teach them to communicate instead of tantruming. She has 10 years of experience and envisions herself moving to supervision of other teachers and then to managing her own clinic some day. She delights in making progress with the students that no one else has been able to achieve. She uses a behavioral analysis model in her teaching and during 10 years of teaching has developed as a teacher from the modeling of experienced teachers in her first years of teaching, her formal education, and from her own practice.

She is a fierce advocate for the potential of severely autistic children and “speaks up’

rather than “tiptoes around” her administration as needed. She intentionally uses her power and her knowledge to improve the lives of children and families that others would “write off.” She not only wants to make a difference for her students and their families; she needs to make a difference to find meaning for herself in her work.

Traci has developed expertise in applied behavioral analysis for the teaching of autistic children. She has learned through her practice and as others have modeled to her and advised her on its use.

Traci functions from a socialized plateau in adhering to this model as the authority for her decision-making in the classroom. Her growth over the past ten years has been in more efficiently, effectively, and successfully implementing this model in an autistic classroom that has gone from chaos to a well-oiled machine. Her classroom is a model site for the state and something the autistic “community is wild about.” She has recently extended the model to a school-wide support plan.

Traci is so convinced of the value of applied behavioral analysis that she adheres to it when the administration asks her to do something that doesn’t fit the model and because of her success the administration has adapted its expectations so that she can do so. The observed changes with autistic children have made it possible for her to influence practices within her local school and beyond. She has recently extended the model to a school-wide support plan.

Narratives from Between the Socialized and Self-authoring Plateaus – Deciding Which

Trail to Follow

The two narratives in this section characterize the teacher participants as between a socialized meaning-making plateau and a self-authoring plateau according to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) framework and use the metaphor of hikers deciding which trail to follow.

Matthew: Teaching as a Selfish Act

I think that I decided that I was cut out for it [teaching]; my Mom and Dad were both teachers, all my aunts were teachers. Imagine being an elementary-aged boy and looking forward to spending a day off school by going to your my parents' classrooms! Now, both my sisters are teachers; my daughter is just graduating as a teacher Some of it is in the family. I think it was a natural thing for me. I love kids and . . . I have never regretted it.

When I was out with my parents when we were younger, I loved the respect that I saw that my parents got when they were out in public. So, I don't think I am doing anything all that extraordinary. They were great models for me. They certainly, my dad especially, had a tremendous passion for what he did. To this day . . . he passed away a few years ago, but people that I see . . . [say to me], "Your Dad, he's the reason I'm a history teacher." I wish I had a dollar for every time someone told me that.

It [my first year] was great. It was absolutely great. It was one of my favorite years. I was lucky to be in a school with a bunch of young fellows. There were a lot of guys in the school and they were kind of crazy in a good sense. Very passionate about school and creativity and doing neat things and having fun, and I really attribute most of what I do today in terms of my teaching style to the influence they had on me. I remember just really liking it. I don't know that I did anything spectacular in terms of what I taught. Like I said, I was learning; I was only 21 years old.

It's just a passion. It truly is a passion. It is something I learned from my parents. If you are going to do something, you are going to do your very best. And I really think that is one of my biggest strengths. And I just feel that now it just gets better all the time. I mean, there is just so much good stuff I can do, and I work with fantastic people, and it is just the passion that I

really love what I do. If you're not willing to give it your best, then do something else. That has always been my attitude.

It [teaching] is kind of a selfish motive. It's self-esteem. When you do something well and you like what you are doing, it makes you feel good about yourself. And I try to impart that to my students. You know, you have no idea how good I feel, how good you will feel if you do your best. It is such a good thing for my self-esteem. The stories. The smiles. There are days that I say I can't believe I'm getting paid for this. I still say that.

And when I'm teaching history and the kids are excited it makes me feel so good. So from that perspective it is kind of selfish, because it makes me feel good. Probably like the feeling of being hooked on heroin. You want that high. And to get that high, you've got to teach up to this level That's what I try to do.

I am doing what I am cut out to do and I am only getting better at it. I don't feel I am wearing out. You know, people talk about the youthfulness and creativity of the young teacher, but the experience of a veteran teacher. [They think] there is somewhere in the middle of their career where there is an apex, where they are both at their max. But I think that what I am still bringing is that my enthusiasm is not gone. My experience has gotten better; my commitment has gotten stronger; and my enthusiasm is . . . [gesturing an upward line]. Just the other day, I was sitting there in my classroom, excited, and thinking, "This is so cool that I can still do this." Everyone talks to me like I am some geezer. Thirty seven years. And I tell them that John McCain, if he had been elected – I'd have to teach 50-some years to be his age just when he's starting his job as President.

I was involved for many years with a legislation committee . . . and learned you have to establish relationships. They all said the same thing. You don't burn your bridges; you don't

say things you will later regret. And I'm driving home and it hit me like a ton of bricks. And it really changed my whole philosophy of teaching and of life. If I can be nice to a politician I don't like, I can certainly be nicer to my wife, and my kids, and my students. By developing and cultivating relationships. So, I try to cultivate relationships for each of my students. You know, starting from day one . . . I am trying to build relationships. By nurturing and developing a meaningful and personal relationship with each and every one of my students, I have become a far more effective educator. And by the same sense, I am trying to be careful with what I say so that I don't damage those relationships. And I attribute a lot of that to just the change in my mindset that I had. Establish relationships and then be careful. They are tenuous things.

I've seen so many things come and go. We just had our inservice a few weeks ago The guy said, "How many of you think this is just another trend?" And I wanted so much to He was doing such a good job, but it is another trend. I'm sorry. I think people [experienced teachers] do what they know works. I think I have a really good sense for knowing what works and what is it effective. Are there things I can learn? Yes, there definitely are. I think that we are wise enough to pick and choose what we know works and not just get on every bandwagon that comes down the road. That's what administrators tend to do. They tend to . . . "Oh, you got to do this, and in your lesson plans, I better see this" and that's the main thing that bothers me about the whole No Child Left Behind. A lot of teachers couldn't adjust. A lot of people just turned into drillmasters. Teachers that used to be creative and used to have fun and used to . . . now they are so paranoid about these tests that And if it's not fun for the teacher, it's not going to be fun for kids.

Nobody became a teacher to get rich, and nobody became a teacher to claw their way to the top. There is no top. You are a teacher. I am doing the same thing I was 37 years ago.

However, I have enjoyed many priceless experiences in my career. So, for you to say if I dangle this carrot out in front of you – you’ll get this money if your test scores come up – you are telling me that I am not already giving my best. And I am insulted by that. I am the last out of the building. School ends at 2:30. I am usually there until 5:30. I don’t think it’s fair to judge on test scores. Those children in your classroom, every one of them is different, their environment, their home lives, their motivations are different.

Like I said, most of the rewards are not monetary. The greatest reward . . . is to be told by present or former students that I have . . . made a real difference in their lives. The opportunity to shape lives. I just have a whole bunch of papers that I collect. I have letters from students. I have emails from parents. My bag of things. I go into my little file and I look at my letters once in a while and I think about . . . and that stuff truly does kind of give you energy sometimes, you know. Sometimes you forget why you’re in it, what’s important about it. Sometimes those meaningful experiences can really come back and help you get through the tough times.

It was 1982. And I got a letter from a mother: I just want to tell you [my son] was killed in a car accident this summer down in Florida. I just wanted you to know that he always asked about you. And every time he came home from Florida, he always wanted to know, “Have you seen Mr. M; how is Mr. M?” And I put the letter down and I realized that I didn’t know who this kid was. And I started crying. It just hit me. And that’s the point when I realized – Wow, what a powerful profession I am in. You know, when this kid, when I apparently meant that much to him, and I didn’t even know who he was. That, and that other thing that I told you about with the – you know, the relationship thing. Those were two really powerful moments that really . . .

I still think about both of them all the time. Things like that get you through sometimes and they really motivate you to do your best.

Reflections for Matthew. Matthew is a middle school history teacher in a rural and economically depressed school district. He began teaching in his hometown when he graduated from college and has taught for 37 years. Matthew attributes his commitment to teaching as partly inherited (natural), partly modeled by his parents, partly learned from experience, and partly maintained by rewards he receives from the relationships with his students.

He has maintained his passion and enthusiasm because he is “hooked on the high” of kids excited about learning, the relationships he has with them, and the reward of knowing he has made a difference in their lives. This so impacts his self-esteem that he describes his teaching as a selfish act.

Matthew is characterized as functioning from the middle region between the socialized and self-authoring plateaus. From a socialized view, Matthew positions himself within a life cycle of giving and receiving - when he gives, someone (he, a loved one, the community, or the nation) will sometime receive. These others are most important to Matthew for the relationships he has with them. His parents were important models and his memory of them still guides his decision-making.

Matthew strives for excellence in his teaching within the classroom and defines that excellence from a self-authoring plateau. He laments another trend since he has seen so many come and go, but he is able to teach in his classroom as he chooses in spite of the latest trend, since teaches within a district and community that supports and respects his work. He does not function, however, as a change agent within the local system as he protects his relationships as a first priority.

In the broader state and national view of public education, he considers the prospect of merit pay insulting since he is already doing his best and he has seen creative teachers become drillmasters under the No-Child-Left-Behind test paranoia. Matthew, however, has not taken that route and sees himself as still getting better at the craft of teaching and still growing in both commitment and enthusiasm after 37 years.

The focus of his teaching is his classroom and each individual student within it where he cultivates a relationship with each one, models the value of striving for excellence, and shares the fun of learning.

Tonya: Balancing the Ying and Yang of Teaching

In the 60s, [for] women - if you wanted to be in the medical field, you were going to be a nurse. So I volunteered at a hospital . . . in the welfare ward. [Because of] just despicable conditions [and] the ways in which the nurses were . . . treated . . . by the doctors, I thought, "This isn't for me!" I took catalogs from . . . colleges . . . and I saw . . . Special Education [and thought] multiple handicaps, genetic, oh, that's kind of medical It just evolved.

I'm retiring at the end of this year [after] 37 years [from the high school]. I've taught all the major subjects [to both] ED [emotionally disturbed] and LD [learning disabled] populations. I . . . like working with the [different] populations of students. I've taught at middle, intermediate, and high schools, always in this district. All the different [classes] have kept me from being bored. I just love a challenge, and you're not going to find a greater challenge than special education.

I started [teaching] in 1973. I was teaching the mentally retarded population, which is what it was called then. All the disabilities were lumped together; I started with 21 in my class; they were all reading levels . . . up through eighth grade. I had very high functioning LD kids,

emotionally disturbed [kids], and [kids] very limited intellectually . . . and then physical handicaps, too. I cried just about every night. I really didn't feel like there was anywhere to turn I couldn't believe the difference between what I had been prepared for and . . . the reality. My materials? The boxes around the perimeter of the room that . . . other teachers had gotten rid of. Curriculum? Just keep them under control.

What I was going to teach and how I was going to teach it? I basically just figured it out myself — individualized instruction [for the 21 kids]. Even to say it now it sounds intimidating! I really had to . . . find my own way; sometimes that is the best anyway I wasn't about to give up. It wasn't my personality. I wasn't going to walk out on these kids 'cause that's what they expected and wanted. They had gotten rid of other teachers before. But, it wasn't happening! I always finish what I start

I really got involved with the kids; [the] kids begin to confide in you. I had a girl that first year who was being raped by her father; a cerebral palsy young man who was bright . . . but really had some physical . . . issues. My heart broke for them. They just needed someone to help them. I just really started to feel like . . . this is something I can feel good about doing — once I figured out what I was doing [laughing].

[In another class] a boy . . . was very dyslexic. I had him all four years. My biggest role was . . . giving him a safe place . . . [and] talking him through it when he wanted to give up [He] just really had a struggle for his whole life. It was a [challenge] knowing when to be nurturing and supportive and when to say, “Okay, fine, sit there and sulk . . .” and walk away. Knowing when to do that and when you couldn't do that with him . . . was a real balancing act. I can still see that kid with his head down on the desk and tears running down his cheek He wasn't going to take the SATs that day I said, “You've got to be kidding me . . . ! You

cannot throw in the towel now.” He took his SATs and got into college and graduated. While he was [there] he became involved in a mentor program for inner city kids. Seeing him graduate from college was really one of my proudest moments. [The connection is] not [there] every year [and] not with all kids. Let’s be real. You can’t save them all, but if you can keep trying and save a few, that’s enough. That was a hard lesson.

By being honest, you help them to be honest. When you are vastly different in the classroom than you are as an individual, you’re not in touch with yourself. It just all goes downhill. It’s a disaster. A particularly bad year for me was . . . 5 years ago. I was out for 8 weeks at the beginning of the year [sick leave] . . . and I had a population of kids that . . . were really resistant to change, not the kind of kids that bond easily with anyone. Even the physical classroom was being [shared with] other people! [Plus] so much had changed in special education that year All the change was just a recipe for disaster; it was a horrible year. I could not get systems in place fast enough when I came back I couldn’t bond with those kids I could not find my stride. I couldn’t find myself. I could not do the job I wanted to do. And physically, I was here until 8:00 at night. It was a frustrating year.

Particularly in special education, I think, good teachers are leaving education in droves. It’s hard. I understand the frustrations of teachers who have said, “This is not why I got into special education, to push papers and to test all the time” Why do we make special ed kids take exams and become proficient when we know, by definition, they can’t do it? [Interviewer: How do you handle that?] I can see it both ways [and] I’m not sure I know what’s best You have to . . . do what you’re being asked to do and find a way . . . that you can somehow live with. You know you have to . . . deal with what the system tells you . . . to deal with but [I] find a way to do it that is efficient and [find] a rationalization for it.

[I have them from ninth grade through twelfth grade.] You get to see that huge change . . . how they see themselves and . . . the world. I love graduation. I also love when kids keep in touch . . . after they've graduated. The girl I told you about my first year . . . called . . . to let me know how she's doing . . . 30 years later. I've an invitation to a wedding – a child who graduated ten years ago. A student who graduated 5 years ago . . . [is] now a . . . teacher and [he asked] me if I would meet him for dinner. It's great when that happens.

I try to give the kids success. I sit down with them. I work individually. I model. Then I give them time and space to see if they can work on their own. You have to give them that first taste of it or they're . . . going to give up. [I try to] instill . . . in kids, too, the eagerness to be lifelong learners I think that's just key. I view it as my disability if I cannot [find] the hook that engages them [or] find a way of communicating that allows a child to [learn].

[One hook is that] children want to serve and become involved They just do not always know how. [Over the years] . . . I pulled my kids into the Community Service Organization and Aid for Friends program at the school, which was so great. We worked as a liaison, pairing up kids with organizations that needed help. Eventually we had over 400 kids involved from the entire school.

The direct interaction and relationship with kids, that's probably first [in importance to me]. Just seeing kids respond to what you're trying to do with them, either emotionally or academically, and doing what they didn't think they could do. Even if they don't say it, just seeing that . . . ! That's it. That's wonderful. Who knows, they might have achieved that anyway . . . but I like to think that maybe part of it was something that went on in [my] classroom.

[Second], the support and friendship of your colleagues, that's huge If you don't like the environment you're working in, that . . . would make it hard to do for 37 years. The friendships here, the compassion that we have for each other, that's just been one of the biggest pluses in my life. I like mentoring new teachers. It's something that I wish I had had . . . when I started. It's a really good experience because you are reminded of what it was to start out, to have all those insecurities and questions.

The third thing would be the constant change and challenge [in teaching] – that in itself keeps it fresh and new. You see it . . . when you turn . . . around a class that's resistant or just unmotivated and very negative about each other, the school, you, the material, and you turn that around! I think, "It's tough, but it can change if [I] keep plugging away." If it was easy, it wouldn't be worthwhile.

[Students] need that balance of discipline and nurturing, humor and strictness — the ying and yang of teaching. You learn what works and what doesn't, and it changes with each child To get to know kids and what turns them on and what motivates them, what hurts them . . . It's just always evolving . . . You get some things right and still have to work on other things; and then you work on those things, and the things you thought you had right fall apart. Because things are constantly changing, you constantly need to change to keep up with them. Change . . . is kind of life renewing.

Reflections for Tonya. Tonya's 37 years in special education began with a class of 21 students labeled mentally retarded with expectations from the school to keep them in control. It is ending in a political climate that requires thorough documentation of services and expects special education students will achieve proficiency on the PSSAs (Pennsylvania State Standards Assessments). When her vision of the needed education for her students and the expectations of

the system are in conflict, she works within the system to do what she is required to do in a way that she can live with.

First and foremost, Tonya's teaching has centered on building a connection with her students. She intentionally balances discipline and nurture, provides learning tasks that build an early success, and encourages cognitive and emotional growth in each student. She engages her students in relevant learning that connects them to others in the school and community. She is her authentic self in her teaching as she builds these relationships, some of which are maintained for years after the student has graduated.

The continuing relationships with some of her students, their successful life stories, and her role in their development are the rewards of Tonya's teaching. She also values the collegiality of her teaching colleagues and the change and challenge of teaching. Teaching is hard work, but that is what makes it worthwhile. Too much change all at once has overwhelmed her on occasion, but mostly the opportunity for change is renewing to her. In the tough times, and with tough classes, she persists with a belief that she can find the hook that will engage them and turn the situation around.

Tonya is characterized as in the middle region between the socialized and self-authoring plateaus. She has a sense of personal mission and has always rejected the systemic and societal expectation that her students with disabilities should be controlled, not taught. She has always advocated for them and makes a difference in the classroom by establishing connections and persistently helping them to learn and to deal with personal challenges. She works within the system and participates within the school on programs that will benefit the students. However, she is silent about her role in decision-making within the school. She does not challenge the system. She instead finds a way she can deal with what the system tells her she has to do and a

way to do the task that makes it somewhat worthwhile. Although she expresses some frustration with the state's expectations for special education students, she does not know which choice is best. Therefore, she cedes some authority to the school system and state in structuring some of her tasks as a special education teacher (socialized plateau) but rejects the stereotypical view of her students and follows her own voice in sense of mission with her daily interactions with her students. This middle region plateau combination of her own voice within the classroom and dealing with the systems expectations has made it possible for her to continue to find a fit for herself within the system as it has changed over her career.

Narratives from Self-authoring Plateaus – Enthusiastically Creating a New Path

The nine narratives in this section characterize the teacher participants as within a self-authoring meaning-making plateau according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) framework and use the metaphor of hikers enthusiastically creating a new path.

Benita: Still Teaching if She Wins the Lottery

[When] I originally went to college, I wanted to go into vet school, but . . . I hated Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy. I hated Anatomy and Physiology. That's all I had ever wanted to do since I was in elementary school, so . . . if I hate this, obviously there's no point in going to vet school. At the time, I was tutoring at the Tutoring Center and I actually really liked it. I decided I liked it then, and people said I was good at it, so I thought, "Well, okay, you can make a living at this."

[Even in my first year of teaching] I was very academically rigorous . . . but I'm also very – I'm kinda a very supportive, loving kind of person. Kids know why they're doing it. I think that's important. And if you can't tell them why, then you shouldn't be doing it.

I'm hard but I'm fair. The curriculum is challenging, but not so challenging as to be impossible. I think that students can, if they work hard . . . toward the goal, it's doable. I feel like my job is to help students to not only just obtain . . . science information . . . but also . . . what it's like to work toward a goal. I want them to know that . . . everything is not going to be easy and they have to work at it.

When I came here, I had this high academic standard I want their education to be relevant and applicable for their next stage . . . an academic place, or . . . the world of work. There was a struggle [with parents] at the beginning to kind of get them to come around It would have been so easy to take the path of least resistance You have to sort of say to yourself, "I'm going to continue to do what I know is pedagogically sound, and they'll come around," and they do.

There are those teacher frustrations every year [of the 19 years] I think sometimes teachers get bogged down on trying to fix things that they have no control over. I don't take anything personally You have to come back the next day with a clean slate. You just let it go. I think that's something you just have to train new teachers. They come crying, "I tried so hard and" I said . . . "Just say to yourself, 'I know in my heart that what I'm doing is right.' If you have a reason for why you're doing something, you let them know that and you stick to your guns."

I think human relationships really are what's key in driving people, or at least in driving me in teaching. If those connections hadn't been there, then I probably – I can put up with pretty much. The lack of funding, you can work around that and you can work around needs for materials and so forth, but those connections are important. Teaching is a human endeavor all the way around.

I'm not the students' best friend or anything. I don't think students need another friend in the classroom. I'm the person who – now I have like that grandmother quality. A grandmother sort of lets you do your thing and guides you to where you need to be, and I think that's where it comes, that's the point that I'm at, and that's what I mean by that. I think I moved from "I know what you need, and you need this", very driven . . . I think I am still driven, but . . . I like to put the onus more on the kids now I was always trying to do for them. Now I'm just trying to show them how they can do for themselves, and I think that's a better fit for me at this point.

This is a tough job. There's a lot of work, and you're held to a high expectation. I put my kids to bed at 8:30 and then I stay up to like 11:30, 12:00, and then I get up at 4:00 Otherwise, I can't get my work done. I want to be good at what I do. I'm driven to do the best that I can and unfortunately I can't do that within the framework of the time that I'm provided, so I just have decided that that's the way I have to do it, much to my husband's dismay. I feel like I'm doing a good job at home, or a good job at school, but I'm falling behind one of those two places. I do separate myself. I don't do a lot of student clubs kind of thing, extra that kind of stuff. I would never have my . . . kids come [to my house] for review sessions. That's just not me at all.

I like teaching in an environment where the teacher is treated like a professional, where they are pretty much permitted to kinda do what they can do as long as they can show categorically what they're doing is appropriate. Giving teachers a chance to take ownership of their – if I'm just coming every day and I'm doing somebody else's canned plans . . . then why come? Freedom, I think, to plan lessons appropriately, to write lesson plans in a way that's conducive to organization on your part, and a freedom for assessment, where you're not just given a cookie cutter

And time to develop . . . those things. They have been giving us more time. We have been crying out for time. In fact, we're gonna get some time this summer even, so that's even getting better. We're making monumental changes to the curriculum, and there's got to be some time for people to get together and do that. It's always been one-man island working on their own Now it's becoming a lot more collaborative.

I think I've always felt like I did this [my work] well, that this was sort of where I belong and that I did this well. I will make my place and . . . not only just kinda come and do my job, but . . . make sure that I'm making tangible, positive changes professionally. I am very positive about what I do. There are times where I feel bogged down with work and drained and things, but for the most part Teacher survivors are optimists, and I think they like what they do and they are willing to overcome some of the hurdles . . . if there are enough internal rewards there to keep them in. I think for me it's just the knowledge that I am making some type of a difference.

We all want to think that we have left a legacy out there in our own little small part of the world. I think for me, that's all it is, knowing that. To see them . . . actually take their education and see that it was useful and important . . . and then they're out there being successful when they were kids who may have fallen through the cracks. That's very rewarding, that personal kind of connection that you make with the kids.

I don't need to be working. I could probably arrange our financial, you know. I enjoy it, and when I quit enjoying it and I quit feeling like I'm making a difference, then I probably will stop. I'm probably still going to be here in this position for the rest of my life Even if I won the lottery? I definitely would still be teaching if I won the lottery.

Reflections for Benita. Benita chose teaching as a career because she liked tutoring science in college and others affirmed her tutoring skill. She has taught for 19 years in four

different districts. She describes herself as a positive and academically rigorous teacher who shows her students the relevance of the work. Like a grandmother (not a friend), she makes a connection and guides them to get where they need to be. She recognizes her growth from a teacher who was directive and “doing for” students to a teacher who showing them what they can do for themselves. Benita is making a difference with her students when they see the value of persisting toward a goal and she models this work ethic to them. To her, teaching is tough and time-consuming and more than a job.

She functions from a self-authoring plateau; she needs a workplace where she can create within the classroom and beyond, provide leadership to the newer staff, and advocate for positive and tangible changes. When she knows she is right, she “sticks to her guns,” and she advises other teacher colleagues to do the same. She does not choose the path of least resistance but is confident in her decisions and then communicates, collaborates, and advocates tangible. Benita works in a local system that gives her the freedom to function from this self-authoring perspective. She is both a realist and an optimist; she does not get bogged down in fixing what she thinks she cannot control but she also is a teacher leader who does change the workplace so that she and other teachers have freedom within and ownership of their classrooms and school.

The legacy of making a difference, of seeing former, falling-through-the-cracks students become successful adults, of teaching students to persist in working toward a goal, of making changes in the school - these are so rewarding and such a fit with her internal voice for Benita that she continues to teach even though it is not financially necessary for her to do so and she is sometimes torn between her family’s needs and the demands of teaching.

Caleb: Carrier of Civilization

I had a prior career. My undergraduate degree is in Economics. I worked overseas for the World Food Program and CARE, a non-profit line of work. Decided I wanted to come back to the community that I grew up in. Worked for a local government . . . and decided at that point I wanted to go into education. Both my parents were educators. So I went back to school. I didn't start teaching 'til I was 30. [I've been teaching 21 years.] That's it in a nutshell.

It wasn't just self-serving. One of the things that's always motivated me has been to try to do something larger than myself . . . part of my reasons for going abroad. When I came back . . . I saw education as an opportunity for me to have an impact on the kind of country we live in I had a broader view there. I'm interested in education as a system and . . . we have a crisis in this country with education, reengineering our educational system to meet the needs of kids in the future, and we need to address it.

Education is . . . giving them [students] the tools to mold themselves in productive ways. My goal, my fundamental goal as a teacher is to get students to think about what they're learning. I want them to formulate questions and ask them. They're not used to that I tell them they need to have mental agility, which means that they have to jump from topic to topic. It's not going to be linear. It's a conversational approach to teaching. What I want kids to be able to do is, "What do you know? What do you think about what you know? and What can you do with what you know?" That's kinda what I try to get across. I always say to them . . . that what really matters is what kind of person you're becoming, not what you're learning in my classroom. I mean, that's my – that is core. Are they developing integrity, are they becoming a good person? You're teaching . . . things other than your subject matter. Teachers are exemplar . . . citizens . . . , the carriers of our civilization.

I would say teaching's like getting married 100-150 times a year, and getting divorced 100-150 times a year, and then getting remarried the next year. Every class has its own character and personality. Every kid is different. You can teach the same thing in every class, but each one is different. It's a very emotional job. That's one of the hard things about teaching. If you really take the profession seriously, you immerse yourself in it emotionally. Lots of emotional highs and lows, but I think what you have to do as a teacher is don't let the lows pull you down. Let the highs pull you up.

The great thing about teaching is you get to reinvent yourself every day and every year . . . and so what I've used that worked when I first started teaching doesn't necessarily work for me today. Throughout my career . . . there are some practices that I've used that have worked and that I've continued to use. There are some that I've used that have worked that I don't use anymore. There are some that I used that don't work that I've thrown out the door. It's a continual process. I'm at a different place in my life and a different knowledge level, and so my practice has changed.

Openness to change, I think, is a critical aspect of it. Most of the [formal] professional development that I've done throughout my career, and I've done a lot, has been really ancillary to my practice. It's not that it hasn't been useful and helpful; it has. But I don't think it has made me the teacher that I am. I think what has made me the teacher that I am (for better or worse) is my own personal reflection upon my practice.

So you have successes and . . . not some successes. That's challenging. Content can be challenging, too, but . . . content can be mastered. People are hard to master. That's challenging. One of the biggest challenges is when you have a student who's maybe engaging in destructive behavior . . . and you want to change that pattern, and some days you feel very powerless to do

that I expect kids are going to meet a certain level of achievement and standard and behavior and all those things, and then I'm disappointed when they don't. So if I have one kid out of 100 who doesn't meet that standard, I'm disappointed.

Our . . . supervisor wants us to do some things I basically said, "We can make this a meaningful exercise, or we can do what you want us to do and it will be a meaningless exercise where we'll fill out all the paperwork . . . and that's the choice you have." I'm at the point in my career where I'm gonna say what I think I fought with the administration over changes in . . . [how] final exams . . . [affect] grading They might seem like small issues but . . . they get to the larger issue of autonomy for the teacher in the classroom. Having said that, I also feel – I mean, there are certain things that are beyond your control. So I'm at a point now in my career where . . . it's a case-by-case basis [whether this is or isn't] a hill to die on for me.

Again, kids are – they're the ones that make or break you. Ultimately, everything that I do impacts students. That's why I want to emphasize their role in this. Ultimately, that's the key. I think the daily interaction with kids is . . . that's vital. Your day goes as the kids go. So when I find myself stagnating in the classroom [pause] One of two things happens with teachers: they blame the kids or they look at themselves Often times it's yourself and so you have to recognize that and make adjustments. Ultimately, we are serving them – kids change, and sometimes times change – and so teachers have to change.

Some core things, though . . . are the same. My core mission . . . is to engage kids in learning, [never use] sarcasm in the classroom. For me, teaching's about building a relationship, and I want inside every kid's head. I had a student come to me . . . this morning, and he said that he had a dream about me and . . . I was Freddy Krueger. Okay. And I said to him, "Well, why was I chopping you up or whatever?" and I've been after this kid . . . he can be lazy. He needs to

be pushed and I've been on him. And I said to him, "I'm glad that you had that dream because that means I'm inside your head, and that's where I want to be."

It is an all-consuming – it can be an all-consuming profession, and that's why summers are vital to me. I don't want to over-exaggerate it, but teaching is much more than what I do, it is who I am. If you take the profession seriously . . . you've got to have stamina and commitment. It consumes. Ask my wife.

Your professional life is always intruding upon your personal life, and that's why it's hard to separate who you are from what you do. When you care about kids, then they're your kids and it's not like you can leave school and . . . forget about that. If a kid is having a serious problem, it occupies your mind. So, in that sense, it stays with you. It's part of who you are. In another sense, in terms of what you're teaching . . . , even when you're looking at the news . . . , you're looking at it from the point of view of "how can I use that in my classroom?" The other thing is that there's work to be done outside of classroom, in planning, grading, especially when you're teaching new courses . . . or get more preps than other years. In that sense, it's consuming, as well.

Keeping yourself fresh by teaching new courses or whatever is always a challenge and I would say this year has been one of those years for me. There are days when I look at myself now and I say, "Am I still really making a difference? Am I still effective in the classroom?" I've always said that I hope the day I answer that question in the negative is the day that I walk out the door. I . . . never considered quitting this job. I have started to think about when I will retire in . . . Pennsylvania and then moving . . . and teaching in Baltimore city schools [where experienced teachers are really needed]. Just as a way of kind of rejuvenating my last few years in the career.

Reflections for Caleb. Caleb has taught his high school students from a self-authoring plateau for 21 years as he influences them to become citizens who ask questions, are mentally agile, and think about and are engaged in their learning; that is, teaching them to be citizens who are also self-authoring. In his conversational style of teaching, he provides tools to the students so they can grow as learners and citizens. Caleb's internal voice is informed by the perspectives he gained in his experiences abroad. Caleb challenges himself to be an exemplar of a moral and educated citizen as a teacher in his small town, including activities with the students outside the classroom, participating in educational initiatives beyond his school district, and saying what he thinks to the administration about policies or tasks that relate to teacher autonomy. It is clear that Caleb answers to his own internal voice and sense of mission. His school context is primarily supportive of his work and when it is not, he carefully chooses which battles he will fight depending on the issue and on whether he thinks his voice can make a difference.

Teaching is challenging, emotional, and relational work for Caleb. He teaches with a broad vision for meaning and relationships, in addition to content. The work is so relational that he compares it to marrying and divorcing each student each year. He wants “inside every kid’s head” and they remain inside his head in this “all-consuming” profession. In the emotional highs and lows of the daily interaction with each different kid and class, he learns from his practice, continually reflects on his practice, and is deliberate in changing his practice to reflect changes in himself, the students, and the culture. His current need to “stay fresh” is so compelling he has thought of choosing a different and more challenging school environment for the rest of his career. His vision of education which impacts the kind of country in which we live influences his reflection on moving to a school where his experience is needed.

Dale: An Emersonian Grandfather

At 60 years old, I still feel young, and the kids make me that way. I'd like to teach for a long time yet. I truly knew I wanted to be a teacher, and I have all my life. I knew I loved my classrooms [as a student before college]. I tell the story in two different ways. I followed my girlfriend to [Name of University]. Don't tell my wife . . . but that's really not fully it! I had an English teacher . . . had him in 8th grade, I had him again . . . in my senior year, and his love of words, love of literature, of all things English . . . I followed another teacher. Simple answer. God was directing me. That's how I feel about it. Yeah, the fit was there.

I think it's the whole gamut. I get to do a new job every year. It's new every day for this. As long as I have those new faces . . . new brains, and new ideas, and a different skew on the issue coming from whoever it might be . . . that changes my mind, too, and it keeps me young, too.

I think it's the classroom situations. I've always been able to have . . . discussions with my students comfortably, listen to their ideas. I've had very close relationships with the students while they're here. I've seen that role, of course, develop too. They'll come to me and we talk, we chat about whatever is bothering them. It's one of those things you learn – where they're willing to go, what they want to talk about. When I brought back *Brave New World*, for instance . . . there's a lot of issues of sexuality . . . it's so open now, so why would I run away from it? And I think . . . 15 years ago . . . I would have been very embarrassed . . . and I'm not anymore.

I feel like a grandfather often now. I mean, it is literal in some of the cases. It's interesting that just this morning . . . a boy on the track team was . . . out there running . . . with a pair of high-top basketball shoes . . . So I asked him yesterday, "Do you have any other shoes?" and he said, "No," and I said, "Maybe we can do something about that," and he smiled.

This is one of six children, and I guess the father has left, so here I am, I'm the grandfather, including buying shoes to take care of this young man.

I think it's the feedback after they graduate. You walk around in a community and see those past students, see the parents, whether they are this year's kids or kids from 20 years, parents of kids from 20 years ago, who tell you, "Wow, Johnny is now . . . doing whatever," and it's just what a connection, what a wonderful thing. See this? This is from a student of 1979. She wrote a novel . . . and she asked me to copy read it for her. I will be meeting with her this week. Those are the things that are the rewards, the seeing someone on the street, the occasional mail, especially with e-mail now. In the last 10 years, they find the school web site and they will e-mail and say "thank you." It's tearful.

Loving the work is exactly what makes one an outstanding teacher. I wish that more teachers understood the thrill of participating in the extracurriculars with the students. What a big part of education – the sports, the band, the co-curricular. How much teaching can go on there? An awful lot in terms of the life skills and even with everything else that we do. I'm teaching English. Even when I don't go around swearing [during the extracurricular event], I'm teaching English. Let's use some real vocabulary!

Teachers must get out to seminars and institutes. After 15 years of just doing the classroom experience . . . a wonderful principal . . . encouraged me to go to a conference. That was just enlightening for me. At age whatever that was, 35, I just wasn't sure I was an adult yet. I wasn't sure that I had the capacity. To be quite blunt and quite honest about it, I was proud of myself there, and that gave me the confidence to say, "I can do this; I'm really a teacher now, and I want to be a teacher." I cherish my classroom. It's tempting to wrap myself in its security

and stay there. But it is too easy and too comfortable to hide from new ideas and from experimental change.

The support that I've always felt from I've always been allowed There isn't anybody coming in here and watching and demanding and correcting. Very, very supportive. Yeah, I feel supported, and yet I don't feel demanded of.

My curriculum coordinator . . . came to me and said, "How are we going to do this?" And I looked at the material, and I said, "This is simple." I said, "Give me six days." What I did was sit down and taught to the test. Our scores skyrocketed. I can play the game, and that's the way I feel about PSSA, as it is, and I despise it, to be honest, but I play the game As far as I'm concerned, it's dumbing down . . . – like I said, I can teach it in six days, so why I fear any attempts to minimize our profession into a science. It's becoming a little more tense right now because we have a new curriculum coordinator that wants us to be in line, and I'm fighting that right now.

I think the training of the late 60s did not direct me in any way to do anything but lecture . . . and it took me a long time to not be in charge of my classroom. I change my desks all the time. They are in fours or threes or they are facing each other. We do debates. We do all sort of things like that. I tell my students quite often that the unanswerable question is perhaps the most important. The ones that you can come up with an answer, you know, who cares, because it is at our fingertips now. It's those debatable issues that seem more significant. There's no right answer there. Romeo and Juliet . . . a beautiful love story. Romeo and Juliet, what stupid kids getting involved in a relationship and killing themselves That's what I mean by – that's part of what I mean by the unanswerable, the relationships, the "Who am I?" "Why am I here?"

It does seem that the students like the discussion. I have students, for instance, come to me and say, “Thank you. You’re about the only person that doesn’t throw PowerPoints at us.” [Today] the discussion went totally away from anything I considered, and they liked that. When the opportunity arises for my students to teach me something, I embrace it because I know they are learning as well. We have to have the higher order . . . there’s still that philosophy issue you gotta deal with. Ideas are dangerous, and isn’t it wonderful?

It gets challenging when I find that the rules – that the school rule goes against the ethical right. That’s when it gets challenging, when there’s no sense in a rule or an action or something that people are asking me to do Specifically, I was told, “He’s not invited [a former student without required clearances working with kids in extracurricular practices].” My response was . . . , “He belongs here; he’s an inspiration for the kids.” I don’t know if I’ll hear about it. If I do, I’ll argue my point. And I’m not a confronter, not at all. [Interviewer: How do you know that you are right?] I guess I’m Emersonian, intuition, somehow or other. I hope I’m right, that’s all I can say. I really don’t know.

I get up at 4:00 in the morning, my personal reading time . . . and I don’t just read; I study. I think about my friends in the books. I try to give that same thing to the students. At 5:00, I’m usually here. I do my lesson plans . . . , change posters, . . . correct papers, essays constantly. I teach my day. This evening and Wednesday evening, I’m going up to [College Name] to teach evening classes. I usually finish my day about 8:00 and that’s pretty much time for bed. When you hear that . . . it’s as if I don’t have another life, and I do, and that’s one of the things that’s been so nice about it. I have a very supportive family. My wife is just wonderfully supportive.

I don't know how I can not work at something. I'm a little scared of retirement, to be honest. I know I must, sooner or later. I'll probably never really leave teaching. If I would retire this year, for instance, I would tell my fellow English teachers right here in the hallway, "Hey, if you need a guest lecturer, keep me in mind. I would love to be here, and I do know some things that maybe I can help you out."

Reflections for Dale. Dale has remained young in spirit by teaching English and working with students in extracurriculars in the same small school district for nearly 40 years; a job he sees as new every year and every day. He chose the profession by following his own English teacher and believes that God directed him to this profession. He stays because he loves the students, the content, and the act of teaching — the daily classroom discussions, the books he chooses, the role of grandfather, the connections to current and former students and the community, the participation in extracurriculars, and learning opportunities beyond the classroom and district. He needs support from his administration and the freedom to ask his students the important and unanswerable questions and the freedom to deal with dangerous ideas. In comparison to this vision of educating students, he finds the PSSA testing a "dumbing down."

Dale recognizes his own growth and development to a self-authoring plateau. He no longer hides behind the role of lecturer in charge of the classroom. He does not hide in his comfortable classroom but challenges himself professionally. He does not hide any longer from discussion of topics that once embarrassed him. He primarily works in a supportive context with autonomy in the classroom; no one is typically coming into the classroom to watch or demand changes. When there is a conflict with his administration's expectations, he finds a way to be courteous and cooperate if possible. He will, however, not compromise his inner voice, so he

resists attempts to reduce learning to a test score and contests or even ignores a school rule that does not fit his understanding of what is ethically right.

His time during the year is consumed by his job. This dedication is in part possible because of his supportive family. He envisions continued teaching in his eventual retirement. Like Ralph Waldo Emerson, one of his “friends in the books,” Dale listens to his inner voice and risks exploring “dangerous ideas” in the classroom in the pursuit of higher order learning and thinking for both himself and his students.

Diana: A Seat at the Table for Everyone

I had teachers that would call on all the boys first; and then when they couldn’t answer, then they might get around to calling on me I think somewhere in the back of my mind that irritated me and I felt I would do differently. Get even by succeeding. I wanted to be a teacher who would not intimidate students in the classroom, who would not make fun of students, and who actually seemed like a human being!

My first year teaching . . . I taught all the low level classes. Two of the books I used were a 1963 copyright . . . whole pages of just problems and problems, really horrible looking books. It was that same sort of “these kids don’t matter.” I felt that I probably gave them a better chance because I didn’t have the opinion that they couldn’t do well that everybody else seemed to have of them. In the middle of the year . . . he [the principal] said, “I didn’t think you’d last this long.” He referenced that a lot of these kids were the farm kids . . . and I said, “Well, I grew up on a farm. What’s your point?”

I’ve always really enjoyed it Teaching is a very intrinsic thing. I think it’s part of that helpful nature. I also like a challenge. I’m a driven person and I like to be given a challenge and meet a challenge I like working with the kids, I like the challenge, and I like the

rewards. The reward comes from those kids. I've always enjoyed the camaraderie with the kids. They all need that respect and that regardless of how good a math student you are, you have something to offer. It's really important that you feel valued here in my classroom because you are valued. You have a good day when it's not just a good day for you, but it's a good day for your kids, too; and you sense that throughout the day. It's not just about what happened for me, but what happened for all of us. We were striving to be the best we can be.

Something that I think comes out of all that is trying not to judge, "Oh, you're a doctor's kid so you're going to do this," or, "Oh, you're from the low housing, and so you don't really have that much to offer." Here at [name of school] we have that broad spectrum of student, from the very wealthy to the very poor. I think that one of the biggest things is that I do try to make everybody feel that they have a seat at the table.

I know my scope and sequence . . . and so, for me, I don't even look at plans anymore. It's just been something that I do that I don't really pay attention to actually. I know my content inside and outside, and regardless of where it is in the book, I know how to link it together. I know what I want my assignments to be. If the kids need an extra day, we take an extra day.

We're giving these [trade name] benchmark tests to see how they are going to do with PSSAs. There's three to four days lost out of my curriculum to give this assessment that I could tell them, "This kid's not going to do well, and this kid's going to do well." I know enough about my kids. I assess them all the time, both formally and informally, to know who struggles and who doesn't Everything has become – it's data driven, it's data driven, let's look at the data, but you're not working with data, you're working with kids.

I considered it [quitting] about two years ago . . . just because of all the administrative miscellaneous stuff that has nothing to do with my classroom, it's just stuff that you need to do.

Stupid things . . . that actually interfere with your work with the kids . . . and some other issues basically related to curriculum that were not being heard It's very disheartening, especially when you've been recognized as being a leader in your field — by them!! The only thing that probably kept me going was working with the kids and really enjoying that [I] decided I'd stay where I was in the classroom and work subversively, going into the principal, "Do you think you maybe ought to consider this?" or "Have you thought about?" or "Maybe we should try?"

You have to really listen to your kids. Because we all approach things from a very specific mind set — "This is how I see it, this is how it's done" — and I think we have to pay so much more attention to how kids view it because they can see it in a totally different way that is correct As we want kids to construct their knowledge . . . you want to realize that they have those other viewpoints I think that's part of why so many kids struggle mathematically is 'cause we try to fit them all in the same groove, and yet there are other ways to see it that we don't think of 'cause it's not how we see it.

For Honor Society, they used to — it was more of an intellectual kind of thing, but I just didn't think they did enough of the service component type things. They would go to New York and see a play. That's not really service related. At Thanksgiving, we'll go downtown here and help unload food for the food baskets. We also help with the collection of the shoe boxes locally, and they do tutoring, and just other things as they come up. They volunteer. I prefer to see that kids see that I do things; I put my money where my mouth is, in terms of I don't ask them to do something . . . without participating. "If I'm going to ask you to get up at 6:30 to go unload a tractor trailer truck, I'm going to be with you and do that"; or "if we're going to pack shoe boxes, I'm going to — not only are you going to bring stuff to pack them, I'm going to bring stuff to pack them, and we're all going to pack them together."

I realize that what I do can make a critical difference in the life of another human being. [As a teacher] you're a catalyst for change . . . whether it's overall change or . . . "How can we help this one kid?" . . . for kids that might not have someone to champion their cause — the kids that just fall through the cracks . . . or don't have someone to be their personal champion. No matter what you try to do, you can't do enough for them.

I've had lots of kids that I've talked to that have come back and really done well for themselves. [On the other hand] we just had a kid that just quit yesterday and it's for lack of any kind of support outside of this building, and not necessarily a great deal of support inside of this building I probably had a couple of those over the course of my career of kids that you work really hard to try to save [long pause, crying]. Do you see how bad that is?

It's about treating people fairly and enjoying what you do. If you don't enjoy working with the kids, if that's not central . . . you're not going to be a good teacher. The one thing about teaching is that . . . we're not robotic. It's very much individualized. And so you line a million of us up and no two of us are ever going to teach the same. We talk about the 21st century learner and all the media and all that kind of stuff and how that changed how kids learn. You have to be willing to adapt to some of that, but there's also . . . part of teaching doesn't change. There are some things that are just like they've always been. You have to present information and then get them to mull through and work on it, or get them to create it. There are times when they go, "Not another PowerPoint!" Sometimes they just like something a little low tech, like me.

Reflections for Diana. Diana is a high school math teacher in a small suburban district that includes students from the "very wealthy to the very poor." Throughout her career, she has defined herself as a champion for the kids who need one — the students who struggle in math

because they see it a different way, the students without support at home, the students who face prejudice from the system because of class or gender. She recognizes the barrier that mathematics can be for some learners. She knows that amidst the content and the technology, they need her – her belief in their value, her attention, her listening ear, her model of service to others, and her voice.

Her commitment to a teaching career that spans 26 years was partly a response to the gender and class bias she experienced as a student, partly her intrinsic helpful nature, partly the challenge, partly the daily camaraderie with the kids, and partly the rewards from the eventual feedback from the kids. She sees herself as an effective catalyst for change not only within the classroom but also within the system, and is moved to tears when a student she tried to salvage quits school.

Diana maintains her commitment to teaching although she writes lesson plans she doesn't need, give tests she doesn't need, and puts up with “administrative miscellaneous stuff” she finds unnecessary and counterproductive to her work. Her enjoyment in working with the kids, her awareness of the kids in the system who need her as their champion, and her continued belief that she can be a voice for change within the system keep her in the public schools.

Diana began her teaching career with on a self-authoring plateau as she advocated for kids no one expected to achieve from her determination to “get even [for prior prejudices] by succeeding.” She has remained within that self-authoring plateau throughout her 26 years of teaching as she champions underserved students who need her belief in their value. Although Diana works in a school context that expects its teachers to follow its and a state context that trends toward increasing standardization, she has found a way to work subversively as an

advocate and catalyst for change. The system may be frustrating at times but it does not silence her voice or rob her of her belief that her work is meaningful.

Edward: Relationships Supersede Rigor and Relevance

If you had asked me my senior year of high school . . . if it [teaching] was something that I foresaw myself doing, it would not have been on my list. If you had asked me if I would have gone the route of English, that probably would have been my last guess, as well. Through high school, I took AP [Advanced Placement] courses in the Sciences and the Maths and History. English always sort of took the back seat. I went to [college] and I did not enroll as an Education major. I started off in Business

I guess had I looked myself in the mirror closely, I would have realized that that's where my passion and my talent lay. I read from a very young age. Family members of mine had been educators before me – my grandfather, my grandmother, my mother for a brief period of time – and they had large influences on my life. He [my grandfather] had been a life-long educator. He knew that teaching was not a job, but a way of life, and he lived it to its fullest. I remember the day he retired He and I were becoming very close; I was 14 years old. A lot of students came back Shortly thereafter, he died, and I saw many of these same people come, just streaming through– and to see the impact that he had had on so many young lives

So I made the decision towards the end of my freshman year . . . that I was going into Education and English . . . and I didn't look back, and I'm glad I didn't. The culture of the business world didn't fit, I guess, [with] how I saw myself impacting the world. How I found myself . . . I really don't know . . . sort of [one of] those epiphany moments. I think I saw where I needed to go, and made the move. It reached out to me. I think that's why I call it a calling.

I need to do something of significance; I need to make a difference. I think I wanted a

job, too, that . . . I felt was going to be different every day It's a new experience; it's a new adventure every day, every year. I think . . . the challenge of it, to some degree . . . keeps me going even still today. One thing with teaching is I think you're always growing. You have an opportunity for almost a start-over, if you will. I'm at 15 now. No year has been the same for me.

So I can't exactly put my finger on it, but there needs to be a sense of enthusiasm, a genuine concern and care for children, and just a kind of sense of being a genuine person. Some of it just has to do with I'm willing to share myself In many ways it is impossible to not bring who you are to what you do. It's just kind of how I'm wired.

With teaching . . . the kids make every day . . . working with the kids, when they get something, when something really goes well, when a kid comes to you with a problem. There's an energy to it that I think attracts me. It's draining, but it's a satisfied tired. Never am I more tired at the end of the week than a week of teaching . . . and I've done manual labor jobs in the summer, where I'm working 8-9 hours a day.

Over time, I've had to evolve with the job and with kids. I think the first couple of years of teaching . . . that first year or two is, in some ways, keeping your head above the water . . . you're just holding on to the life preserver, hoping for the best You build experience; some of those things (the nuts and bolts of the job) become automatic It did take probably, I think, until my sixth or seventh year 'til I began to feel some comfort in what I was doing, to be able to fully reflect on what I was doing, and to be able to see the differences if I did this and if I did that . . . to be able to devote more time to the building of better lessons, the creating of better materials, the taking the time to get to know the kids.

Mostly, I self-create. I don't want to say what I make is any better, but I think it's more

personal, and I think the kids buy into that. If I were the kind of teacher that wanted [to use] the textbook year after year and read the same stories year after year and gave the same quizzes year after year, I'd be done. That fire would [whoosh sound] just go out.

When we begin to view what we do as anything less than a calling, when we stop caring for each student's uniqueness, we have minimized what we do to just a job. It's not just a job. The job doesn't end. It really doesn't. I'm usually in my office at home doing work by about 5:45 [a.m.] until I leave for school. I'm usually here well after the school day ends. I do try to get home to my own two children . . . and the rest of the evening is theirs until they're in bed, then I do whatever needs to be done . . . on the Ning [online social network] and responding to kids' emails and papers to grade.

[Interviewer: What bogs you down?] Sometimes the paperwork — not . . . the papers that I have to grade for the kids . . . but . . . the paperwork of the district. It seems like there's a lot more that we have to do. That can get tiresome sometimes. Good administrators, I think, have a vision. They allow the staff to buy into that vision, and then, to some degree . . . , know enough to step back out of the way . . . allow us to run with our ideas . . . manage ourselves. And I think when that happens, you see things happen that wouldn't ordinarily happen.

My priority first, second, third, last, and always is to make a difference for the kids. My job from the beginning of the year to the end of year is to get them from Point A to Point B; and for each student, Point B is the not the same. It's not a formula, you can't apply formulas to education; you can't formularize human interaction. I don't often get in front of the classroom and stand and deliver. My classroom is partially controlled chaos. I'm not trying to say I'm a poor classroom manager. But not all the students are at the same place at the same time I want it to be a student-centered classroom.

Writing is not something that occurs in a vacuum . . . writing is an extension of who we are; it's an expression of who we are. Writing is not a 60-minute PSSA test and a five-paragraph essay format - true communication, true human interaction, goes much deeper than that. It involves a voice The authors didn't write these books just so we could appreciate all the symbolism and the foreshadowing and the irony . . . but there are also many themes and we can learn from characters' mistakes and triumphs in our own lives. What I want to give them is, "Here's an interesting piece of reading. Let's take a look at it." And while we're looking at that piece of reading together, talking about it, connecting it to our lives and things like that, we're also taking a look at audience, purpose, and all the things that they're going to be asked to take a look at on the test. I think if I do my job well in my arena, then those tests should seem easy.

To me, education's much deeper than the tests, than the grades, that it's the things that happen in between those. It's not just all about the content, but the lessons that we take. Our success in life isn't going to be determined by a test Our success in life is going to be determined by our character, our feeling of self-worth to some degree, and our ability to have some vision in terms of where we want to go, to be able to set goals for ourselves, to know how to reach those goals, to be able to work effectively with others and communicate effectively with others. That's where our success will derive.

I'm all for rigor and I'm all for relevance . . . but . . . there's a third R, which is relationships, and to me, that supersedes the other two. My ability to reach kids . . . whatever their life situation is, is that ability to just be myself, to build that relationship. Establishing a rapport with the kids is extremely important, and doing so early is important. It's something I keep working at all year, building that relationship with the kids, that they trust me, they can count on me The students will go as far as you take them, providing they've kind of bought

into what you're selling them.

Everything is immediate in today's culture. The concept of having to struggle for something or work through something or not have it right away can be a challenge for some of these kids. [I] have to try and pull them in and hook them to it rather than have them experience frustration and give up after half a chapter Certainly we can point to some of the benefits and the gains we've derived through technology. But something's also lost, I think, sometimes, too, in order to sit down and have a person-to-person conversation for an extended period of time.

There are rewards in this job that it's hard to put a finger on. The rewards are there, but not if you look for them. They don't happen all the time. They don't happen every day. They don't happen every week. They don't happen every year. But there are those moments in the course of 15 years that I can look back and that have been enough to say, "I've made a difference. I could stop today and feel satisfied." But I think part of it is that, you know, to know that you've impacted a life.

I had a kid a number of years ago He was a mess. He was all over the place, just always in trouble, just everybody dismissed him. So I got him in ninth grade . . . and we just got going. I pulled him aside a couple of times and talked to him, was very frank with him . . . and he had a good ninth grade year. At the end of the year, he won . . . this award . . . for improvement. The recipients of the major awards come back the following year and they introduce the award for the next student. I was sitting in the audience that year. He got up and he found me in the audience and he said, "I'm up here," and he got tears in his eyes, "only because one teacher saved my life." I went to pieces then.

To have something like that [tears in his eyes]; you're not looking for it; it never was the

intention; you're just doing your job. I was fortunate in my life to have great teachers. . . . I struggled mightily at one point. I had a couple teachers who lifted me I often ask myself if I am of the caliber of . . . those exceptional teachers that always seemed to have a fire burning within in them for their subject and students.

Reflections for Edward. Edward has been a ninth grade English teacher in an upper-class suburban middle school for 15 years. He majored in business at first in college, but was called to teaching in his first year, influenced by his educator grandfather and his own great teachers in school. Impacting a kid's life is by far the most important log that keeps the fire burning within. Other fuels in his commitment are the unexpected and unpredictable events of every day and every year, the challenge and energy of the interactions with the kids, and the opportunity to continually create and grow.

Edward teaches from a self-authoring plateau as his time and energy is consumed in the pursuit of making a difference, and he does as much as it takes to light a fire of deep learning within his students. His lessons are self-created. He values the uniqueness of each student, fosters a relationship, and then provides support and appropriate challenges to take each one as far as he can. He does not settle for the easy content of the standardized tests where an essay is written in a vacuum; he uses events from his own life and the lives of the characters in the literature to provide relevant life lessons and deep learning; his goal is student writing that authentically represents the voice and character of the student.

He wants his flame focused on impacting kids and their learning and finds it tiresome to have some of the flame diverted by fulfilling administrative paperwork. Other than the frustration, Edward's school culture appears to fit his self-authoring plateau and he teaches in the classroom from his internal sense of mission, measuring success within the context and

complexity of each situation. He appreciates a visionary administration that steps out of the way as he and other teachers manage themselves, run with their ideas, and accomplish extraordinary things.

Reta: Teaching as a Dream Come True

I had always wanted to be a teacher from the time I was 5. My mother was a teacher. I did go [to college] for a year, but . . . I was . . . not ready. My life took different paths. I worked at a Y and I taught swimming all day from three- year olds to 85-year olds. About 35 [years old] . . . that's when I really started thinking that all my life I had wanted to teach, and I thought, "Okay . . . I need to do it now." I graduated from college when I was 39. I had to drive daily 120 miles to go.

I have been in [Name] School District . . . 17 years . . . I am a middle level [fifth grade] teacher. My first year . . . a dream come true. There wasn't a day that I didn't want to go into work. Yes, there are things you can't be prepared for, but I was just in heaven every single day 'cause I had waited so long to do it.

I think starting my teaching career at 40 also made me look at teaching differently. I brought along a lot of life experience . . . knowing what was important and not sweating the small stuff. You understand that you're working with the whole child. You're not just working with the child that's sitting at a desk . . . Everything plays a factor when it comes to learning. You cannot have that knowledge or expertise unless you've experienced it.

It's just the kids [laughing]. I mean, they make you laugh, they make you cry, they make you pull out your hair . . . And I think you have to have a true love for children to be able to enjoy it every day . . . It's just fun to watch them grow. There is nothing that can compare to the light bulb moment when you see your students getting something. To help children is why I

went into it, and so to get that feedback that that is happening, I mean, that's the whole meaning of me being a teacher.

I have one little girl that when she started the year in my math class . . . was not doing her homework, would not ask a question, was very apathetic. And so I started having her come to my room when it was recess time She is my little shining star now, and it's so wonderful to see. She just needed to believe in herself. I may have provided her the tools to get there, but she did it.

Teaching is never a boring career. There's so many things that happen in a day, expected and unexpected . . . and at the end of the day, it's, "Wow, this day's over already!" You can plan all you want, but the unexpected sure is going to happen. And it's a rewarding career and it's a career that you better be flexible. I don't sit at a desk all day. I am a high energy person.

You will never see my room with rows. My room is bright and happy. I want them to be curious. I believe in hands-on. It's an exciting place. There's never a dull moment. They think I'm a little crazy, which is okay; the middle level children are really strange, and I think I'm really strange, so I think we blend in so well together; and I say that in humor, but I say it seriously, too. I think my love of life is a good thing to pass on to middle level children. I think it's a very difficult time period, and I think they need somebody who has a positive outlook on life.

My standards are high. I'm not going to dumb it down for them . . . and I'll keep at them. I explain; I help. I don't do it for them. We keep at it. I give them suggestions. I teach. I tell them, the sun's still gonna come up, it's still gonna go down; we'll get through this, it's not the end of the world; and we do, and they learn. I think I take it at their pace because I'm looking at the development of the child I also think it's the energy and the knowing that someone

cares for them that has made them want to learn. Last year . . . my language arts class . . . said to me, “It was a great year, but you are the hardest teacher we’ve had.” And the teachers I remember were the ones that expected the most, but I knew they cared.

My favorite children’s book about teaching is *Thank You, Mr. Falker*— here’s this little girl who couldn’t learn and the teacher took the time — and the acceptance of differences. My Number One Rule . . . remember . . . that you may not always agree with them, that you may not always like them, but everyone deserves respect. The second thing is that I hope they come out prepared to be able to work hard —that if you put your best into it . . . that’s a feeling that . . . it’s self-satisfaction and you should be proud of what you do.

We had a man who was a temporary custodian in our building and he said, “You people amaze me You get here early in the morning, you stay late at night, and when you walk out the door, you’re carrying school work with you.” And I said, “But the world doesn’t know that.” It’s a hard job; there’s no ands, ifs, or buts about it; and I do think it’s getting harder. If you are a teacher, that is a way of life. If you’re going to be good at it, it can’t be just a job. I don’t think that a teacher ever stops thinking about teaching. No matter what I do, it’s always clicking in there. I do see . . . there should be more of a balance with a lot of us. Finding that balance is very, very, very difficult.

I think that many of us allow teaching to overtake everything, and I’ve been guilty of that. I did have a year [I felt like quitting]. It was probably the hardest class I’ve ever, ever had. A lot of dysfunction, and just events every day. I actually even said to my husband one night, “I hate my job.” That’s the only time in 17 years he ever heard it, and I think it shocked him. It shocked me. I don’t feel that way now.

So, policies come and go. What absolutely amazes me is that in this profession nobody

asks their [the teachers'] opinion. It just puzzles me why you wouldn't ask the people that know what they're doing. I get very frustrated with the new policies that come in, and they'll last for four or five years, and then that won't work, so then we come up with a whole new thing . . . and the basics are the things that the kids need.

No Child Left Behind made us accountable, made us look at what we were teaching and the relevance of it, and I think that's a good thing. They [standardized tests] have an importance place, but I don't think they're the be-all, end-all, and I think we're losing something because of it. If we start to make them, the children, become very good test takers and not think . . . I get very frustrated with that. I think imagination is so important, and I think that's getting lost. What I'm seeing is that everyone is concentrating so much on these tests and covering all the material, that we're never mastering the material. It feels like a constant introduction.

Well, for the PSSAs, do I think my math class is going to soar on the scoring [from Below Basic to Proficient]? No, I don't. Is that the most important thing to me? No. I want to see growth from last year, and when I see that growth . . . I will be dancing away with joy. I think we need to go back to being developmentally appropriate, and I think we need to give these kids a chance, because the way we're doing it now, what happens to Leo the Late Bloomer, that doesn't mature into their skin until they are a middle level or high school student? Are we writing them off right away . . .? I get very frustrated with that, because if I look at myself, I was Leo the Late Bloomer [laughing].

We have a big responsibility. I don't know if we ever know for sure if we're making a difference. We hope so. I guess the biggest reward for me, or the reassurance that maybe I have made a difference, is to hear from them as young adults. I'm standing in our high school lobby and all of a sudden I hear, "Hey, Mrs. [Name]," and I turn around and here was this young man .

. . . He said, “I’m teaching,” and he said, “And you were a big part of that decision.” Just last year, I got an e-mail from a child I hadn’t heard from in 6 years . . . and she is in education in college now, and something like that just blows you away. It’s so rewarding, it’s humbling. It’s kinda fun to see that kind of full circle come around It’s kinda the icing on the cake. It’s an affirmation that you chose to do the right thing.

I love teaching because I can then always see what children see through their eyes; and maybe that’s a selfish thing I’m definitely getting a benefit from this. I’ve reflected, “What if I could retire right now?” and I’m not ready. Who I am comes too much from being a teacher. I love the kids too much.

Reflections for Reta. Reta drove 120 miles a day as in her late 30s to obtain the degree needed to fulfill her life-long dream of being a middle level teacher. She was “Leo, the Late Bloomer” as a student. She credits the life experiences she brought to the classroom as a critical factor in her teaching expertise.

Reta has always taught from a self-authoring plateau with a local administration that supports her internal voice. However, she finds the current set of expectations from the state frustrating and laments that policymakers do not consult teachers as policy is developed. Standardizing testing provides accountability but is frustrating to her because it does not spark the imagination, because it provides only an introduction, not mastery, and because it labels children who are late bloomers as Below Basic.

Nevertheless, she loves life and enjoys the daily interaction with the kids in a classroom that is exciting and hands-on as she sparks the imagination of her fifth graders. She receives so many rewards from providing the tools for children to learn that she describes teaching as a selfish thing, even though it is hard and time-consuming work and she is frustrated with the state

standards. She teaches the whole child, not just curriculum, and likewise brings her whole self to the classroom. She struggles to keep her commitment to “more than a job” from overwhelming her, especially when she has a class of particularly needy students.

She defined the meaning of teaching as helping children, as providing tools for them to use, and as providing both support and challenge to make it possible for them to grow. Former students who also choose a teaching career provide the “icing on the cake” and reassure her that her commitment and effort have made a difference.

Sarah: The Courage of a Teacher Leader

I knew before I entered college [that I wanted to teach]. I had amazing teachers who opened my eyes . . . not just about the world, but also about me. They gave me the courage to challenge myself and to see all setbacks as temporary. They really showed me what power a teacher holds in transforming the lives of his or her students.

But I actually began undergraduate work as a pre-med major There was a lot of pressure from my family . . . but then . . . I just knew it wasn't for me. [I] switched to English with a minor in Education — a great disappointment to my dad at first, but [now] . . . he's proud of me.

I am currently in my 12th year of a full-time position. [The first year I taught] a rather strange mix . . . an itinerant class in creative dramatics [in several elementary schools] . . . after teaching . . . senior high English classes in the morning. Initiation by fire! It was extremely overwhelming, but I have to say it was also exhilarating

I came in really eager to learn I also remember coming in without enough confidence Somewhere near the end of the [first] year . . . one of the veteran English teachers . . . [came to me], physically patting me on the back and . . . saying, “I can see

something in you. Just keep it up . . . you're going to be great" Because of her voicing that for me . . . I had a whole lot more confidence and could take more risks.

I didn't actually have my own classroom. A cart . . . had to travel with me, sometimes to three different locations in a single day. I got really big muscles. In the wintertime, I fell down a lot! They don't tell you that you have to do your own heavy lifting in college! I just said that again today [laughing]. I was moving huge textbooks . . . with sweat dripping down the side of my face I'm still doing my heavy lifting!

We're a Title I school district – we don't always have two pennies to rub together. Because . . . of funding [the district chose to] get rid of the creative dramatics program . . . and move me to the senior high full time. [All but one of] of the English Department [teachers] at the senior high school [had] retired [that year]. When the new members of the department came in, we were all just so eager to learn from each other We were all willing to throw our hats into the ring and really roll up our sleeves for each other. So we did just some amazing collaborative things those first few years Only two of [that group of teachers] have left the school.

If you had visited my classroom my first 2 years, probably it would have been all about the lesson . . . and not who [I was] teaching. Now I'm much more aware of the fact that . . . it's about what the students are getting or not getting . . . and so there are constant adjustments being made. There's a lot of formative assessment, a lot of little checks. I do an awful lot more [reflecting] both before and after [class]. What worked, what didn't, what does the student need . . . , how can I kind of make this more of a connection . . . ? I have come to regard teaching as an art as well a profession.

My teaching style is my personality given professional expression. One of the best things about being a teacher is that my personal life and my role as teacher don't have to be separate. So I can actually use all of my interests and my passions and my loves. Books and movies and TV shows and favorite songs, I can use it all. The students' interests become so much a part of what we do, too, so it is definitely not a cubicle where everything is always the same.

I just can't imagine things not constantly changing and evolving and growing Not only are the students always different, [they] need completely different things. Because I'm reflective, I find that I'm always changing [and refining] what . . . I do in my classroom. Intellectually, I get an awful lot from my job, too. There are constantly complex questions . . . and every answer uncovers another question. I don't think I'm ever going to be done learning.

I think the reason I have so much energy and enthusiasm is because I get an awful lot of it back from my students, and I kind of feed off of it. Returning to me, it usually becomes exponentially larger. I live for the light bulb. That's where I get my fix.

[Although I am working on another degree], I really don't see myself separated from the students [in the future]. I always say I would love to try my hand at elementary again. I miss them. Maybe an arts environment I regret that [the district chose to] get rid of the creative dramatics program [that I taught the first year] I always threaten I'm going to do music. I have served as the Spring Musical Director and Producer for 9 years; I have created and taught summer elementary drama camps.

I would say it [my enthusiasm] is a pretty steady line. There are definitely some blips. Sometimes you ride a little higher [A drop in enthusiasm], more often than not, has to do with . . . trying to get resources . . . , an administrative initiative . . . or . . . responsibilities that

kind of transform. But I never feel as though I'm in the middle of a situation that isn't going to get better. You need to find a way to handle the change, however it comes. [Interviewer: How?] You keep the students at the center of your thinking and not yourself at the center. I try to . . . say, "Okay, how is this going to be good for students?" I'm going to take that piece of it and . . . make the best of it.

The longer I was in the classroom, the more I realized all of the outside influences that were actually affecting directly what it is that I can and can't do for . . . and with my students. I felt like [change] was always happening to me instead of something that I was a part of. I really wanted to . . . have a hand in what was directly affecting my students through me. I want to be able to put in my two cents. As a teacher, I'm "policy landing gear." I'm where the rubber hits the road.

In talking with and working with teachers from all settings and all levels, you get a much broader view of how a single policy, a single rule, a single consideration . . . how differently that impacts a district with a completely different set of demographics. I've gained an awful lot of insight into not just how policy is built, but how that policy trickles down eventually to the classroom setting and how little teachers are actually involved in those really important decisions.

When I know my voice is valued and my expertise is respected . . . , that feeds . . . my enthusiasm and energy for my job. I like the idea that at a certain point in any teacher's career, they can be seen as not just a teacher . . . [and] move into some sort of leadership role . . . an opportunity to take on more responsibility, not just as a teacher, but as a teacher leader.

[A few years ago] when professional development days and in-service days were being spent yet again on curriculum mapping and common assessments . . . that had become redundant

[for the Language Arts Department] — I remember as a brand new department head at the time saying, “Okay, this is my make-it-or-break-it moment. ” [Being part of] an ELI [Educational Leadership Institute] team on how we [the school district] could implement a Shared Leadership Model . . . helped me to get a leader’s courage . . . take that leadership role and step into it comfortably And so I remember [successfully] approaching administration about what our needs were.

[Often] you’re left to wonder . . . whether or not you’ve been able to affect [the students] and if you have, how deeply. We get glimpses sometimes. Letters and sometimes they’ll stop back and visit, e-mails. What is really fun is some very specific things that they’ll remember and you’re thinking, “Wow, I wonder why he remembered that?” Sometimes I’ll run into them, students, in the grocery store or at a restaurant. Those are wonderful moments . . . , that kind of validation. That helps to keep you going.

I remember an incredible moment in my first 5 years where [Name], in the middle of my remedial reading class, said, “I finished this book.” The first book he had ever read from cover to cover It was incredible. For a long time, that keeps you going.

[Recently, a student] had . . . thought about dropping out. One day, he . . . completely refused to . . . do anything at all and I remember . . . saying, “Look, [Name], you have to do this.” He looked me right back and he said, “I don’t have to do anything” [laughter]. I laugh now, but at the moment it was pretty scary. I looked right back at him and I said, “Yes, you do have to do this because I care and because I want you to succeed and I know . . . that you’re waiting for somebody to push you hard enough to the point where you can’t push back.”

Toward the end of the class . . . he said, “I’ve got to go my next class,” and I said, “No, you don’t. You need to finish this assignment with me.” The next day he came in . . . and he

didn't want to engage, and I said, "You know what, I can keep you again if I really need to," and sure enough, he got involved. It was really a push and shove kind of moment. It really worked. I . . . just gradually saw that change.

[In *Stand and Deliver* there was the] idea that there shouldn't be any excuses. He [Jamie Escalante, a calculus teacher] was not going to take any excuse as a reason why they couldn't do it. Excuses are a bad habit. It's not okay just to sit back and do nothing. Everybody can achieve. The student . . . has to be able to do the work. He or she has to roll up his or her sleeves and make it happen. But at the same time, if that student isn't rolling up those sleeves, then I'm the next in line and so I have to figure out . . . what's that obstacle? That's my job; that's my responsibility.

Reflections for Sarah. Sarah loves teaching English to high school students but retains a passion for music and the arts and younger students. In the past 12 years, she has developed into a teacher leader in the district and beyond and embraces and seeks opportunities for that leadership role. Since teachers are "policy landing gear," she wants to contribute her teacher practitioner voice to the policy making process, recognizing how those policies impact her daily practice.

She credits her own teachers with her life philosophy that "setbacks are temporary." She takes a "no excuses" approach in her classroom – for the students and for herself. This is not a rigid, high-standards approach that ignores the needs of the students; it is a "we can do this together," mutual responsibility approach. Sarah acknowledges receiving glimpses of the difference she is making with current students and the difference she has made with former students is crucial for maintaining her enthusiasm and commitment to her job. It's her "fix."

Sarah functions as a self-authoring teacher leader in a school with a model of shared leadership. She expects to have a voice in the process of policy decisions at the state and national level. She has developed from an initial focus on a lesson to a focus on the complexity of connecting with and believing in individual students. The local system she works within is a fit with her self-authoring plateau; the extended educational system limits her voice.

Trent: Each Student a Feature Story

I actually started out as a journalist. One of the activities [the newspaper] had for first year journalists . . . was to work with the community So one of the things I had to do was to . . . be interviewed by the kids for career day And it was really neat, was very exciting, and was very hands on. The third grade teacher [asked if] I'd be willing to stay an extra session. So, I called my editor and I asked . . . to put together a . . . one-page mock-up. The next day I took it back to the school and presented it to the kids, and it was quite the big deal. And the teacher at the time, [my future wife], said to me, "Have you ever thought of teaching?"

The first year [of teaching was] terrifying. I had . . . kids who had never passed, who were now seniors. I was supposed to be teaching American Literature. I passed the books out . . . and Mister [P] said, "You're new You don't know anything about us, do you? We don't read." (I called all my students by Mister and Miss in that first year. Today I think I'm still the only teacher to do that.)

I said, "Well, that's going to change this year. We're going to have quite the adventure, because we're going to be reading" And Mister [P] said, "It's going to be quite the adventure for you, too." Twenty-one kids leave my classroom; eleven books are sitting on desks. So the next day . . . I pass out the books . . . and I said, "We are going to read. We will stay here after school until we get this right." Mister [P] said, "You can't make us stay. We all ride the

bus.” I said, “You’re seniors . . . you have cars, I’m sure.” They all started to look at their desks. I said, “Mister [P], we’ve been very honest with each other the first two days, what’s up?” He said, “None of us have licenses. We never passed the test.”

So after school I drove out to the driver’s ed place and asked to see a driver’s ed manual . . . I came back the next day and collected the American Lit books, passed out the driver’s ed manuals, and for the next four weeks we studied that. We had tests. We did reading comprehension. We did peer review. We did interaction with texts. We did front of the room presentations. We did posters, flash cards; we did it all. [At the end of the month] we went over and 21 kids got in line and took the test . . . and everybody passed. I wish I could tell you that was the beginning of a wonderful year, but there were struggles.

There were a whole lot of things to learn. But I think it was a sense of setting my expectations out there. [Now] when I start my first day [of each year] . . . two words “Expect Excellence” [are on the board]. When the kids come in I tell them, “Oh, they’re not for you. No, that’s for me That’s what I have to expect . . . and if I ever let you down, I need you to tell me.” I watched *Dead Poets Society* . . . with some colleagues who were saying, “He was the best . . .” and I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me. He was a lousy teacher. He abandoned his kids. He walked out the door and he didn’t fight.”

The one thing that makes my day so exciting is that every day I walk in here not knowing what story’s going to come out I have to be ready for a story as it appears. What you want to do is just make that classroom feel like . . . there is just no beginning It’s wall-less My classroom starts in the hallway in the morning and it ends in the weight room or down at the tennis courts or wherever I am. Many [new and student teachers I’ve worked with] were told, “It starts when you flip the lights on and off, the minute the bell rings.” I said to them, “You’ve got

to be kidding me. You need to start out there. You need to become engaged with the kids. You need to become involved with kids.” It’s the kids who gave me these plants [dozens in the room]. I want to get rid of half of them, but I’m terrified that these kids will come back and visit, and they’ll say, “Where’s my plant?” I had a couple, they just outgrew the room, and I called the students and asked permission, and they’re in local churches and banks, and they’re still blooming and growing

I think the connection is what makes it work. It’s the connection with these kids. All of them are stories. In my classrooms . . . at least once a day, there is an event that becomes part of the stories. Some have been tremendously powerful. I can still remember a young lady . . . and she had leukemia. She was in the hospital. Her family asked me if I would tutor [and I was] around children [in the cancer ward] who were struggling and dying and living. I’d like to tell you that that story is somehow . . . is more of a story than the young man who [was] . . . the first special education student [put] into a regular classroom. He came in and said, “What a nice tie you have,” and I took it off and . . . I tied it to him. It was dress-up day for their photo. But I think all the stories are the same. They’re all about one student at a time. And I don’t think I’ve ever lost that. That’s that feature writer in me that sees that person . . . and I treat that one person as . . . the only important person. I’ve never figured out how to do more than one at a time.

There have never been those moments where I thought of quitting—but I . . . have thought of screaming! [For example, as the newspaper advisor], the principal and the superintendent and one school board member called me down We did a story one time on the fact that there were no minority . . . teachers in [Name of County]. I said, “Tell me: Is it obscene? Is it in danger of disrupting the school day? Is it libelous?” They said, “No, but it makes us look bad” and I said, “That happens a lot.” [As another example], I am writing

curriculum, again, next year I was told, which will make, I think, 15 different times I've written English curriculum. The new person they just hired came in and told us that whoever did this the last time didn't know what they were doing, which was the quote used by, the curriculum coordinator who did it before.

Looking back . . . I don't think I would've had the kind of personal and professional overlap of satisfaction and pride if I would have been a journalist. The minute you start hanging, you know, your trophies on the wall, somehow I think you lose the edge, you lose the touch. Every year, it's a re-invention, [but] I stay true to myself. I am a teacher, not an actor. [A student teacher, observing my classroom,] asked me, "How do you do that? It was just pretty flawless. It was smooth. We didn't feel the lesson plan. We didn't feel the anticipatory set It looked like it was just this nice smooth thing." I said, ". . . to pull any one of those out, one at a time, would literally be fake." I think it would feel that way. [A student, seeing me grocery shopping] said, "You're the same way no matter where you are; no matter what you're doing . . . you're always the same. It's good to know that we can trust you to always tell the truth." So I do think that that's important. All those elements have just become part of who I am and what this place is I don't think anybody can pretend to be a teacher, and I don't think anybody can pretend with these kids.

Notice the front of the room [nothing but the whiteboard]. The front of the room—that's for them. I don't want any distractions when the student's up there. The main purpose is for them to be safe, and to realize that when they're writing there's safety. I'm never in the front of the room at the beginning of class. [A] student from years ago . . . stood up in front of the room and said "Mr. [Name] is it all right if I start class?" He wrote the words *Timed Writing* on the board . . . and he said, "Okay, in the next 60 seconds I want you to write down all the different

. . . things that can get stuck to the bottom of your shoe.” Soon, I’m finding myself doing it in other classrooms. We do the Metaphor of the Day. We do poems. We do anything. I teach writing. Within 30 seconds of . . . when the bell rings, every student has a pen or pencil in their hand . . . a student is in front of the room and they’re writing. That’s not too bad.

Reflections for Trent. Trent has taught students in either middle school or high school the subjects of English and journalism for 34 years. He “expects excellence” of himself and likewise, expects his students to be the best. He sees his teaching as an unfolding story and himself as a feature writer – the focus is on each student, one at a time.

Trent values relationships and connections in teaching; so much so that is willing to take risks to advocate for his students. (He criticizes the *Captain, Mr. Keating*, in *Dead Poets Society* for walking out on his students.) Trent values all of the student stories; he keeps all the plants that were gifts from his students. He sees multiple things that are important in his teaching. His classroom is “wall-less.” He does not divide his classroom plans into segments – it’s “smooth.” He describes himself as a teacher, not an actor. There are no rules posted in his classroom – instead classroom interactions evolve from the principles of valuing each other and striving for excellence. All of these reflections indicate a person who cannot separate parts from the whole, but teaches with an integrity that springs from congruence between who he is and what he is doing at any particular moment with a particular student. An unpredictable narrative evolves from this kind of living and teaching.

Trent began and continues in his teaching with on a self-authoring plateau. In his first year, he replaced the American Literature text with a driver’s education manual; lately as the newspaper advisor he has supported students in writing a story that made the school district “look bad.” He has found a school, a subject, grade levels, and extracurricular tasks where he

can teach with integrity, connect with students, re-invent himself each year, and keep his focus on each student, one at a time. He occasionally screams at the organizational structure, but always finds a way to maneuver to maintain his authenticity and student-centeredness.

Vance: Called Back Home and to Teaching

I started – both undergrad and graduate degrees are mechanical engineering, and I spent 7 years working as an engineer for a large shareholder-owned company, including a one-year assignment in Japan. The year in Japan . . . was the pivotal year which changed it all for me. I think I learned a lot more about my country living outside it than living within it. You get a different perspective. It definitely created a crossroads for me. The metamorphosis of becoming a teacher would not have occurred without being in Japan.

[I] came back from Japan and started volunteering some in the schools with my company-sponsored programs, and I just saw what a difference you could make – just a sense of satisfaction. It wasn't that I wasn't successful at engineering. It was a surprise to people that I wanted to leave, really; but I just knew there was something I wanted more than what I was doing. I guess I didn't want to spend 30 years designing widgets After about 2 years of volunteering, [I] decided to just quit and become a teacher, and physics was the most logical step, and . . . the most interesting one to me.

I always had . . . a philosophy . . . and it wasn't to teach Newton's Second Law . . . but it was maybe to try to make a difference. That difference is made with the art of teaching, not the delivery of the material. To teach, to play a key role – there's no teaching at all in my family, nor can I identify a past teacher who spurred me into the profession. The calling came from within. I endured a 50% pay cut and 2 years of unemployment to become a teacher. And I love being here [for the last 15 years].

The curriculum's not as important to me anymore. It's working with that kid, or those kids, or that class. That's something I probably learned in the last 10 years. You can't quantify life. You can't quantify emotions very well, very easily. I don't place success on my part necessarily on whether they get this material right versus whether they grow and develop as a person. Are they reaching their potential both as a person and in terms of physics' understanding? That's where I am now.

If I have a student who plans on going on to engineering, then the curriculum aspect takes a greater role. If I have a student who I sense has issues that I can help with, then that takes a greater role. It depends on my job of getting to know the student and then from there trying to see which way I can best influence and be a positive influence for that student. Like anything, you want to give as many opportunities as you can, and some kids will take this one, and some will take that one, and hopefully every kid has something they really got out of the class.

Every year, I get 100 case studies [new students], and I try and pick and choose the ones I think I can have the most influence on because you can't get to them all. Every kid's different. Every kid learns differently. They don't all learn the same, so you can't treat them equal. And that's been one change that I've had, I think, over the years, is I don't try and necessarily treat every kid equally. I treat every kid fairly, but you only have so much time and so much energy, and you try and look at your 100 case studies and figure out - the ones . . . you think you can make the most difference with - [those] that come to you, first of all, and the ones you want to go to.

I'm a more effective teacher with experience. It develops with motivation and sustained effort, I guess, and wanting to get better. Time . . . you keep at it. A lot . . . is internally driven You get better with more experience and more case studies.

I have students write essays . . . the philosophical aspects of science, and they sometimes go into other areas, as well . . . about three . . . a marking period, and the essays are op-ed responses of examples from Richard Feynman or Albert Einstein or David Levy - philosophical great thinkers I think – I hope it gets them thinking. I’ve done that ever since I started teaching. I was a student who didn’t like English, I didn’t like writing, and even through college, I always just did the bare minimum; but I realized as an engineer, when I got out into the work force, you have to write. I learned the hard way I had to become a good writer, to communicate, and to get the information out effectively.

You get little burning bushes. Students are not necessarily beaten down by experiences in life and so forth, and they – that’s why I really enjoy working with kids They want to think for themselves, they’re anxious to get out there, and they’re still the bright blue sky yet. Kids have great ideas. Formal awards cannot compete with the real awards – the small gestures of “thank you,” the simple respect . . . and the willingness of students to share their lives with me. I have shed a tear of humility and pride every graduation night since entering the profession.

It’s a separation in June. You have to cut the cord. It’s hard. You invest getting to know the person; you invest seeing that person develop over the course of 10 months or so. You only have so much time. It’s hard. As much as I look forward to coming back [in August], those first few weeks of the new year are tough. In the back of my mind, those kids that graduated in June . . . I want to know how they’re doing; I want to know what struggles they’re going through now that they’re off on their own but I have to focus on my new group. I learned you cannot be effective with your current group of kids if you spend too much time with the ones that already moved on. And as bittersweet as it is, once you get into the next group of kids, that’s so much

fun, too. Even as you start to see patterns . . . it still is exciting and enjoyable to me to . . . see what I can offer

The bottom line is being there; it's being there You start to know some of these kids and you start to know what their interests are and what their desires are and what their goals are One day that something happens and you want to be there. There are little windows where you can – the opportunity – the door closes pretty quickly on certain opportunities to have a teachable moment, and what is a crisis right now may not be a crisis for them tomorrow even or next week. So being there is taking advantage of an opportunity when it presents itself. Timing means a lot. It's those risks you take with the personality of the kids are the real challenges [and] absolutely for me, that's the greatest satisfaction.

Come June, July, and August, I'm helping calving and pasturing and baling hay and stuff like that. It's totally different from what I do in the classroom, which is my reset button. It's the family farm. I couldn't just walk away from that. I tried. Because when I was 17 the farm was just a hot hay mow in the summer that I hated. I had to go away from home, had to separate from it altogether I think that as a teacher, too, by the way. I wouldn't have been a very effective teacher to go right from the high school classroom to the college classroom back to high school classroom. For me, until you're the fish out of water, you never know what being out of water's like.

When you're not sure what else is out there, you always have those doubts. I think if I'd always stayed here, I'd always have questions about what it would be like to go somewhere else. There are times I struggle to get the bills paid with . . . college . . . and so forth, but I don't ever regret – there's not an ounce of regret at all. I have absolutely no reservations, no second guessing, no doubt that I'm where I should be now. None. Everyone finds their own – everyone

knows their own 40 days in the desert kind of thing, you know, and I guess that was 7 years for me to, and then some, sort of figure that out You have to have the perspective Things come full circle with a little perspective, I think. That's what sustains me.

Reflections for Vance. Vance has taught students physics for 15 years in a small district near his family's farm. He had a previous and more lucrative career for 7 years, his "40 days in the desert." While working in Japan for an extended time, he was called from within to more meaningful and satisfying work. (His favorite books are *Narcissus and Goldmund* and *Siddhartha*. Both are stories of young men who walk away from success to find meaning.) He volunteered in schools for his company and then left for a teaching career. He values the perspective he developed when he was out of school and out of the country and credits those experiences with providing him certainty and sustenance as a teacher.

Vance describes his journey from an external measure of success to his own internal perspective as a metamorphosis. He has received external rewards, but the real reward of teaching is his personal satisfaction. His students learn physics content (and philosophy and writing), but content is not Vance's primary purpose. He intentionally influences students, is intent on "being there" for the teachable moment, and teaches according to each student's different needs. He learns from each individual student (case study) so he can continually get better at the art of teaching.

Vance sees himself teaching within a local system, in a content area, and in a country that provides him the freedom to make choices in his classroom that fit his internal voice. He treats kids fairly according to his own judgment, not equally as determined by some external rule. He has intentionally chosen and learned to appreciate the water in which he swims by having a perspective on what it is like to be out of that water.

Narratives from Self-authoring Plateaus – Resolutely Creating a New Path

The five narratives in this section characterize the teacher participants as within a self-authoring meaning-making plateau according to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) framework and use the metaphor of hikers resolutely creating a new path.

Doug: Building an Extended Community

I think I knew that from middle school that I wanted to be a teacher. I had a little brother . . . and teaching him how to do things . . . just seemed natural. Everything I’ve ever done, I’ve been successful . . . because I have a great work ethic. My parents had a tremendous influence on me. They instilled that work ethic.

I’m learning-disabled, I’m ADD [attention deficit disorder], and I think that those things really help me because I . . . work with kids that had problems like I did – [school] was such a struggle I remember being in the blackbird reading [struggling reader] group; that dishonor stayed with me for years, and that feeling evolved into determination . . . to teach the blackbirds to read. I always have the bottom reading group because I have empathy for those kids; [it’s] just very important for me to be there to show them that they can [read] if they work hard. I say to them, “That’s what I did, and that’s what you have to do.” So I try and instill those attitudes into them

I model by example - to other teachers [and] to students. [You] model what you want your kids . . . to be like. My students all know I’m super involved. I’ve always been involved in the community, doing different things in the community. Community is a sense of belonging. The love I have for my kids, the love my kids have for me, the community I build in my classroom, the way I want my kids to act and be citizens - [preparing] students not just for the next grade but as members of a social fabric.

The ADD is such a blessing It allows me to be a wild man and get involved in everything. I am involved in so many things right now I'm the coordinator of the *Remembering Suzanne Committee*. A little girl in first grade had cancer and I made arrangements to go into her ward, and I took all my science stuff and . . . the mom said to me, "I'm so afraid my daughter will be forgotten [because she was dying]." And I came back, and I talked to key people here, and we started this committee, and we had our first walk and raised \$7,000. We didn't know what to do with it. Then I got on this [other] committee, and their goal was to build a Ronald McDonald House We raised \$30,000 here to have a room at the Ronald McDonald House named *Remembering Suzanne*. She would have been a senior this year. The kids . . . come back and they want to do things for her, for us. One made this beautiful brochure, and I gave it to Suzanne's mom and she just started crying 'cause her daughter's never going to be forgotten.

It was without a doubt the best thing I ever did. And we still raise money. We have three events. We just gave away \$2,500 – \$5,000 to families. We send . . . kids to Diabetes Camp. We're sending kids to Deaf Camp this summer. And it's all coming out of that fund. And this is a low or lower middle class neighborhood. Basically it's a hard-working community; people stay here and people are generous. We develop that into community - not just school community, whole town community.

I can't wait to get to school every morning. I found my niche. Fifth grade is just . . . perfect because you can really talk to the kids. You can get them to understand how important it is to give back and be kind to other people, and don't bully. They understand that. I'm an ultra-nurturer now. I love my kids. I let them know all the time I love them I hug. Because I'm an older person, I can get away with that kind of thing because I've done it for 37 years.

I had a little girl . . . mom and dad were alcoholics and drug abusers; kids . . . had to rummage for food and everything. She'd been sexually abused. [She needed] a good male role model. This girl in my class wore a jacket; everything was covered up Within five months . . . the jacket was off; she had personality; she was involved in the classroom; she was trying the best she could. So when those kinds of things happen, you know you're doing the right thing.

A kid in my class last year, diabetic, LD [learning disabled], father that's a drunk, mom trying but doesn't have a lot of energy; I was on him constantly, just constantly. We sent him to Diabetic Camp last summer. And this year, he's having a tremendous year; he's working. The end of the day, he comes over and sees me. Now he's got a male that he knows he can trust, because he can't trust his dad. I like to think that what I did last year, and going to Diabetic Camp, he sees that I was . . . trying to make him a better student at our school.

My expectations are high. They have to be. If my expectations aren't high for them, they're not going to have expectations. That's the constant battle. They have to work hard. That's the key to education. If you instill that in them early, really there's no limit. I show my passion every single day in the classroom, every single day. You do whatever you have to do to get the kids to care, and let them know that you care about them. 'Cause if kids know that you care about them, then they'll care about themselves. You don't give up. A lot of the kids that I've had in the past have come back. I get phone calls from kids I had 10 years ago asking for a recommendation or when they have a problem with something.

The great thing about teaching is the start of the year, and then the end of the year, and then the following year, it starts all over again, and it's a whole new beginning – every year. Every summer, I look at all the mistakes I made and said, “Alright, I'm not going to do that next year.” It's not only fun working with the kids, but . . . the [teachers] I work with now . . . can

solve any problem, any problem in education - somebody's got an idea how to solve that. We never do the same things. It's constant change. Finding better ways to teach We're extremely innovative because . . . we love what we do.

One [past] principal . . . that I worked with was phenomenal, just gave me more confidence. He . . . let me be me. My [new] principal - she's . . . not involved in the school. My other principals, they'd sit down and talk with me. This one, I can't sit down and talk. I did . . . have a talk with her . . . and gave her suggestions . . . because she's losing the respect of all the staff; they all come to me. She is a really nice lady, and she does care. It's just that . . . she's in her office too much and she needs to be in the classrooms.

Outside the classroom, I don't know what the limits are [with her as principal]. It's when I try to think outside the box and do things. I'm a big injustice person. I have to find a way. People do get upset at you. When it's not right, that's when I . . . go 110%, and I either hurt some feelings or - in most cases, people . . . understand why I'm doing it and [know] I'm not trying to hurt [anyone's feelings]. I'm impulsive, so I say many things that I could kick myself for afterwards, [but] there's always a cause. Things that bog me down are just people . . . getting in the way [and saying], "No, you can't do that." There's no reason. If you can't give me a good reason, then . . . look out. [We] find other ways to get around whatever . . . and find a way to do what we want to do. I'm not trying to cause a problem for someone.

When I get upset . . . I don't hang on to things. You can't, you just can't. When you're with the kids, you're with the kids. Your mind is strictly on what you're doing in the classroom. It has nothing to do with what's going on outside [with the principal]. Once you're in the classroom, everything else is forgotten - because they're kids and they need me. I'm here to teach kids.

I look back on my career and it's been wonderful. First year - all of a sudden, you're in a situation where it's you and the kids. I was confused. I was, at times, overwhelmed with the amount of work. So you are flying by the seat of your pants. I've gone from someone that wasn't quite sure of myself as a teacher to . . . a tremendous amount of confidence. Experience is such a wonderful thing. The more I would watch good teachers, the more I became a better teacher. You learn from the people that you work with. [Also], you've seen that same situation happen over and over. You just know how to deal with . . . things because you've done it over and over again, so you know the right things to say; you know what not to say. I mean, I can walk into any situation and deal with anything. I was never afraid to do things, but . . . now I have the confidence that anything I decide to do is going to work. So I think that's been an important transition, the confidence that I've gained. Experience is just so, so important.

This is my second home, and . . . [retirement] will be difficult but I don't think it really will 'cause in my mind, I'm ready to retire. It's time to move on to the next stage of life. I'll still stay involved with kids. I'm going to be around kids still. Who knows?

Reflections for Doug. Doug has taught elementary school for 37 years. He values what he has learned about teaching from his years of experience. He used his struggles as a learning disabled student with attention deficit disorder to become an empathetic teacher. His love for his students includes high expectations for them. He does not give up on them, and he does not let them give up on themselves. He does not just prepare students for the next grade academically; he builds community both within and beyond the classroom. He has a strong sense of justice and will risk relationships with other staff and “find ways” to do what he sees as right for the students—for the blackbirds, for the abused, for the ones without a positive male role model. Doug attributes his success in finding solutions for student needs to his experience as a teacher, his

work ethic, and the support of his fifth-grade teacher colleagues.

Doug understands his role as a model for his students and for other teachers. He has created a legacy of science fairs, stock market games, and fundraising for *Remembering Suzanne*. He has identified key persons who will continue these events as he retires. He has decided to leave his second home and retire at the end of the year but knows he will continue to work with kids.

Doug functions as a self-authoring person in a school that until recently has let him be himself and find a way that solved a problem or supported a cause by thinking outside the box. He challenged the status quo if necessary. He developed and uses a network of colleagues and community members in support of his causes. He learned from prior mentors and his own experiences. He was confident that ‘could be me’ and find and implement the right and just thing for his students and his school. He is frustrated with a current principal because his voice is not heard. For many years, Doug flourished in a school that supported his development as a self-authoring teacher; recently, however, the climate is restricting his voice and has influenced his decision to retire.

Irene: Creating a Memory for Each Student amidst the Garbage

My passion was music, still is. . . . I started out as a music education major But it was incredibly difficult, and . . . I didn’t have support from . . . anybody. . . . I went [into] liberal arts . . . and then I sort of fell into elementary education. The first year I was out [of college] I did all sorts of things. I was an Avon lady and I played in an . . . orchestra; I play violin. I cleaned houses. Then I started substitute teaching and then I [was] a long-term sub [and now] I have been in this district for my entire 30 years. I never thought I’d be in it longer than 10 years.

I used to think I could save kids when I first started teaching. I would just love them, and care for them, and hug them. [But] the next year these children were dealing with the same stuff all over again . . . and I thought that I had made a difference. I finally . . . came to the belief . . . that I can't change those children. The truth is I can't change their lives, but I can be a memory. We never know what one thing we say or do in a school year a child will remember for life. That's a huge responsibility. . . . But it's the truth. I just try and live that. Here's a question that's become a guiding question for me: What will serve — in the end what serves best . . . ?

I've been back and forth from third to fourth grade About every 6 or 7 or 8 years I would need a change. I was just happy to be doing what I was doing . . . until every 6/7/8 years, and then I changed it so I could love it again. But 5 years ago . . . it was starting to get harder. I was losing the joy of teaching, and they were losing the joy of learning. I took great exception to the things we were now being told to do to children and with children. Still do. With No Child Left Behind lots of things . . . didn't seem to me to be in the best interest of the children. Legislation [is] passed by people who have only ever gone to school; they've never been in education as a profession They pass the legislation, and we all have to bow to it and do it. We're assessing these kids to death. [It's like] just training cattle to . . . jump this high.

Fortunately, there were two elementary gifted education positions open . . . and that's what I've been doing since then. So that's juiced me up again. So it's my fifth year. It's been different every year. I mean, I wish I had found out about gifted education 20 years ago. I absolutely love [the students]. I know — I've been through it myself. I don't want to, you know, speak proudly, but I've been in their shoes, and I know the experiences that they've had. I want [to help] them in ways that I wish someone would've helped me when I was their age in dealing with similar things. . . .

When I came into the program we had . . . a 2-hour pullout once a week for elementary gifted kids. We got a new superintendent 2 years ago and . . . he had his ideas of what he wanted to do, and . . . we got the report in March [from a national expert in gifted education], and things have really changed. I'm out in front with the charge. My preferred position is to support from behind. But I can't. I have to be out in front . . . right now. It's been a really huge change . . . and it's really, it's fascinating. And I think what's energizing me now is watching this process.

This year we're doing cluster classrooms in third, fourth and fifth grade. A cluster classroom means gifted and high-achieving . . . children [put] into one classroom. We're pre-testing more; we're compacting; we're picking the pace up . . . adding some critical thinking models . . . [and] higher level thinking It's caused quite the stir among everybody. Taking the children out of [the regular classroom] and putting them all together . . . has created such a firestorm, much of it negative emotion – a huge outcry from the community . . . from principals [and] from staff in the district.

I think . . . what we're seeing is a microcosm of our country . . . , the feeling towards people who are intelligent – such negativism . . . , bullying . . . , [and] name-calling. Everybody cries “elitism.” [I think] if you want to see elitism, look what we do with our football teams and our wrestling teams. That's elitism!

What have I left out? [The paperwork! We had to] re-write all our GIEPs [Gifted Individualized Educational Programs] ASAP for the state . . . and [use] a [new] on-line GIEP writer. I'm a Luddite when it comes to technology. It really wore me down. It was hard. But I wasn't bored! I had to find the [one] teacher in each building that I can go to . . . [where] I don't feel I have to monitor . . . what I'm saying. So that's one way that I've done it. I [also] have some support people in my personal life.

It's time for me to say, "It is what it is. . . . What am I going to do?" I [just] close my door and be with the kids. I have to [separate the kids and the others]. Professionally and ethically I have to. You just tie a knot in the end and hang on. It's easy for me to do that because I enjoy working with them [the children] so much.

With children I am [outgoing]. And I . . . love being with them, and I love teaching them, and . . . I want to help them learn and grow, and I really enjoy supporting that process for them. I love these kids. I love their families. It's never a dull job. Kids come in different every single time. It's never the same thing 2 years in a row. I'm always learning. And I just love the look on kids' faces when they get something. I like . . . facilitating people working together.

[However] I am an introvert; I am the most introverted you can be. Every time I take the stupid Myers Briggs, I think please, please, please let me be an extrovert. Extroverts have more fun. [Laughing] There is really more interaction between them and other people. . . . When I do that a lot, it really drains me. I need time in my day to kind of mull things over. To recharge myself I have to go inside [myself] . . . and kind of just check in with myself.

I tend to be better at recognizing good ideas than I am at creating them. Quite often, I am able to pull things together and make them into a whole . . . that's different than those different other parts. The other part of my creative process is . . . take it, soak it in, and then let it go . . . for a couple days [or] take a walk, come back. The back of my head has worked on it, and now it's turned it into something else. I didn't always know that about myself. I used to just keep trying to bulldoze [my way] through. I can very intense.

Pretty much teaching was my life. [Except] I had my music life doing musical things in the evenings. And that was okay in the beginning. But it hasn't been okay the last 15, 20 years. I was headed down a really bad road without learning how to find some separation over the years.

[Separating] has been important to enable me . . . to continue to teach. It's been a lot of what we've worked on, balance, separation, you're you/I'm me boundaries, that's a lot of what I've worked on for 20 years.

Whenever I hear a young person say, "I want to teach," I say, "Are you sure? Do you love to work with children? Do you love to work hard? And do you mind it when people complain about you?"

I've been out of the classroom for 5 years [and] don't think I can go back and do it again because of all the changes, all the directives that have come down. . . . It would take an incredible amount of energy on my part . . . to go back into [the classroom] and to juggle all those balls. With all [the] "you learn this and this" [new technology and new strategies] I think it would be very, very difficult, and at this stage in my career I don't want to do that.

We'll see how this job goes. The jury is out on that one. There is enough that I love about it; I can, for now, put up with the garbage. I don't think I'll retire. I would really terribly miss the children if I retired. When I [do] retire I am going to throw myself a graduation party. I've always been to school. It [will be] time for me to know what else there is in the world besides school

Reflections for Irene. Irene is currently administrating elementary gifted education for her district – supporting students, teachers, and others in three buildings. She has been doing this for 5 years, after 25 prior years in either third or fourth grade. This move was a chance to be out of overwhelming and inappropriate expectations for the regular elementary classrooms. Her commitment to being a good memory for her students and to providing the support to gifted students that she did not have when she was a student keep her in education. Her passion for music has constantly enriched her life and sustained her.

The contrasts and conflicts in this narrative are not a result of the time period between interviews; they appeared in both and reflect the intensity of both her positive and negative experiences. She is extroverted as needed with her students, but is an introvert by personality; change is both fascinating and draining; her vision of the job she loves is in constant tension with the “garbage” she puts up with from the system; she does not want to retire but she does want to finally graduate from school.

Irene functions from a self-authoring plateau in a school and state context that increasingly expects a socialized response to their expectations. As her personality of experiencing events very intensely combines with this mismatch in perspectives, Irene oscillates between joyful moments with the children and despair at the overwhelming and inappropriate expectations of her as a classroom teacher. She functions as an exemplary teacher in the classroom, but this commitment comes at a personal price and she finds it harder and harder to teach and says the jury is still out on how much longer she will remain in the public schools.

Madelyn: Teaching as a Rewarding Responsibility

This is my 26th year; all in elementary; most of them second [grade]. I knew I wanted [my career] to be in some kind of helping profession. I had a few field and volunteer experiences [in college] that helped me to fine tune my direction, and I decided classroom teaching I always knew it would be little ones.

That first year was quite a year. It was in [State]. I didn't have a classroom. I taught in a hallway with an easel and the desks lined up along the wall I remember thinking, “You don't really know what you're doing yet, and everyone's watching you,” but I was so excited to have my first job. I just remember . . . staying 'til 6 or 7 every night to prepare for the next day and loving every minute of it. It was a very supportive school. Although I didn't have a formal

mentor, there were several teachers who took me under their wing

We moved to [State] and I . . . had my own classroom. I was there . . . 5 years and taught in two different school buildings I've always been very fortunate because I've never felt isolated in my teaching. There's always been . . . a sense of knowing there was always someone to go to, to ask, to confer. If I [had] felt like I was just in my own little bubble . . . I think it would have been much more challenging. As I think about it, for beginning teachers, [it is] critical to have that sense of support.

Then I came to Pennsylvania and . . . I felt like I was starting from square one because the philosophy was so different. It was up to the teacher to fill that framework, and it was all hand created. It was really such a different way, and I loved it. It was very exciting and really challenging. I remember just being in love with my job. I was feeling, "Okay, I've this figured out now," and I could extend what I was doing.

I want my expectations to be high because my experience is that almost always students will rise to what you expect of them — if you give them a safe environment to take a risk and if you give them the tools they need to try things out and the confidence that it's okay to not get it the first, second, third, fourth, whatever time. Every child isn't going to meet [the expectations] in the same way at the same time.

Making a difference means just helping that child reach their best possible potential. [There is] something to be celebrated if they improve. We're really the root of what happens next in our culture and in society We don't know what these kids are going to grow up to do. We're making a difference, though, for the years they spend under our care.

Teaching's essential work [and] it is hard work . . . because it's so complex. The number of spontaneous decisions you are making every single day! You are juggling so many different

things! Every year's different It's intellectually very stimulating, very challenging. It's never stagnant. We're always questioning, "How can we tweak this?" That's been the sustaining part. It's been very rewarding. It's just kept me so alive. I've never felt bored, not a single day. There's always just such an up feeling when you realize you've really taught something.

A lot of the satisfaction and value that I get intrinsically from this work is through developing relationships [and] making those connections with my students, with their families, and with colleagues. So when I think about important things in my career, it's probably the specific students that I've really reached in a way that I think I made a difference, or I hear back from students I am so moved by that I just recently got an e-mail from this young woman [who] is now in college in Korea and . . . she just was writing, "I think about second grade. I remember . . . listening to stories."

The last 3 to 4 years . . . I started to recognize some of my enthusiasm had ebbed. I'm trying a little harder than I used to [in the classroom]. I mean, I know how to engage kids . . . but it feels different. I feel a little weary. I still enjoy getting up to go to work every day, and I still would say I absolutely want to do this work, but . . . there are more pressures. When [an] opportunity . . . to step out of the classroom for a period of time and do something different became available [for next year], I got very excited about that I can remain in the world of education and still work with children, but do it in a different context. [I will] be in different schools and connect with different [teacher] mentors and see the kinds of things that are happening in classrooms all across the district

The job [of teaching] is harder than it was when I first started. There's no denying it. We have more at-risk families. The work has become so much more demanding because [the students'] stories are so complex and sometimes very sad. There are more levels of

responsibility. The creative aspect has definitely lessened. A lot of our curriculum is very much scripted now You do this, then you do this, then you do this. I think we deliver a very effective program [but] it is far less open-ended It all comes down to time. I mean, everything is so very specifically structured . . . that if I wanted to do . . . a project . . . preparing typical pioneer foods that were eaten, the amount of time that that would take is just not in my schedule anymore. Other things have just presented themselves as “have-tos” and “must-dos,” so we do less experiential extensions of the unit and more just teach the concepts. It’s just so different. Our new units have specifically been written to meet the Pennsylvania State Standards. There are so many different areas now that teachers are expected to teach. It’s almost like instead of [taking time and] going deep with what we’re teaching . . . we’re just spreading it thin . . . instead of . . . really taking [fewer things] to a place where there’s deep understanding.

It was very ironic. The year that I was chosen as a [PA Teacher of the Year] finalist was the hardest year of my career. It just was a perfect storm of extremely needy students. I just had never had so many intensive needs on my plate at one time. There were so many things that were taking me away from what I thought my day-to-day job should be. I never felt like I was doing anything well. Again, I had a lot of support—my colleagues, a lot of resource people in our district. Luckily I wasn’t alone

It was really quite humbling, but it was also really good for me, I think, to have to dig deep. I invest a lot emotionally with my kids, and I think what I learned was that I had to take it less personally, and I had to do the best that I could but not take everything to heart. I think it best if [you] don’t let this job consume your life because it easily can. You don’t even realize that it’s happening. There really is no end. [It’s] rare for me not to be here at least part of a

weekend day. It's not a job where you can go home and say, "Okay, I'm finished for today . . ." I strive toward more balance because I think I actually do a better job [teaching] when I have other things in my life that are bringing me satisfaction as well. I [have] realized that . . . I needed to . . . really have some kind of space between my work and myself. You have to say, "I've done this much today. That's all I can do for today. I'll start again tomorrow."

At the end of the day, I always reflect. Even on those really hard days, I always looked for that little bit of joy, and there always was something wonderful . . . , something to make me laugh, or something that created a little bright moment. It's hard to put into words . . . sort of . . . classroom magic. It can be a tiny little something, but you know it's been important. Sometimes it's very deep and intense, where they've had the light bulb go off. There are all kinds of rewards that are inherent in the day-to-day. You just have to make sure you look for them.

I like having a surprise every day and . . . it's tremendously creative. I've been able to express myself creatively through . . . teaching. I spend a lot of time and put a lot my own self into creating a community where . . . the [students] develop that sense of "you're an important person in this community." I think that's what's sustained me. And, again, the relationships, and the fact that you really do feel like you're impacting people's lives on a daily basis. Sometimes it's overwhelming. I'll think about that and think, "Whew, big responsibility," but it's so rewarding.

Reflections for Madelyn. Madelyn has brought her expressive, creative self and high expectations to the classroom as she has taught early elementary students in three states for the past 26 years. She has taught from and was supported in a self-authoring plateau where she hand created experiential learning opportunities, established relationships and connections with her students, and enjoyed the challenge of the complexity of teaching. She values

encouragement and support of her colleagues but does not look to them for confirmation or validation of her work; that comes from her intrinsic satisfaction with her work.

She is planning to move to a professional development district-wide position providing support to beginning teachers – something she found invaluable in her early years. Madelyn is making the change because she is recently sensing the need to do something different as the job gets harder – needier children, higher expectations. She fondly remembers the past 20-some years as she currently feels a bit weary as the expectations of the job recently are less of a fit with her vision of herself as a teacher – connected, creative, and teaching for “deep understanding” instead of “spreading it thin.” There are increasing constraints on her self-authoring perspective from the implementation of the state standards and there is little chance for creativity with more prescribed curriculum units.

In contrast to the increasingly directed curriculum, her goal and teaching responsibility is primarily to know her students’ stories and assist them in reaching toward their potential. She reflects daily on the moments of joy. Opportunities to build community and support within and beyond the classroom with student families and fellow teachers sustain her, as well as the complexity of teaching, the rewards in the daily interactions with students, and communications from former students. She looks forward to her new role in mentoring the next generation of teachers.

Margo: Choices for an Internal Comfortableness

I was the first person to graduate college in my family. My parents were both . . . high school dropouts, [but it was] important to them for me to have a good education. My teachers influenced me greatly in my life [and] opened up another world . . . to me, and I wanted to do

that [for children], too. I was a gymnast. I loved art. I loved music. I thought [in elementary teaching], “Here’s the best of all things.” I can write poems and songs

I started [teaching] in 1970. We had a miserable strike . . . months, months . . . and I had a first-grade class. I taught . . . in three houses of my students three days a week in the morning; they came! First grade is the where you begin your love of learning and reading, and I just couldn’t bear that they would lose . . . all that time. I wasn’t popular [with other teachers]. When we did go back in, I was pretty lonely, but you . . . make your decisions for yourself as a human being. You do what you can live with.

[After that first job] I took a position . . . in Indiana teaching at a demonstration lab school [for future teachers]. [My husband and I] came back to [Name of City], and I took a job in a gifted program, and I stayed there two years. Then I stayed home for 15 years during which time . . . I worked [part-time] in some capacity or another, usually taking my children. I came back to work in this district . . . in the gifted program. I did that for 7 years. Then I left that job in pursuit of a regular [elementary fourth grade] classroom. I did that for 7 years until I was asked to become the literacy coach. I was hesitant at first because I really loved my classroom, but . . . this was an opportunity, again, for me to learn more and have a chance to do something different.

I don’t stay in the same place for more than 7 years. I love to learn, and in every job I’ve had good experiences to learn I need a challenge myself [Each time] I sort of knew in my heart it was time to move on — either I had accomplished . . . or I felt like I couldn’t accomplish what I wanted. I always feel there’s a new start. I’ve tried to get that across to students, too. We don’t have to be perfect Tomorrow’s another opportunity . . . , not to beat yourself up . . . , but to move on.

[As the literacy coach] I model . . . reading lessons for [other] teachers [by going into] their classrooms. I try to make the teachers' job a little simpler by giving them a lot of resources that are already [created]. Once teachers learn how I do it, then they do it themselves. As a fourth grade teacher, I embraced the change . . . when we changed the reading program. I'm . . . always examining my own practice. Instead of teaching stories . . . [we were to] focus on teaching strategies that students could pull from when they were struggling . . . [to read]. It was an extraordinary amount of planning the first year I worked an 18-hour day all that year. I made everything available [to other teachers] . . . , and that sort of singled me out as a leader.

Some of the teachers in my building were annoyed . . . [that] I worked 18 hours a day; I don't have to answer to that. I don't expect anybody to approve or disapprove. I think that's just an internal comfortableness with what your own value is. I don't think the right thing is always popular . . . , but you have to live with yourself at the end of the day It serves you well to have a belief system that you can feel comfortable about upholding.

I've always looked for a way to meet all the children's needs. Even as a first-year teacher in 1970, there was an old book closet, and they had lots of old series in there. So my first thing to do was to go get every reader that . . . the children could possibly learn from and get in on shelves in my room. So, I guess that's the thing. I've always wanted to look at how we can meet a wide spectrum of needs.

Sometimes [I am] working on something and then . . . people above me shift gears and [drop the] project [to] jump on the next bandwagon. I see that happening all the time. That can be frustrating. There's always something new . . . asked for by your school, your district, [or] your state, and so there is a lot on the plate The accountability factor with all these stakeholders is huge today.

Coming up with some content or knowledge statements [standards] that we want children to know and be able to do is a very healthy thing [However], the teachers do have autonomy here, and that's important. It's not just everybody has to be on Page 2 on the same day. [The classrooms here all] look different, and they should look different. On the other hand, in my job, what I really see is people need structure, too. They can use their own talents and interests to implement [standards] in a way that suits them, but they don't have a choice about implementing [them]. I know people don't like the standardized testing, etc., but . . . it has held people accountable to teach certain material

I think what's not realistic sometimes [is] to fit in the amount of things that [these other stakeholders] say children can learn into a year. Because we're putting too much in, we haven't given children the comfort of exploring and having fun with it. It doesn't last, [we don't] get deeply enough into it to master it, and . . . I think we're falling short of giving students that time. Teachers . . . feel breathless to get on to the next concept, purely because there's a deadline, that benchmark test Children . . . can all learn, but they can't all learn at the same way at the same pace. Some children need 26 repetitions . . . when there's hardly enough time for two today. We've sometimes lost sight of children and what they need as little people, as people with needs.

This is not a 9:00 to 5:00 job any way you look at it. This is not. No one can do it in that time frame. It's a dedication, a different kind of life, and at least I realized it when I got into it. I come to work at 7:00 [a.m.] usually [and] stay 'til . . . 5:00 or 6:00 [p.m.] and . . . take work home. To have a life with my family on the weekends, I . . . often get up at 6:00 [a.m.] on a Saturday and get some work done by noon. You're a person with a life outside the school, and

yet you're constantly juggling your outside life with your school life. [Your school life] interferes, without a doubt.

The public perception is much different than that reality. I guess that it frustrates me that the public has very little perception of what it really means to be an educator, how hard it is to meet the needs of all these children all day. But I try not to feel hardened about that 'cause I know that if I could go back, I wouldn't do anything else It's worth it to me. I've loved it.

It's so beyond content and subject material. Children in your room— the stability, the safety, the way you interact with them in a caring, positive way— that's a big deal. They may not have it everywhere, but the fact that they can have it with you all the time is very important. What you do in the classroom makes a difference Somehow that's important for me. I am not minimizing the importance of academics at all. But . . . we do want people to be able to go on and use their skills and . . . to respect each other. People on Wall Street who are swindling other people and not caring about them . . . they weren't in the right classroom!

There's something here that pulls me back as the summer wears on. I [look] forward to school. It's just fun. It's just the joy of watching students learn. The connection with the kids. That's what drives you every day. That keeps you going. A child who had trouble . . . who says, "I can't believe that I can figure out how to do this." That's a reward . . . and so I guess I really need that. That's something that not a lot of people get a chance to do. I guess the biggest thing to me is my own satisfaction at a job well done. You really do it for yourself You don't mind going the extra mile because . . . you always want to have a good day, for them and for you.

Just like I've kept in touch with my teachers . . . I would really love to see a list of [all former] students and what they were doing and what choices they made, just see this little

snippet of their life It's so interesting to see . . . what becomes of them. Some of my first-grade students [from the strike year] . . . wrote to me for years It was just great. One of the pleasures when I was nominated for the [PA-TOY award was former] students . . . e-mailing and updating me on their lives. Some things you just can't throw away — pictures and letters I probably will have a lot of scrapbooks someday . . . [that] my grandchildren will probably look through!

Reflections for Margo. Margo, whose parents did not finish high school, had such a positive K-12 experience that she decided to teach and provide a caring, safe, and stable classroom where all elementary children, anywhere on the spectrum of learning needs, can learn academic content and establish relationships. Her contacts with her former teachers and her former students span 40 years.

Margo teaches from a self-authoring plateau. She listens to her internal sense of comfortableness as she takes a new position periodically to maintain the challenge of learning something new. She disregards others' approval or disapproval and does whatever it takes to live with herself at the end of the day. She has had supportive relationships with many of her teacher colleagues over the years. She has also been willing to endure loneliness, disapproval, and unpopularity to uphold her beliefs about what is right to meet the learning needs of the children — teaching in homes during a strike and working 18-hour days for a year to implement a new program, for example.

She has always been willing to assume the role of teacher leader and now impacts classrooms other than her own as she coaches teachers into changing reading strategies, and assists them in implementing the state standards. While recognizing the value of the structure

provided by the standards, Margo, as a self-authoring person, also sees the need for autonomy for teachers to make the classroom their own and each classroom in her current school is different.

She laments the pressure to include too much content without enough depth as benchmark test deadlines approach, the rush to try the latest program “cure,” and the public misconceptions about teachers. While the current climate of standardization and accountability is not a fit with her internal voice, she finds a way to work within the system without becoming hardened. Each of the characteristics she laments as well as each new position and each new day is a challenge and a learning opportunity for her (and her students or the teachers she coaches) to start anew, to move on, and to embrace change. Assisting others in learning, connecting with them, and confirming that she has made a difference in the lives of others over the last 40 years provide her with joy, satisfaction, and meaning for her life’s work.

Nikki: Committed to Her Students in Spite of Constraints

I was an English major. I always had an idea that I wanted to teach, but later on [in life]. [First] I was going to, I don’t know, save the world, translate a million languages, travel It just made more sense to dual major in English and . . . Secondary Ed. [Then] I was thrilled to be able to get a Masters in Literature; and then after that [another] 40 credits . . . [in] to how to be a better English teacher.

I student taught here . . . and was able to get a half-time contract position There are times when I feel like I want to give everybody a tax refund for that year . . . ! I . . . was also coaching girls tennis, being an Athletic Council Advisor, doing Reading Olympics . . . just to make the school realize that they didn’t want to let me go. It was exhausting but, at the same time, I . . . knew that this was what I wanted to do.

[Then] I was able to get a full contract. Working on the Coalition of Essential Schools . . . Team, that was special. We were able to, in a small portion of the school, participate in this. We were given more liberties in terms of flexible planning, common meeting time, and interdisciplinary projects. I really tried to move away from the “teacher as the center of the classroom.” The other thing that I thought was really important was to make connections with the kids about the literature [and] bring current events into the writing. We were able to do field trips; we were able to do group projects [and] rearrange and flex our schedule, and that doesn’t happen anymore, [pause] unfortunately. When I was on that interdisciplinary team . . . I sat down with veteran teachers and a guidance counselor and . . . most definitely, I . . . learned from my colleagues.

Our suburban address doesn’t keep out a lot of the problems that urban schools have. So I feel like maybe that I can make a difference because of the type of kids that are here. I’ve been working with the AP [Advanced Placement] Program. I’ve always felt . . . I needed to be grounded with the remedial kids as well . . . , so I try to make sure that my schedule has a balance of both of those courses. At the same time . . . I’m also beginning to realize that it’s incredibly demanding . . . ; no matter which class . . . I have perhaps some of the neediest students, and that is taxing.

So I’ve been here for, I guess this is my 17th year. I have taken students . . . to museums, theaters, and bookstores. Some of the kids in the remedial classes . . . are the kids that need the trips the most. [They have been] neglected for emotional, intellectual . . . [and] even financial development. I never let biases or stereotypes get in the way of my planning a trip, and maybe I was just crazy, but we did it. That [was during] an era when it was much easier . . . to take students out of the building. Unfortunately, [now] there are too many hoops and signatures and

papers . . . you need to have a parent chaperone who has filled out FBI clearances and [has been] fingerprinted!

2007 . . . was my last international trip [after 4 prior trips chaperoning students]. Not only is the world we travel in much stricter with airline travel, but . . . students . . . are more heavily medicated for psychological . . . issues [and] it makes traveling to Europe all the more difficult. So I doubt if I will ever be taking students [abroad] again.

The start of this year was the worst that I've ever experienced . . . for a lot of reasons. I had a student teacher; I had a new co-teacher; every class had new books; [there were] new on-line grades and I was coaching. I didn't have time to exercise and to take care of myself . . . so I made it a [New Year's] resolution . . . to [leave school at 3:30 p.m.] to make sure that I get to my swimming time . . . and running time. [But then] I face two to three hours' worth of work at home each night Sometimes that's overwhelming, and I just put [the exercise] off another day. Sometimes I can't believe I picked a job with homework!

We haven't really brought up standardized testing, and that's been a bigger change in my 17 years [and] has changed what I'm able to do in the classroom. That just saddens me. It doesn't change my commitment. I guess I have to settle for, "Yes, I will follow administration's expectations and try to make this the best as I possibly can." It's hard because part of what I like is the creative process and making those connections . . . , and when I have to lose that time and give it to practicing for a standardized test [on the computer], it's hard not to feel resentful I feel, in some cases, that I'm a laptop cart operator and not so much somebody who makes stories fun for kids.

I can't keep up with all the technology. What's the best way . . . ? With technology, our jobs are changing I think my job is less and less to be the expert and the center . . . ; my job

is now to help the kids explore, whether it's new literature or . . . technology. When they've grown up reading on the computer and reading hypertext . . . they don't read the same way we grew up reading I'm in a different world, and my way might not be the right way, and I have to help the kids figure their path. [In the future] it's going to be even more different than it is today. If I have any chance, if I have a prayer in reaching them, [I have to] speak their language or use their media.

I struggled probably with years three, four, and five. I . . . questioned whether I made the right decision. I was still learning the material and trying to survive. I would have been 24 to 27 [years old] and I think that's a tumultuous time for a lot of people I think there's a tendency to look around and say, "Am I measuring up?" I tend to put a lot of pressure on myself I have this diverse schedule . . . , and I have this expectation that I should use the technology properly . . . , and I need to get all these papers back in time. In those early years, I didn't know how to define success at work, and I think that led to some frustration. [Now] I can be happy with smaller moments and smaller successes I guess it's less of a sprint and more of a marathon.

I wish that . . . I hadn't worked as hard as I did for so many years, but I know that this is the right profession for me. My other friends who worked in other industries [told me about] . . . feeling like there was no purpose to what they were doing. [Eventually] I realized that every day I know what my purpose is I value the relationships with students and the sense of optimism. I realize that my job offers that. My career and my life and my interests support each other. I like the ability to be creative and to plan and to research.

Teaching is hard work. We want our classrooms . . . to function a certain way, and we're looking to always do the work that needs to be done. We'll go the extra mile . . . ; you have high

expectations for yourself; you're always trying to improve [and] show growth. Care and concern and also self-criticism and reflection [are] necessary in this job. Unfortunately, at that metaphorical end of the day it's still a race to finish X, Y, and Z [and] there's not enough time to . . . say, "Wow, look what we accomplished."

I value the simple things in life, and I think that maybe a good teacher can help students discover that. They're bombarded with so much media; I do think they need some sort of sense of guidance. The reward of knowing that you're making a difference with somebody . . . , [helping] somebody think, have a good outlook on life, be excited about their future, and . . . communicate well. At the end of the day, if I know I've done that

I will absolutely be here [another] 10-15 years. What keeps me in? I love this school and this district, and my colleagues are fabulous, and the kids are worth fighting for. [Interviewer: How do you know when you are winning?] When the kids are excited when they come to school or when they're proud of their work. I like what I do, and I believe in what I do. I have the daily contacts with the kids. They're worth it; they're the reason why I'm here. The kids just made me laugh an hour ago. I'm not really ready to leave the classroom in any way, shape, or form.

Reflections for Nikki. Nikki has been sustained in her teaching commitment for 17 years by her supportive teacher colleagues and her daily interactions with her students as both teacher and coach. She teaches from a self-authoring perspective where she creates learning opportunities for her students and herself, teaching provides meaning and purpose. She intentionally works in a school that is somewhat disadvantaged and deliberately chooses to work with both the gifted and the remedial students in the school; both are the "neediest" students. She is determined and pressures herself to maintain high expectations for herself and to make a difference with her students.

In her determination to make a difference and teach from her internal sense of mission, she fights (for her kids and for herself) against a system that increasingly demands more of her time while also making it more difficult for her to practice as she would prefer. She does more grading and less planning and research; more in-class activities and less travel; more standardized test preparation and less “making stories fun for kids;” and more school work and less exercising.

Nikki remains engaged with her students, still believes she is in the right profession, and expects to remain in teaching long-term even though she finds it increasing hard, sometimes resents the demands on her time, and is saddened by the loss of creativity and connections. She copes with a school culture that has become more restrictive and directive. Nevertheless, her commitment to her students remains, and as she makes school the best she can for them given the constraints of the system, she finds rewards and purpose for herself.

Narratives from a Self-authoring Plateau with a Hint of Self-transforming – Exploring Ways Other Than Hiking to Travel

The two narratives in this section characterize the teacher participants as within a self-authoring meaning-making plateau with a hint of self-transforming according to Kegan’s (1982, 1994) framework and use the metaphor of travelers exploring ways other than hiking to travel.

Dwight: A Scholar Who Plants Seeds

I started as a Communication Arts and Literature major. When I started college I really was . . . trying to go into anything but teaching . . . because my entire family teaches — my mother, all my sisters [and their spouses]. So we were a faculty-room family. But I worked with [Professor Name], a Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year [as my advisor]. She started me on the road . . . [and I added] a secondary education certificate.

Leaving college . . . I became a public relations copywriter and an account executive . . . and within 5 years, I was vice president of advertising I realized I wasn't enjoying it [though] I could do it very well. [I left advertising and] became an assistant manager at [Name of Bookstore] and that was really a healing time. I didn't realize how much emotional damage being in advertising [had done] to me — the pressure and the money and the . . . politics This detour [from teaching] . . . gave me authority and experience outside of teaching that I think was very important

[The school where I had done my student teaching seven years earlier] . . . called me. I was 27. It felt right the second I remembered my student teaching experience I had a little bit more distance starting seven years after [college graduation]; I quickly earned the respect of the students. I had such a positive first five years. [There was] cohesion among the faculty and a lot of . . . interdisciplinary collaboration.

[After those 5 years, I came to] this school. We are kind of surrounded by old money and new nouveau riche suburbs and . . . fortunately, we're not either of those. We call it Mayberry RFD . . . because it's just a conservative, old-fashioned kind of . . . small town We have about 40% of the parents show up for open houses . . . [and they are] very supportive of teachers. A little different tenor when there's a strike!

I don't know if I would have stayed in teaching had I started in this district [18 years ago]. My first year here was very tough A school that is this large [1,700 students at the high school] and this fragmented . . . creates isolatable cadres of people who don't really know each other. I'm lucky if I know a quarter of [the students] by the time they're seniors. I don't know the names of all . . . the teachers. There's just not the family feeling that a school can have. It's hard to put your thumb on exactly what the feeling is. It's just sort of an edginess.

I am a teacher! Every September [my enthusiasm] peaks coming back — yes, yeah! I think it goes back to doing what you're supposed to do in life. Csikszentmihaly [author of *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*], flow, you get into that zone when you are . . . at the top of your game. I feel bad about it; it hurts inside, if I know that my level of performance wasn't my best shot. It's frustrating when [others are teaching] when teaching isn't their niche That's one of the most frustrating things — mediocrity. My sisters and I . . . got the idea . . . from [our parents] that you should always do your best

Teaching is hard work. It should be hard work. If you're doing it right, it's WORK *ad infinitum!* The official duty time starts at 7:25 [a.m.] . . . I'm at school by 6:30 just to get ahead of the [traffic and] to make sure that I'm organized for the day There's nothing as motivating as knowing that you're going to be facing teenagers! [When] I go home, [I] take about a two hour nap, and then I . . . get a bite to eat and [spend] from 7:00 to 11:30 prepping. This weekend, I'm going to be reading a hundred essay tests and . . . finishing up a PowerPoint. I don't like to add it up because it sounds horrible . . . there may be 20 hours of work on the weekends during those nine months. So I just tell myself that there's June, July, and August!

[I have] those two and a half months . . . to travel . . . [and] to keep learning, to just be [myself] and to find out more about the world. It becomes this regenerative cycle that I had [not] experienced . . . in business My travel tends to be literature inspired so that I can bring back artifacts and photographs and just the experience. Teachers are hunter/gatherers Last year, I . . . went to Africa for four weeks. I could barely get my luggage back from Africa because of the amount of stuff I had to put stuff in other people's bags! Before that, it was Turkey; before that . . . places in America.

I think what gives me energy are new projects — vying for the PA-TOY award, National

Board [Certified Teacher], going for a Fulbright [Scholar Grant] . . . , presenting at the NCTE [National Council of Teachers of English] meeting, and [doing] projects at [Name of Art Museum]. I suppose any teacher finds the things that are going to buoy them. I . . . have a picture of my mother's first year, first class. She was a one-room schoolhouse teacher I peer into those little eyes of those little kids and my mom at 21 and . . . try to rise above the bells and the paperwork and the e-mails and that sort of thing.

I love to learn. I think that's another key element. A great teacher must be a great student, indeed, a scholar. I let my students know that I am still learning . . . and [about] the many, many things they teach me. If [teachers] don't have the curiosity, if they don't want to learn, if they [just] want to master it and be the expert, then they're sorely disappointed. It's that irony, it's that paradox. If they want to keep delving, they [do] become a master and . . . an expert, but . . . they're not [ever] done, and I guess I'm just not done yet.

There's a science to what [teachers] do, but there's a lot of art I call it sitting. I just sit and think what the class gave me that day, and . . . the next logical move . . . in developing their curiosity and inquiry. I never understood a teacher who could open up a textbook . . . and do what it says to do in a lesson That doesn't compute for me. It's got to make sense to me if I'm going sell it in the classroom. I think it helps . . . if you have some theater in you, playing the adult, playing the teacher, playing the role . . . that calls on them to play the student. [Long pause] The role has to be authentic. It has to have the kernel truth in it.

I think to be an educated consumer of media is . . . a key ingredient [of Language Arts education]. I work from . . . the very postmodern standpoint that literature didn't grow on trees; it came out of a historical period; it came out of a culture, and we are receiving it in a different

culture. I start with a historical context; then I pull in the art. Some of my students are starting to realize that the world is constructed, and we have constructed it, and they can deconstruct it.

Now [my] students are creating [content]. They have stories to tell, a world to create, new media to do so, and a world to share it with instantly. [When a] blog . . . goes out to the world there are new very authentic responsibilities . . . [with] an authentic audience. I think [we are] transitioning to . . . project-based learning We've been talking to different . . . groups . . . about producing content. I'm constantly looking for the next technology – [to] entice kids in, train kids on, or just use in the classroom, and yet . . . I don't see technology as a panacea.

There's a lot of potential [in technology but] there's a lot of unanswered questions Legislators press for reforms that call for accountability and standardized testing on the one hand and 21st Century skills on the other! I've witnessed our PA Cyber School and it is not anything I would like to participate in. I see the technology as affording us some new ways of interacting . . . but I don't buy it wholesale. Without being too poetic here, there is something that happens between human beings in the room that cannot be replaced

Spatially, I've always tried to have a circle or a semi-circle in the [classroom]. Students say they just feel calmer in that environment. It also puts every kid in the front row and . . . I [am] able to be walking within their space [When] using process drama in the classroom I'm trying to get kids to evoke from the text and . . . their imaginations and to collaborate . . . to find . . . the human story inside of this text.

[Some students] don't come from sane . . . and safe places at home. The ones that are the most troubled and the most trouble - as crazy as it can be here [at school] . . . this is sanity for some kids. In 1984, when I was . . . student teaching, the movie, *Teachers*, came out. It touches on a lot of truth - flawed human beings in a flawed system. Despite the fact that this [teacher]

character . . . is going to get in trouble for what he was doing, he did it anyway. Also . . . the kid got that he was being authentic with him. So if you're ready to accept that insanity in education reigns supreme, and you're not going to let the bastards win, those are . . . two mottos that carry through.

Teaching is an act of faith. It is a land of shifting sands and not for the faint of heart. You never know. We get criticized for spraying and praying, but . . . a lot of teaching is planting that seed, and somebody else will see it to fruition A lot of it is just the faith of playing it forward.

Reflections for Dwight. Dwight began his teaching career 18 years ago in a small, rural high school where he knew all the students and enjoyed a supportive group of teacher colleagues. In his current high school of 1,700 students not all teachers and students know each other well, if at all. There is a feeling of edginess; he misses the family feeling of his first teaching position where he knew all the students and faculty.

Dwight is a scholar. He treasures the opportunities to learn within the classroom, in educational projects beyond the classroom, and in traveling the world. He recognizes the paradox of becoming an expert teacher only by knowing the learning doesn't end. Even though he works with "flawed human beings in a flawed system," he looks forward to his return to the classroom each September. His prior experiences in the advertising world did not provide his life with meaning, and that contrast informs his understanding of and commitment to teaching. He knows that he is a teacher and that teaching is "supposed to be" his life's work and he works tirelessly to excel at it. He "hurts inside" if he is not at the top of his game. He doesn't let his frustration with the mediocrity of some of his fellow teachers, or his concerns with the overall system of education dampen his day-to-day teaching commitment.

He sees the need for a vision of alternatives [using technology] to keep education relevant in a world of instant media. His students create content for an authentic audience and he challenges them to view what they know as one possible construction of the world, Learning occurs as the students listen to, create, tell, and interpret others' stories and their own.

Though he is one of the teachers on the leading edge of adopting technology for educational uses, he is concerned about the growth of technology options amidst the current political climate. Will the kind of teaching he has worked so hard to master be outsourced and replaced by a less effective by seemingly more attractive cyber alternative? Nevertheless, he creates a sane and safe place for his students and teaches as an act of faith that the seeds he plants will eventually bear fruit.

Dwight teaches from a self-authoring plateau. He maintains his voice, his vision of quality teaching, and his authenticity in the classroom. He is a teacher leader in technology use in education but he doesn't buy it wholesale. He doesn't just use the book; he has to make the content his own before he can sell it in the classroom. There are some factors external to his classroom that are not a fit with his self-authored stance — the school is too large for the collegiality he prefers; he has to work with mediocre teachers, and within a current political climate that devalues teachers' work. However, within the classroom, he has enough autonomy to maintain his authentic voice, sense of mission, enthusiasm, and commitment. He still looks forward to each September.

There is a hint that he is seeing the construction of his own perspectives, a self-transforming characteristic. He recognizes the reality of flawed human beings in a flawed system. He not only sees his role in creating the story that evolves from his classroom but he also sees that his students contribute to that story. He learns from them and his other

experiences, but these other voices are not equal to his own. Instead, they are incorporated into his evolving self-authored internal voice which is the decision-making guide for his teaching.

Edwin: Continually Learning, Reflecting, Teaching

This is my eighteenth year. Teaching is something that I wanted to do from . . . third grade, [though] I did not enter [college] as an education major because my [family] did not want me to be a teacher. After one semester . . . I switched . . . to music education. In high school, music . . . played an enormous role in the development of my life I got to teach my peers and lead my peers. It [music] was a natural fit. I promised myself to never take a middle school chorus job! [Nevertheless, my] first few years, I was . . . teaching general music, middle level, with one class of chorus. When I went to graduate school, I . . . just absolutely fell in love with teaching choral music [and] have a master's degree in vocal music.

Prior to teaching, I had served in the Army, and I'd also been a volunteer firefighter. I've been in burning buildings; cut people out of cars, seen people not survive . . . , so when I came into the teaching profession . . . I brought very unique life experiences . . . to the classroom setting. It gave me a lot of self-confidence.

I want students to do everything that they do – better – because they were in my class. All of the skills . . . applied to musical performance . . . can be applied to . . . life. Yes, I want to be exemplary as far as our students' performance goes, but . . . I am more concerned about what kind of person each one is going to become. That really becomes the root of what I do. The greatest rewards in teaching are when students become more willing to take risks in the learning process and . . . more passionate about their achievements, and when students acknowledge the impact that chorus has made on their life beyond my classroom.

My personality is one [where] I have to constantly [and continually] learn new things. What's out there now? How can I make [my practice] better? My wife [says] that I'm a participant in the hobby of the month club! It doesn't matter what I do, I find myself being a teacher in that role. [Right now] I am giving lessons for the kayaking club. I am a teacher everywhere I go . . . it's just who I am. I didn't realize it early on, but . . . I don't care what I teach. The subject matter doesn't matter to me. I teach students The age doesn't even matter; I've had from 7-year olds to 60-year olds. I just love teaching.

I'll give you one defining moment for me. [When I started] teaching was all about the kids in my classroom. My position was chorus once a week and [I] was doing all the general music work – not the vision I had for myself or the program. I had some potential opportunities to leave. [However] I had a college professor who said, “Instead of leaving for the position you want, why don't you stay where you are and make it the position you want?” I never realized that you could! Teachers [usually] don't think they actually have the power to change structure to make it better for the students' educational experience.

After a few years in my career, I had the confidence, I had the knowledge . . . things just all meshed. “Hey, it's your responsibility to change things. Your peers - get them to believe what you believe.” It was somebody inspiring me at the right time. Sometimes you get the right question at the wrong time. This was the . . . the right challenge at the right time. The result of that was my graduate thesis [and] a significant curricular change for our school district. It changed the experience that the students get, and it has to this day.

[Now] my career is nothing like I ever would have imagined it to be. I strive to impact the field of education in a global manner. It takes a lot of work to change yourself, your colleagues, your environment. A lot of teachers look at it as, “I'm only responsible for the

students in my classroom.” [I say], “Who’s passing on what?” I just finished [working with] my 23rd student teacher The mentoring process [for student teachers and new teachers] has been a significant role in my career. I teach in the School of Music now at [Name of University]; I’m . . . teaching the college students how to do my public school job.

I can’t say that I thought about quitting, but there have been times that have challenged me to think, “Is this what I should do?” [I] haven’t gone as far as “I need to get out of here,” but there have been moments of doubt: “Should I be doing something different?” [There was] a little bit of lull around year 7 or 8 . . . : “Is this going to satisfy me for the rest of my life, or do I need to start looking beyond this?”

I felt myself going through that [lull] . . . again, year 15, 14. That same sense again, “Okay . . . I’m about halfway there [retirement]. My students stay the same age, but I continue to get older. The age gap . . . continues to grow each year. Will I be able to keep up with the change? Am I going to be able to tolerate all the change that goes on in this career as PDE comes up with yet another name for the same thing or as they impose something new on us?”

I have not had any resistance to any of the things that I’ve done in my classroom, I think, for a couple reasons. I’ve typically had administrators who trust . . . and believe in me. My administrators know very little about my content area, so I could be doing it really well or really poorly and they may not know the difference. Another reason, quite honestly . . . is because they don’t have a PSSA for music I’m not so sure that they really care what I do. There are teachers that are being told, “You need to be doing six writing assignments that match the rubric for the PSSAs.” We’re not imposed upon as much as those reading and math teachers. [If we were] I think I would struggle. I think it would frustrate me. I still would probably keep doing what I’m doing, not that it would chase me away. But, yes, it would be frustrating.

[What bogs me down?] Sometimes it's not adequate time to really do it well. Sometimes your administrators just want it done – they don't care how well. [Also], you think you're going to make . . . a curricular change, but teachers . . . just keep teaching the way they've always taught, and that really frustrates [me]. Three areas—colleague support, administrative support, and personal satisfaction—have really kept me there throughout all those times [of] questioning. The first and foremost is personal satisfaction. If you do not love what you're doing, you need to find something else to do.

[Recently, my] eyes were opened to things I [wasn't] aware of or didn't see [before]. I got to see . . . poverty and the effects of poverty on education. It starts to make you question a lot about who you are and what you believe in Students need things that are very different, and we keep trying to make them the same.

I think [with] great teachers . . . the students are immediately engaged because that teacher believes so much in what those students can be, can become. I don't know that you can train that . . . personality component. I have just recently had a student teacher who was constantly worried: “How am I doing?” And I said, “The question is, ‘What are you getting the students to do?’” Are you interested in connecting with the students?” [Ask], “Can I inspire the students . . . and care about them along the way?”

If you get a teacher that has that [personality] and you get a teacher that has some self-confidence – if somebody just puts a little idea in their hands . . . , then step back, 'cause it's just going to take care of itself from there. To let teachers really develop, just encourage them a little bit and challenge them a little bit. [It's] just holding them accountable and really pushing them to become their best, and then getting out of the way and giving them the freedom to do so.

Reflections for Edwin. Edwin has taught middle school students music for 18 years, but music is only the vehicle for the development of his students. His vision of teaching has evolved from his role in the classroom to include his leadership in influencing the structure and curriculum of the district and beyond. He mentors the next generation of teachers, contributing from his actual teaching experience (something missing in his undergraduate classrooms). He defines great teachers as ones with personalities that naturally connect with students and believe in their potential. Edwin continually learns, and continually teaches, whatever the context. He is reflective as he learns. Supportive teacher colleagues and administrators energize him; imposed decisions and teachers resistant to change bog him down.

His life experiences prior to teaching provided him with both leadership skills and confidence as a beginning teacher. His personal satisfaction from his interactions with his students keeps him teaching as he works through and gets beyond the questioning and frustrating times. He sees his work as part of the larger district and state system of education and has the confidence and willingness to advocate for needed changes. As a teacher leader, he yearns for both challenge and support and then the freedom to teach, connect, inspire, and change himself and his students.

Edwin developmental plateau is self-authoring but is perhaps becoming self-transforming in some aspects. He sees beyond his own internal voice to the limits of his understanding. He recognizes learning as creating knowledge, but he also questions what he thinks he knows. He not only teaches his students; he also considers, “Who is passing on what?” to the next generation of teachers. He not only expects a role in decision-making; he has used his power to change the structure of the system to create an environment closer to his ideal.

Edwin's local school has supported his self-authoring stance; his administration trusts him; he is a teacher leader, has successfully altered the system and influenced some of the other teachers. The state has not standardized his content area of music. He appreciates these freedoms. If the system or state became more restrictive, he thinks he would be frustrated, but he would not be driven away. He has prior experience in getting through some times of questioning and challenge and knows he would still find a way to teach in a way that is meaningful to him.

A Narrative from an Unclear Plateau

The narrative in this section could not characterize the teacher participant as within a specific meaning-making plateau according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) framework. Whether Barbara sees her teaching from a socialized plateau or is transitioning to a self-authoring plateau cannot be determined from the information available.

Barbara: Releasing Wings

I always knew from little on up that I was going to be a teacher. I . . . would line up my dolls and teach them. I was always . . . torturing my poor [younger] brother. When I got to intermediate school . . . I was asked to volunteer . . . with a student . . . life skills type things. That was what started me on the path of special education. When I got to high school, [I] sought out the learning support teacher there. I knew that not only education and teaching was for me, but the area of special education.

[However,] I was in the top ten of my class and my guidance counselor said to me, "When somebody's in the top ten, they can do something else . . . instead of going into teaching," and I remember going home and being absolutely discouraged . . . He was the school counselor. He knew what's best for us. And my parents, thankfully, said, "You do what you've always dreamed. You go be a teacher."

I did . . . student teaching . . . [in] an Emotional Support classroom. The hurdles that the group of kids had . . . was nothing that I ever experienced. Those were six tough boys. They were really tough. Yet they could melt, and deep down inside they were little boys. At the time, the song . . . *I Believe I Can Fly* came on when they were working and I just watched these hard kids just start singing, and . . . I thought, “You know, they can fly. They really can. It’s my job to release their wings, get rid of that hard, cold exterior, and let them loose so that they can fly.” And I just kept that in the back of my mind.

I love behaviors – that was something that I’ve always enjoyed, the challenge [of working with student behavior problems]. . . . In my mind, there’s no bad kid, there’s only bad choices, and working with them to change their choices around. I feel that behavior management is something that I’m positive in, that I’m strong in. I really go back to two classes that I had taken in college that were behavior courses. . . and I still continue to use that— realizing why the kids are doing it and then tackling that part . . . and then giving them the positive consequence that refuels the positive behavior that you want.

The kid that pops into my mind . . . we’ll refer to him as “Tony.” I was setting up my [learning support] classroom before school started. And Tony came to the window . . . and he said, “You our new teacher?” and I said, “Yes, I’ll be here this year. So what’s your name?” He says, “Tony.” He said, “You don’t want me. Me bad, really, really, really bad Ohhhh, I like trouble, me like trouble.” And I said, “Well, Tony, I’m really excited to have you in my classroom.”

So Tony comes in [that first day], proceeds to rip down my whole bulletin board, clears out desks, and he says, “See, told you me bad.” And I said, “Well, Tony, welcome to school. I’m so glad that you came. Come in and have a seat.” He just looked at me. All day long he did

different things to try to get a reaction out of me, and I would never respond to the negative thing. I'd always bring him back and do something else. Well, at the end of the day, we cleaned up our bulletin board. I said, "Well, Tony, you know, I need some help cleaning up this bulletin board." He helped me . . . not once argued with me. This went on for about a week of him coming in every day and throughout the day trying different things It gradually changed to where he would come in and he said, "Good morning," and I said, "Good morning, Tony, I love the way you came in the room today." Turned it around by not reinforcing those negative things because I knew that's what he wanted, and gave him another way to learn . . . a better way to get my attention. And we had a wonderful year the rest of the year.

Here [a rural school in learning support] I dealt more with students that came to me very frustrated with school . . . because they had struggled for so long, and it was easier to quit than it was to try. It was a different negative behavior that I had to get rid of. So I had a sign: "I can't" are words that are not allowed in this room. It's all about making them feel good about themselves, reinforcing each little step, and I think, bottom line, knowing your kids, too, knowing what frustrates them, knowing what will set them off, knowing what type of attention they're seeking, and letting them know that you're not going to give up on them, and we'll get through this together.

I had a little boy who hated reading. He was reading at a first grade level; when we left at the end of the year, he was reading at a third grade level. And a year later . . . his mother . . . said, "You have to tell [Name] I am having some problems with my son at home When he goes to bed at night . . . I'll find him with a flashlight under the bed reading books!"

I've always been the person that set high expectations for myself. There's no star too high . . . to reach, you just have to lower some clouds to help you step up to reach your stars, and

I think that's true for anybody. You're setting your expectations high, but giving them the means to reach those expectations and helping them along the way. And there's that fine line. With especially our special needs students, of knowing how hard to push, but not push to frustrate, push to succeed. I know there's a lot of people that will say that learning support students can never reach proficiency on the PSSAs. To a certain extent, that statement might be true, but I never believe that in my head. I always set my expectations high.

[When I first] graduated and came in to teaching, [I] thought, "I don't want to go into administration." [But, Name of superintendent] asked me to be a part of . . . aspiring administrative meetings. I went and I took the cohort at [Name of University]. As a teacher, I had taken on several leadership roles, just in different projects. [At] the last PA-TOY . . . a candidate in the group . . . also had her administrative certificate and I talked with her about her experiences. Then I went to another . . . aspiring administrators meeting. The lady that was doing the presentation asked us to share why we weren't using [our certificates]. There were a lot of people . . . that enjoyed being with the students, and then she said, "If you stop enjoying being in your classroom, is that the time to move into administration?" And it got me thinking, "Am I doing what's right for kids in the big picture? Am I doing what's right for me? I have the power [as a principal] of impacting more things in more lives, working closer with parents, more students." A hard decision for me. I'm happy where I'm at right now [principal for 2 years], but there are days where I miss the classroom.

I think the biggest thing [as principal now] – although you'll hear teachers say they believe all kids need to learn – is truly getting them to believe that, and when . . . you see that frustration, for me, it's like being back in the classroom seeing the kids that are frustrated with the school work. You see a strength in somebody and you know that there's potential there –

you have to find an avenue where they can use that strength and that potential to do something bigger and better. So, again, it's reinforcing that each step they take, that they're making a positive impact. The teachers being my students now, they responded to . . . reinforcement, that one-minute praise, the exact same way students did in the classroom. It's the same response. The smiles. The "oh, I feel good."

The hardest thing to get over at first [was] when I would hear these mumblings from people that somebody wasn't happy with a decision that was made or whatever. It would bother me and I would start questioning, "Did I make the right decision moving from being a teacher to an administrator?" So I would have some negative thoughts . . . processing what had happened, but I would try to keep it positive with the staff. You're a leader [as a principal].

And being a mom now, I think that even plays a larger impact. What classroom would I put my son in? If I'm expecting the best and setting my expectations high, I should be able to say any of the classrooms. So I truly believe he [my son] gives me a different perspective now. I always thought I was student-centered and child-centered, but I think more so now.

My enthusiasm . . . for my career . . . I'd say the past year is a slight drop. It's not a big decrease. It's just a slight one because there's just that piece of me that misses the classroom. I'm reaching out, I'm doing things different, and it's starting to come back up as I am getting more comfortable in my position, learning my duties, my roles more. It's draining to me [when] roles are changing. I want to know where I'm going and what I'm expected to do so I'm meeting expectations.

I think the thing that keeps me going is that smile that you see on the children every day and knowing that I'm doing it for them for tomorrow. That's what drives me. I truly love getting up and coming to work every day.

There's nothing more rewarding than watching kids smile and succeed at something they've tried . . . and it's the same for teachers. My classroom now . . . is a group of adults. I still have that power to energize, to motivate, to drive, to guide, to support. It's watching that teacher that has struggled with that particular student . . . finally come to me and say, "Look at that!! This is what she did!!!" There's nothing – there's no monetary paycheck, there's no benefit, there's nothing that can replace that, and that's what keeps me going and keeps me enthused and energetic. And when they're not smiling, I got to figure out what to do to get that smile.

Reflections for Barbara. Barbara has been principal for 2 years in a small rural school where she taught for 8 previous years. She recognizes and reflects on her own learning journey - as she grows more comfortable in her role as principal, as she misses the close relationships of the classroom, as she integrates her experiences as a young mother into her understanding of quality education.

Barbara's goal is to feed the students, staff, and parents in her school who "on a daily basis . . . arrive at school hoping they will be safe, fed, and assisted in realizing their dreams" (Connors, 2006, p. 11). From her special needs background, she is deliberate in providing a particular response so that she can encourage and reward a particular behavior. She recognizes that persons in her journey fed her what she needed for growth. In both her prior teaching and current principal roles, she physically, emotionally and educationally feeds the students and staff – providing a safe and positive environment and giving them just the bit that they need to go to that next level. She is careful to always support growth by not feeding too much, providing opportunities for them to have those "aha" learning moments. She described it as lowering some clouds to help others take the next step toward reaching their star.

Nothing, and no one, deters Barbara from her belief that teaching and education are the career for her. Her mission is to change the behaviors of either the students or the teachers as she appropriately challenges and supports them. As her decision-making is guided by the behavioral model, she functions from a socialized plateau. She ventured into this new role of principal only after following the confirmation of others. She questions herself when her staff is not happy with a decision and she wants clear direction on her duties and roles from her upper administration. She does not yet see her ability to change the larger system beyond her local school. All are characteristics of the socialized perspective, but are perhaps a result of the time of transition and her learning in her new role.

The following questions are not clearly answered in the narrative: Are there times and circumstances when she deviates from the behavioral approach? So far, she has been able to fit her vision of making a difference within the local school context in which she taught and now leads. What if her understanding of what is needed would conflict with her upper administration's expectations? What does she mean when she says the teachers are her students now?

There are indications that she does not adhere blindly to the behavioral model, but decides from a self-authoring plateau and does what she thinks best in the context of each individual student's or teacher's situation to provide the challenge and support. She insists on finding a way to success, but not necessarily "her way." As principal, she sees her opportunity to create a school culture that reinforces and supports her mission of people who are "safe, feed, and assisting in realizing their dreams" (Connors, 2006, p. 11); she values discussion with her staff and it appears that she may support them in developing their own voice within the classroom. It is likely that with increased experience as principal she may be envisioning ways

to change the way the structure that influences her local school, in the same way that she changed her classroom and her school.

However, because of the time of transition, and because the narrative does not answer several key concerns clearly, whether Barbara sees her teaching from a socialized plateau or is transitioning to a self-authoring plateau cannot be determined.

Summary

Chapter 4, Narratives and Reflections, contains the narratives compiled from the data collected from 21 participants. Each participant was one of the 12 finalists each year for the PA-TOY award from the years 1999 through 2009. The two or three data sets for each participant were compiled into a narrative for each one and then the several reflections relevant to the research questions were added. I have selected and grouped each teacher's responses into a narrative for each. I have preserved the language of each teacher; the selection of the phrases and sentences from the transcript, the grouping of these into paragraphs and the arrangement of the paragraphs are my interpretation of the meaning of teaching for each participant, as faithfully as I can convey my understanding of each one's commitment.

The reflections include a characterization of each teacher's developmental plateau according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory where it was possible to determine this from the narrative. The narratives are grouped in Chapter 4 according to the developmental plateaus found in these narratives: socialized, between socialized and self-authoring, self-authoring, and self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming. Neither the instrumental or self-transforming plateaus of Kegan were identified. These narratives and reflections answer the first research question. Chapter 5 addresses the other two research questions.

CHAPTER 5: INSIGHTS AND IMPLICATONS

This chapter turns from the narratives and reflections of Chapter 4 to the purpose of this narrative inquiry — exploring the meanings of teaching throughout the lifespan of exemplary and experienced K-12 public school teachers — and the research questions that guided the inquiry:

1. Which, if any, of Kegan’s (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus can be identified as current meaning-making systems for these exemplary and experienced teachers?
2. What are the current meanings of teaching for these exemplary and experienced teachers? If these meanings have changed, what was the process of change as the meanings of teaching changed throughout their career? Was this process of change developmental?
3. What contextual influences have supported or hindered the teachers’ meaning-making?

This chapter also explores the implications of the narratives, reflections, and interpretations for Kegan’s constructive developmental theory, adult education, and teacher professional development.

Although the literature indicates that the teaching profession is like a “revolving door” (Ingersoll, 2002, p. 21) within the first 5 years of entering the profession, these teacher participants have stayed for at least 10 years, and some have remained beyond full retirement eligibility of 35 years. At the time they became a finalist in the PA-TOY process, they were exemplary and among the “enthusiastic and unbeaten” (Nieto, 2003, p. 7) teachers in the state. They demonstrated expertise in content knowledge and pedagogy with educational credentials beyond the standard expectations of the profession. These required skills, however, are not

sufficient, a “very limited benchmark” (Chapin, 2009, p.27), for understanding exemplary teachers.

The literature suggests that beyond professional expertise, exemplary teachers are resilient (Milstein & Henry, 2000), hopeful (Fullan, 1997), committed (Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Parks, 1996; Day, 2000; Day et al., 2005), caring (Noddings, 1984, 2005), and able to maintain their core values (Day et al., 2005; Hammerman, 2002). There is a need to understand the meaning behind the characteristics of the teacher. It is this meaning that determines the likelihood of exemplary status, not the characteristic itself. For example, a resilient teacher may only be persisting; a committed teacher may only be completing a task.

If their expertise, their credentials, and their characteristics are not sufficient, perhaps there may be something in the background characteristics or the behavior of these teachers within the narratives in Chapter 4 that assists in understanding their commitment. However, their narratives do not provide any background experiences in common that might help us understand these exemplary and experienced teachers. Ten said they knew from childhood that they wanted to become teachers, though three of these did not begin college as an education major. Nine had prior careers before teaching. Eight were influenced by family members who were educators. Six of these teachers mentioned an early interaction with children that influenced their career decisions. Ten mentioned interactions with teachers from their K-12 years; not all of these interactions were positive.

Without any guidance from the background experiences, perhaps there is some understanding to be gained from the behaviors of the teachers in the narratives. They multitasked and they worked countless hours beyond the school day; all of them arrived early, stayed late, and/or took work home. They continually learned either outside or inside the

classroom; all of them said they were always learning, reflecting on ways to improve their teaching, and/or learning from the students. This sense that every day and every year is different is in contrast to the literature, which said teaching in 1975 (Lortie, 1975) and in 2007, a quarter of a century later (Glickman, Gordon, & Ross-Gordon, 2007), is a career without progression. All of the teacher participants at some point in the narratives highlighted the joy of the day-to-day interaction with the students and in contrast to the literature did not express any sense of isolation from other adults in their classrooms (Huberman, 1989; Lieberman & Miller, 2008). These behaviors of the teachers can provide additional insight about them, but like the characteristics of the teacher, behaviors are not sufficient, and it is the meaning behind the behaviors that this inquiry seeks to discern.

Kegan's Developmental Plateaus Identified

The narratives themselves represent the meanings of teaching for each of the teachers and can stand alone without further examination. However, the theoretical framework of constructive-developmental theory can perhaps assist in understand the multiple meanings, multiple ways of meaning-making, and the supports and barriers to meaning-making within the narratives. If constructive-developmental theory, and Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory in particular, is of value, there may be differences in the actual meanings and in the supports and barriers to adult development that depend on the different ways of meaning-making as identified in Kegan's theory. That is, the identified plateau becomes the lens through which meanings, process, and context are viewed.

Therefore, this dissertation characterizes a developmental plateau according to Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory as a snapshot of that teacher participant. A rubric was created and used in assessing the teacher participant's meaning-making (see Table 3)

with respect to each one's teaching. The teacher participants indicated a considerable overlap between their personal and professional selves, and Kegan (1982, 1994) postulates that people are consistent in using their most complex meaning-making systems across life domains. However, this inquiry restricts its findings to their meaning-making as teachers at the time of the study. It provides a snapshot at the current time about teaching, even though the narratives span many years. The inquiry does not have evidence about the teachers in other areas of their lives and cannot determine whether the current developmental plateau will be maintained in times of life transitions or stress. It may be that the consistency that Kegan theorizes actually exists, but this inquiry does not explore that question. There are actually hints that at least the expression of one's self-authoring voice, if not the development of that voice, is related to a sense of competency in the domain.

This rubric (see Table 3) includes only the socialized, self-authoring, and self-transforming plateaus of Kegan's theory, as none of the narratives revealed an instrumental plateau. The rubric is also informed by the work of Drago-Severson (2010), who uses the titles of other-focused self, reflective self, and interconnecting self, respectively, for the socialized, self-authoring, and self-transforming plateaus.

The rubric does not imply that characteristics of one plateau are left behind as the learner moves toward another meaning-making system. Instead, the prior meaning-making is incorporated into the more complex meaning-making plateau. Kegan (1982) used a graphical representation of a helix (see Figure 1) to show the equality of and oscillation between inclusion and independence. The helix metaphor represents development as not "*abandoning* the old longing on behalf of the new" (Kegan, 1982, p. 154) but an integration of the new with the old. The helix also represents a continuous pathway, with named plateaus or bridges (Kegan, 1994,

2000), to characterize the progression. Individuals may incorporate various aspects of two plateaus in the gradual journey of leaving one behind and incorporating another. It is more appropriate to think of the characterizations and plateaus and the transitions between them as ranges, not dots, and to consider a trailing edge and a leading edge in interpretation of interviews (J. G. Berger, personal communication, April 24, 2010).

The metaphor of traveling from one place to another destination is used in Tables 2 and 3 and illustrates the different plateaus. It is perhaps a fit with the developmental bridge metaphor of Kegan (2000) which described developmental movement as “the gradual traversing of a succession of increasingly more elaborate bridges” (p. 60). This metaphor extends the bridge metaphor to consider the learner walking toward the developmental bridge. Is the teacher following another hiker on the trail (socialized)? Is the teacher deciding which trail to follow (middle region between socialized and self-authoring)? Is the teacher creating his or her own path (self-authoring)? Is the teacher exploring ways other than hiking to travel (self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming)?

The narratives as presented in Chapter 4 are grouped according to this lens. Table 2 summarizes this information. The narratives from the self-authoring plateau are further divided into two categories: an enthusiastic self-authoring participant or a resolute self-authoring participant. Some of the teachers in this category could maintain their commitment to teaching with enthusiasm, and others were resolutely determined to maintain their commitment to teaching in spite of some constraints to their self-authoring voice.

The Meanings of Teaching

As the narratives represent, these teachers all work multiple hours beyond their contracted school day; they all see themselves as continual learners; they all enjoy the day-to-day

interaction with their students. In beginning to answer the second inquiry question (what are the current meanings of teaching for these exemplary and experienced teachers) this inquiry explores the meaning behind these behaviors and identifies the following five meanings within the narratives of Chapter 4: making a difference, learning within a community, learning for a lifetime, finding challenges in constraints, and receiving from teaching. These meanings occur for the participants within each of the developmental plateaus as the current meanings of teaching. Nelson's (1993) study of the stories of exemplary and experienced teachers similarly found themes of staying connected to their students, making a difference in the lives of their students, and continued learning from experiences and from their students.

This inquiry now turns to exploring each of these five meanings from the lens of Kegan's (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus. Are there differences in the understanding of these five meanings related to the identified meaning-making plateau? In the progression from socialized to self-authoring to self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming plateaus, does each add another dimension without substituting for the prior understanding? In exploring these questions, selected quotations from the narratives are used. These quotations are representative and illustrative. The selected quotations are not an exhaustive list; there are other examples in the narratives of Chapter 4.

Making a Difference

If all of these teachers share a vision of making a difference, what is the difference they are making? The answer to that question does not have a collective answer. Is the difference for students only or does making a difference extend beyond the classroom to the school, to the community, or to the next generation of teachers?

What is that difference? Is it a change in behavior or an increase in a set of skills in keeping with the expectations of the organization or model? Does the difference arise from the teacher's own sense of mission as engagement in learning, persisting toward a goal, advocating for children that others would write off, or students learning how to learn or learning about who they are? Is it teaching students to question how they know? This inquiry interprets the different meanings of "making a difference" as illustrative of the developmental plateau of the teacher.

Socialized plateau or between socialized and self-authoring plateaus. The teacher participants from the socialized plateau or between socialized and self-authoring plateaus made a difference for their students by changing behaviors and increasing skills – learning goals from the school and cultural context or a model that was adopted by the teacher. For example, Traci said, "The approach . . . in my classroom . . . is the field of applied behavioral analysis. I'll say, "Okay, let's figure out why it's happening in the first place. Let's not reinforce it any longer. Let's reinforce alternative behavior." Barbara said, "In my mind, there's no bad kid, there's only bad choices, and working with them to change their choices around. I feel that behavior management is something that I'm positive in, that I'm strong in. Tonya said, "You see it . . . when you turn . . . around a class that's resistant or just unmotivated and very negative about each other, the school, you, the material, and you turn that around!" and Eric said:

. . . when I see students come to me and need help, get help, pick up a skill, advance it on their own, come back. . . . At some point, it becomes practical and important and they apply it, and you see them kind of light up. They're just beaming with excitement for something they were able to do and learn to do and figure out.

Self-authoring plateau. The teachers from the self-authoring plateau also changed behaviors and increased student skills, but added another dimension to making a difference. In teaching content, they were not bound by standardized curriculum, but created their own. In contrast to a recipe where everyone is on the same page at the same day, as Margo said:

[The classrooms here all] look different, and they should look different. On the other hand, in my job, what I really see is people need structure, too. They can use their own talents and interests to implement [standards] in a way that suits them, but they don't have a choice about implementing [them].

Edward said:

Mostly, I self-create. I don't want to say what I make is any better, but I think it's more personal, and I think the kids buy into that. If I were the kind of teacher that wanted [to use] the textbook year after year and read the same stories year after year and gave the same quizzes year after year, I'd be done. That fire would [whoosh sound] just go out.

In addition to this flexibility in teaching content, these teachers taught more than content; they developed the students as persons. For example, Edward said, "To me, education's much deeper than the tests, than the grades, that it's the things that happen in between those. It's not just all about the content, but the lessons that we take." Benita said:

I feel like my job is to help students to not only just obtain . . . science information . . . but also . . . what it's like to work toward a goal. I want them to know that . . . everything is not going to be easy and they have to work at it.

Vance said, "I don't place success on my part necessarily on whether they get this material right versus whether they grow and develop as a person. Are they reaching their potential both as a person and in terms of physics' understanding?"

These self-authoring teachers made a difference by teaching their students to create and to find their own voice. The following quotes illustrate this understanding of making a difference. Nikki said, “I have to help the kids figure their path” and Caleb said:

I always say to them . . . that what really matters is what kind of person you’re becoming, not what you’re learning in my classroom. I mean, that’s my – that is core. Are they developing integrity, are they becoming a good person? You’re teaching . . . things other than your subject matter.

The self-authoring teacher participants also saw themselves as role models for the development of their students. In doing so, they followed their own internal voice and sense of mission. For example, Diana said:

I prefer to see that kids see that I do things; I put my money where my mouth is, in terms of I don’t ask them to do something . . . without participating. “If I’m going to ask you to get up at 6:30 to go unload a tractor trailer truck, I’m going to be with you and do that”; or “if we’re going to pack shoe boxes, I’m going to – not only are you going to bring stuff to pack them, I’m going to bring stuff to pack them, and we’re all going to pack them together.

In summary, within the meaning of making a difference, these self-authoring teacher participants created their own plans for implementing curriculum, taught more than content, saw themselves as role models, and encouraged their students to create knowledge and express their own voice.

Self-authoring plateau with a hint of self-transforming. The teachers from the self-authoring plateau with a hint of self-transforming not only increased the academic skills of their students and assisted them in reaching their potential as persons but they also made a difference

for their students by teaching the students to question how they knew what they thought they knew. For example, Dwight said, “Some of my students are starting to realize that the world is constructed, and we have constructed it, and they can deconstruct it. Now [my] students are creating [content]. They have stories to tell, a world to create.”

They also shared in their narratives that their impact extended beyond their classrooms. For example, Edwin said:

[Now] my career is nothing like I ever would have imagined it to be. I strive to impact the field of education in a global manner. It takes a lot of work to change yourself, your colleagues, your environment. A lot of teachers look at it as, “I’m only responsible for the students in my classroom.” [I say], “Who’s passing on what?”

In summary, within the meaning of making a difference, teachers categorized as within the self-authoring plateau with a hint of self-transforming taught students not only to construct but deconstruct knowledge and were aware of their influence beyond their own classrooms.

Learning Within a Community

All of these teachers share a vision of learning within a community. There were no discernable differences of understanding in this meaning from the developmental plateau lens. This learning within a community — the way each brought their authentic self to the classroom, the way each strived to make a connection with the students, and the way each saw her or his work as individualized instead of standardized — these seem to be core values or personality attributes that are present and persist through any of the developmental plateaus or transitions between them.

They all emphasized establishing relationships with their students in developing a classroom that was a community to support learning. Some mentioned the community beyond

the classroom, particularly the support of and learning from other teachers. However, the focus on community was primarily within the classroom, and many teachers used family analogies such as grandfather (Dale), grandmother (Benita), and marriage (“getting married 100-150 times a year, and getting divorced 100-150 times a year, and then getting remarried the next year” [Caleb]) to describe their classroom community. Matthew said, “Starting from day one . . . I am trying to build relationships. By nurturing and developing a meaningful and personal relationship with each and every one of my students, I have become a far more effective educator.” Doug said:

Community is a sense of belonging. The love I have for my kids, the love my kids have for me, the community I build in my classroom, the way I want my kids to act and be citizens - [preparing] students not just for the next grade but as members of a social fabric.

Many of the teachers, regardless of the developmental plateau, mentioned the importance of hearing from the students as young adults and years later. Tonya said:

The girl I told you about my first year . . . called . . . to let me know how she’s doing . . . 30 years later. I’ve an invitation to a wedding – a child who graduated ten years ago. A student who graduated 5 years ago . . . [is] now a . . . teacher and [he asked] me if I would meet him for dinner. It’s great when that happens.

Sarah said:

[Often] you’re left to wonder . . . whether or not you’ve been able to affect [the students] and if you have, how deeply. We get glimpses sometimes. Letters and sometimes they’ll stop back and visit, e-mails. What is really fun is some very specific things that they’ll remember and you’re thinking, “Wow, I wonder why he remembered that?” Sometimes

I'll run into them, students, in the grocery store or at a restaurant. Those are wonderful moments . . . , that kind of validation. That helps to keep you going.

Many mentioned establishing a safe and stable place within the classroom. For example, Margo said:

It's so beyond content and subject material. Children in your room— the stability, the safety, the way you interact with them in a caring, positive way— that's a big deal. They may not have it everywhere, but the fact that they can have it with you all the time is very important. What you do in the classroom makes a difference Somehow that's important for me. I am not minimizing the importance of academics at all. But . . . we do want people to be able to go on and use their skills and . . . to respect each other.

People on Wall Street who are swindling other people and not caring about them . . . they weren't in the right classroom!

The meaning of learning within community included being authentic within the classroom. This was illustrated when Trent said:

[A student, seeing me grocery shopping] said, "You're the same way no matter where you are; no matter what you're doing . . . you're always the same. It's good to know that we can trust you to always tell the truth." So I do think that that's important. All those elements have just become part of who I am and what this place is I don't think anybody can pretend to be a teacher, and I don't think anybody can pretend with these kids.

This emphasis on relationships should not be interpreted as only caring for the student without a concern for learning. They also expected a lot and they expected students to work hard and to persist. Reta said:

My standards are high. I'm not going to dumb it down for them . . . and I'll keep at them. I explain; I help. I don't do it for them. We keep at it. I give them suggestions. I teach. I tell them, the sun's still gonna come up, it's still gonna go down; we'll get through this, it's not the end of the world; and we do, and they learn.

Some highlighted the relational aspects of learning within community by voicing a concern about standardization and technology. Diana said, "There are times when they go, 'Not another PowerPoint!' Sometimes they just like something a little low tech, like me." Edward said, "It's not a formula, you can't apply formulas to education; you can't formularize human interaction," and Nikki, speaking of her frustration, said, "I feel, in some cases, that I'm a laptop cart operator and not so much somebody who makes stories fun for kids."

In summary, the meaning of learning within a community for these teacher participants within any of the developmental plateaus included establishing relationships, building a classroom community, hearing from former students, ensuring a safe and stable classroom, and bringing an authentic (and nonstandardized) self to the classroom.

Learning for a Lifetime

All of these participants viewed themselves as continuous and life-long learners with a unique journey. They also saw this same potential in each of their students and saw each of their students as individual learners. They expected each student to learn and achieve. These teacher participants not only taught their students, but they also learned from their students. Frequently the teachers said they wanted themselves and their students to "get better" at doing or learning. They were "never satisfied" (Traci), made deliberate changes to keep learning, and constantly and continually strived to learn. Nikki said, "I like the ability to be creative and to plan and to research." Irene said, "It's been a really huge change . . . and it's really, it's fascinating. And I

think what's energizing me now is watching this process." Margo said, "I don't stay in the same place for more than 7 years. I love to learn, and in every job I've had good experiences to learn . . . I need a challenge." Madelyn said, "Every child isn't going to meet [the expectations] in the same way at the same time," and Tonya said:

[I try to] instill . . . in kids, too, the eagerness to be lifelong learners I think that's just key. I view it as my disability if I cannot [find] the hook that engages them [or] find a way of communicating that allows a child to [learn].

However, within the commonality of individual, continual, and constant learning, there are differences within the lens of the developmental plateau in the understanding of the purpose of learning and assessment of learning outcomes. Is the purpose of learning acquiring skills, developing who you are as a person, or questioning what you think you know? Are learning outcomes measured by external standards, defined within context, or defined by the process?

Socialized plateau. The teachers in the socialized plateau viewed their own learning and their goals for student learning as skill acquisition or acquiring expertise. They looked to external measures for validation and assessment of the learning and adopted the expectations of their professional context. Eric said:

Where I have students now is my personal tabulation At some point, you need to hear back from the educational institutions that you're sending kids off to and get an affirmation from them; and then you need to hear affirmation from the job market; and you need to hear affirmation from administrators; and the capstone is whenever you start to receive local, state, and national recognition for what you do. . . .

These teacher participants learned from prior and more experienced models. Traci said:

You learn a lot through teaching and modeling . . . having somebody who is already doing [the same thing] watch you So that's been a huge part. A consultant . . . [said], "That was great how you did that. This wasn't so great. This is what you need to do next time.

These teacher participants wanted to clear expectations and to be correct in what they were doing. Barbara said, "It's draining to me [when] roles are changing. I want to know where I'm going and what I'm expected to do so I'm meeting expectations." These teachers also compared themselves to others in determining success. Traci said, "We've actually become a model independent site . . . for the PDE. Receiving that status was really awesome for me," and Eric said, "I had a lot of encouragement from professors . . . [and] I had confirmation along the way that I was doing it relatively correctly. And maybe by comparison to the rest of that group, as well as anybody or better"

In summary, teachers within the socialized plateau within the meaning of learning for a lifetime looked for validation from external authorities or models, adopted the expectations of others, preferred clear expectations, strived to be correct, and compared themselves to others in determining success.

Between socialized and self-authoring plateaus or the self-authoring plateau. The teachers in these categories of Kegan's (1982, 1994) developmental plateaus understood the need to gain content expertise and skills, but they also had a view of student and adult development beyond these. In addition to "What can I do better?" these teachers are asking, "Who am I as a teacher?" They expressed some frustration with standardization and external measures of learning outcomes – not because they objected to content expectations and standards, but because they understood the assessments as limited and insufficient measures of learning.

In the meaning of life-long learning for teachers and students, the participants between the socialized and self-authoring plateaus have been grouped with the self-authoring teachers because their responses in the narrative are more of a fit with the self-authoring plateau than the socialized plateau. (This is opposite to the classification in the meaning of making a difference.) They are stepping beyond the adoption of the organizational and model expectations and using the voice they are developing to recognize the limitations of these expectations, particularly with regard to learning goals.

Caleb said, “It’s a continual process. I’m at a different place in my life and a different knowledge level, and so my practice has changed. Openness to change, I think, is a critical aspect of it.” Matthew said:

My experience has gotten better; my commitment has gotten stronger; and my enthusiasm is . . . [gesturing an upward line]. Just the other day, I was sitting there in my classroom, excited, and thinking, “This is so cool that I can still do this.”

Diana said, “The one thing about teaching is that . . . we’re not robotic. It’s very much individualized. And so you line a million of us up and no two of us are ever going to teach the same,” and Reta said, “You understand that you’re working with the whole child. You’re not just working with the child that’s sitting at a desk Everything plays a factor when it comes to learning.” Reta also said:

Well, for the PSSAs, do I think my math class is going to soar on the scoring [from Below Basic to Proficient]? No, I don’t. Is that the most important thing to me? No. I want to see growth from last year, and when I see that growth I will be dancing away with joy.

In summary, within the meaning of learning for a lifetime, the teachers categorized as socialized with a hint of self-authoring or self-authoring included learning about oneself as a person, developing their own voice, and continuing to learn and change. Growth, not the amount of knowledge stored, was valued as a measure of learning.

Self-authoring plateau with a hint of self-transforming. The teachers in this category added questioning themselves about what they thought they knew to the other aspects of the meaning of individual learning for a lifetime. Edwin said:

[Recently, my] eyes were opened to things I [wasn't] aware of or didn't see [before]. I got to see . . . poverty and the effects of poverty on education. It starts to make you question a lot about who you are and what you believe in Students need things that are very different, and we keep trying to make them the same.

Dwight said:

If [teachers] don't have the curiosity, if they don't want to learn, if they [just] want to master it and be the expert, then they're sorely disappointed. It's that irony, it's that paradox. If they want to keep delving, they [do] become a master and . . . an expert, but . . . they're not [ever] done, and I guess I'm just not done yet.

In summary, teachers within the meaning of learning for a lifetime, characterized as self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming, questioned what they thought they knew and recognized that becoming more expert meant realizing how much more there was to learn.

Viewing Constraints as Challenges

Most of these teacher participants expressed the view that teaching was hard and complex work, but also “exciting” (Madelyn) and worthwhile regardless of their developmental plateau. These teachers meet the definition of hopeful, as defined by Fullan (1997) as the ability to handle

emotions and to take action even when it seems like there is reason to despair. As Edward said, “It’s draining, but it’s a satisfied tired,” and as Sarah said, “I never feel as though I’m in the middle of a situation that isn’t going to get better.” Tonya said, “If it was easy, it wouldn’t be worthwhile.” Benita said, “Teacher survivors are optimists, and I think they like what they do and they are willing to overcome some of the hurdles.” Irene said, “The truth is I can’t change their lives, but I can be a memory. We never know what one thing we say or do in a school year a child will remember for life.”

The differences among the developmental plateaus for this meaning of teaching derive from the kind of challenge each tackles. Does the teacher find the challenge in teaching and reaching the students that others would write off as unable to learn? Does the teacher find challenge in meeting high expectations of external stakeholders? Does the teacher find the challenge in advocating for his or her students, “working subversively” (Diana) within the constraints of the local system? Does the teacher find the challenge in attempts to change the structure and environment within which she or he works?

Socialized plateau or between socialized and self-authoring plateaus. Teacher participants within a socialized plateau or between the socialized and self-authoring plateaus found challenge in helping students others found difficult or impossible to teach or in the achieving high standards of external stakeholders. Tonya said, “I wasn’t going to walk out on these kids 'cause that’s what they expected and wanted. They had gotten rid of other teachers before. But, it wasn’t happening! I always finish what I start . . .” Barbara said, “[I] turned it around by not reinforcing those negative things because I knew that’s what he wanted, and gave him another way to learn . . . a better way to get my attention.” Traci said:

I think a lot of people look at [severely autistic children] and write them off and say, “They really can’t learn anything . . . just keep them happy.” I just don’t see that as acceptable. I think they are capable of learning. You just need to know how to teach them.

Eric said:

[In this district] we want to be giving them Lexus standards . . . but at the state level, we are only required to do Ford Focus level. My goal was delivering They gave me a challenge at the very beginning and said, “Here’s what we want to see come out of this program. Can you deliver based on that?” Well, that was, at that point, that was my focus.

Self-authoring plateau. Teachers within the self-authoring plateau found challenge in individual students, sometimes identifying with students who were just like the kind of student the teacher had been. For example, Reta said:

What happens to Leo the Late Bloomer, that doesn’t mature into their skin until they are a middle level or high school student? Are we writing them off right away . . .? I get very frustrated with that, because if I look at myself, I was Leo the Late Bloomer [laughing].

In addition, the self-authoring teachers found challenge in supporting and advocating for students when they felt the system did not act in the students’ best interest. For example, Benita mentored other teachers and said, “Just say to yourself, ‘I know in my heart that what I’m doing is right.’ If you have a reason for why you’re doing something, you let them know that and you stick to your guns.” Trent said:

I watched *Dead Poets Society* . . . with some colleagues who were saying, “He was the best . . .” and I said, “You’ve got to be kidding me. He was a lousy teacher. He abandoned his kids. He walked out the door and he didn’t fight.

Margo said:

I started [teaching] in 1970. We had a miserable strike . . . months, months . . . and I had a first-grade class. I taught . . . in three houses of my students three days a week in the morning; they came! First grade is the where you begin your love of learning and reading, and I just couldn’t bear that they would lose . . . all that time. I wasn’t popular [with other teachers]. When we did go back in, I was pretty lonely, but you . . . make your decisions for yourself as a human being. You do what you can live with.

Dale said:

It gets challenging when I find that the rules – that the school rule goes against the ethical right. That’s when it gets challenging, when there’s no sense in a rule or an action or something that people are asking me to do Specifically, I was told, “He’s not invited [a former student without required clearances working with kids in extracurricular practices].” My response was . . . , “He belongs here; he’s an inspiration for the kids.

Doug said:

. I’m a big injustice person. I have to find a way. People do get upset at you. When it’s not right, that’s when I . . . go 110%, and I either hurt some feelings or – in most cases, people . . . understand why I’m doing it and [know] I’m not trying to hurt [anyone’s feelings]. I’m impulsive, so I say many things that I could kick myself for afterwards, [but] there’s always a cause. Things that bog me down are just people . . . getting in the way [and saying], “No, you can’t do that.” There’s no reason. If you can’t

give me a good reason, then . . . look out. [We] find other ways to get around whatever . . . and find a way to do what we want to do. I'm not trying to cause a problem for someone.

In summary, within the meaning of viewing constraints as challenges, the self-authoring teacher participants advocated for their students, “working subversively” (Diana) and finding “other ways to get around” (Doug) the constraints of the local system.

Self-authoring plateau with a hint of self-transforming. In addition to finding challenge in assisting individual students and advocating for students within the system, these teacher participants found challenge in changing the structure in which they worked. Edwin said:

Teachers [usually] don't think they actually have the power to change structure to make it better for the students' educational experience. After a few years in my career, I had the confidence, I had the knowledge . . . things just all meshed. “Hey, it's your responsibility to change things. Your peers - get them to believe what you believe.”

Dwight said:

Despite the fact that this [teacher] character . . . is going to get in trouble for what he was doing, he did it anyway. Also . . . the kid got that he was being authentic with him. So if you're ready to accept that insanity in education reigns supreme, and you're not going to let the bastards win, those are . . . two mottos that carry through.

Receiving from Teaching

All of the teacher participants in some way mentioned the intrinsic rewards and personal satisfaction they received from teaching. Their investment is personal as well as professional (Day et al., 2005). There were no discernable differences in the meaning of receiving from

teaching within the developmental plateau lens. The meaning of receiving from teaching included bringing their authentic self to the classroom, finding purpose, and finding an internal satisfaction. These seem to be core values or personality attributes that are present and persist through any of the developmental plateaus or transitions between them.

Several recognized that their teaching was not just a response to the needs of the students; they needed to teach to find purpose and meaning within. They used language like “a calling” (Edward, Vance), “a way of life” (Reta), or “a fire burning within” (Edward). Vance said, “The calling came from within,” and Edward said, “It reached out to me. I think that’s why I call it a calling. I need to do something of significance; I need to make a difference.”

All mentioned the daily interactions with the children. Several said that teaching was selfish. Some referred to the joy of sharing the light bulb moment with children; others compared their feelings to an adrenaline rush or used the analogy of drugs (a fix or a high); others talked about the legacy they were creating. Sarah said, “I get an awful lot of it back from my students, and I kind of feed off of it. Returning to me, it usually becomes exponentially larger. I live for the light bulb. That’s where I get my fix.” Eric said, “You see them kind of light up. They’re just beaming with excitement for something they were able to do and learn to do and figure out; that happens every day. That’s kind of like an adrenaline rush– [a] little mini-rejuvenation.” Matthew said:

It is kind of selfish, because it makes me feel good. Probably like the feeling of being hooked on heroin. You want that high. And to get that high, you’ve got to teach up to this level That’s what I try to do. I am doing what I am cut out to do and I am only getting better at it.

Nearly all mentioned the encouragement they received from hearing from their former students. This information about who the former students were, what they were doing, and how they remembered the teacher supported the teachers' visions of making a difference. The teachers are not committed to their teaching depending on or expecting this kind of feedback, but it does provide, as Reta said, "the icing on the cake."

Even in the narratives where the teachers were resolutely instead of enthusiastically teaching, the teachers spoke of their ability to keep the frustrating administrative concerns separate from their interactions with students in the classroom and found these classroom interactions with the kids were worth dealing with the other issues. Nikki said, "I have the daily contacts with the kids. They're worth it; they're the reason why I'm here" and Irene said, "There is enough that I love about it; I can, for now, put up with the garbage." Doug said:

When you're with the kids, you're with the kids. Your mind is strictly on what you're doing in the classroom. It has nothing to do with what's going on outside [with the principal]. Once you're in the classroom, everything else is forgotten - because they're kids and they need me.

Even when the teachers discussed the many hours they worked beyond the school day, it was most often not with a sense of self-sacrifice (Cohen, 1991) but with a sense of satisfaction. That is, the teachers were receiving from their work and their commitment to the children, not ignoring their own needs. Nearly all said who they were personally and who they were as teachers professionally overlapped significantly – some said completely and others said they had found a way to develop a bit of separation. Commitment was both personal and professional, according to Palmer (1998) the teachers were "divided no more" (p. 163). Margo said:

I guess the biggest thing to me is my own satisfaction at a job well done. You really do it

for yourself You don't mind going the extra mile because . . . you always want to have a good day, for them and for you.

Caleb said, "It's hard to separate who you are from what you do." Edwin said, "I am a teacher everywhere I go . . . it's just who I am." Trent said, "[Teaching has] just become part of who I am and what this place is I don't think anybody can pretend to be a teacher, and I don't think anybody can pretend with these kids," and Madelyn said:

I think it best if [you] don't let this job consume your life because it easily can. You don't even realize that it's happening. There really is no end. [It's] rare for me not to be here at least part of a weekend day. It's not a job where you can go home and say, "Okay, I'm finished for today"

In summary, within the meaning of receiving from teaching, these teacher participants found purpose and an internal satisfaction in their enjoyment of the day-to-day interactions with their students. Even when they had frustrations outside of the classroom, even when they spent hours beyond the school day, and even when the job threatened to consume them, their sense of mission and purpose as teachers sustained their commitment to the children.

The Process of Change in Meanings of Teaching

Part of the second research question addressed changes in meaning and the process of change as meanings changed throughout the teacher career, with a specific interest in findings of any developmental change. This inquiry was able to establish a likely developmental plateau for all but one of the participants but cannot establish with any certainty that a teacher at one developmental plateau was at a prior developmental plateau at an earlier time or confirm the development from a socialized to a self-authoring to a self-transforming plateau that is postulated in Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory. Even though the teacher participants reflected on and recalled

events and told stories from the entire span of their career, the retrospective look could not establish a prior meaning-making structure. This narrative inquiry also cannot answer the process question or determine whether the five meanings of teaching were present throughout the career of the teacher or developed over time.

Perhaps the process questions related to meaning-making could not be answered because the narrative interview technique itself is a retrospective look at prior events over a lifespan and because past events in the narratives are told from the perspective of the current meaning-making. The study does not document the original interpretation of the event and relied on the teacher to disclose the original meaning when the event first occurred and any differences in meaning for that past event from the present time. I recognized this as a limitation as I planned for this inquiry and posed the research questions. Still, I envisioned that the teachers might tell me about experiences in the early years of teaching and share something on the order of, “Then, I saw teaching in this way, but now I see that ---.” From my own retrospective look at that plan, I understand the methodology of narrative inquiry in a way I did not understand before I conducted this inquiry. I now realize that narratives and meaning-making are both continuous as they connect to the past and the future from the present (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) and temporal as they change as time passes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Riessman, 2002). The present is the context for the past event (Josselson & Lieblich, 2001; Moreira, 1996). The meaning as it is presented by the teller is retrospective; it is the meaning of a past event as it is understood now and not the original meaning when the event first occurred. The retrospective character of narrative inquiry and the narratives from these teacher participants suggest that longitudinal studies with a time span longer than one year would be necessary to document the process in changes of meaning or changes in ways of knowing.

The narratives and reflections do indicate two kinds of change in perspective. The first is within the receiving from teaching meaning and is seen when a few teachers shared about learning how to establish some separation between themselves and their teaching. The establishment of boundaries between themselves and their teaching cannot be fit within Kegan's developmental plateaus based on the information within the narratives. Irene said, "I was headed down a really bad road without learning how to find some separation over the years. [Separating] has been important to enable me . . . to continue to teach," and Madelyn said:

I strive toward more balance because I think I actually do a better job [teaching] when I have other things in my life that are bringing me satisfaction as well. I [have] realized that . . . I needed to . . . really have some kind of space between my work and myself.

The second change in perspective is within the learning for a lifetime meaning. Some teachers shared a changed perspective about learning — at first developing expertise in content and classroom management and then moving from a focus on content to a focus on student needs and deeper learning. It is reasonable to suggest that this change in perspective about learning is developmental. It does follow the progression from a socialized to a self-authoring understanding of learning. However, were the teachers initially just following someone else or were they choosing elements for their own practice from among many experiences? This critical question — were the teachers operating from a socialized or self-authoring voice as they developed expertise and confidence and learned from more experienced teachers — cannot be answered in these narratives.

What is found in the some of the narratives is a change in the focus of successful learning and teaching from the content learned to the complexity of the learners and the learning process. There is a least a hint in some of the narratives that confidence gained from their teaching

experiences resulted in developing one's self-authoring voice after several years of teaching. The statement cannot be interpreted as either a necessary factor or a predictive factor from the narratives as some of the teachers began their first year of teaching from the self-authoring plateau, according to these narratives, and several of the teacher participants remained at the socialized plateau as exemplary and experienced teachers. This finding supports earlier empirical work that used Kegan's (1982, 1994) developmental perspective in an adult basic education classroom and found that that increased skill and content knowledge and more complex ways of knowing were not necessarily correlated (Kegan et al., 2001). Still, for some in this current study, the focus of learning may have changed developmentally as the teachers developed confidence and expertise in the classroom. The literature supports that some learning that initially only adds to the information known may precipitate a change in self-perception that can lead to transformative change in perspective (Cranton, 2006; Kegan et al., 2001; Merriam & Clark, 1991) or add knowledge and skills that can be used at a later time to deal with future experiences in a more developmental fashion (Merriam, 2005; Merriam & Clark, 1991).

Edward said:

Over time, I've had to evolve with the job and with kids. I think the first couple of years of teaching . . . that first year or two is, in some ways, keeping your head above the water . . . you're just holding on to the life preserver, hoping for the best You build experience; some of those things (the nuts and bolts of the job) become automatic It did take probably, I think, until my sixth or seventh year 'til I began to feel some comfort in what I was doing, to be able to fully reflect on what I was doing, and to be able to see the differences if I did this and if I did that

Sarah said:

If you had visited my classroom my first 2 years, probably it would have been all about the lesson . . . and not who [I was] teaching. Now I'm much more aware of the fact that . . . it's about what the students are getting or not getting . . .

Vance said, "They don't all learn the same, so you can't treat them equal. And that's been one change that I've had, I think, over the years, is I don't try and necessarily treat every kid equally. I treat every kid fairly." Dale said:

I think the training of the late 60s did not direct me in any way to do anything but lecture . . . and it took me a long time to not be in charge of my classroom. . . . I tell my students quite often that the unanswerable question is perhaps the most important. The ones that you can come up with an answer, you know, who cares, because it is at our fingertips now.

Contextual Influences on Meaning-Making

There are two aspects of context that need to be examined in considering the influence of context on meaning-making and whether the context supports or hinders the teachers' meaning-making from the constructive developmental perspective of Kegan (1982, 1994). One is the characteristics of the professional context, and the other is the fit of the expectations of the professional context with the developmental plateau of the teacher participant.

A holding environment is the terminology used by Kegan (1982, 1994) for the context, credited to D. E. Winnicott (1965). An examination of the holding environment is a developmental view of teacher learning. Context or the holding environment is much broader than professional context, but this inquiry explores only the professional context, which is defined as including the day-to-day classroom environments and the expectations of the local school, the local community, and the state of Pennsylvania.

This exploration includes the match or mismatch between the teacher's plateau of meaning-making and the mix of support and challenge that is found in the professional context of the teacher. A plateau of greater complexity in ways of knowing is not necessarily better (Drago-Severson et al., 2001); it depends on the match between what the culture demands, the "hidden curriculum" (Kegan, 1994, p. 9), and the meaning-making system of the adult. Is each teacher "over one's head" or "under one's head" (Kegan, 1998, pp. 214-215), or do the expectations of the professional context match the developmental plateau of the teacher participant?

Professional Context of Teaching as a Holding Environment

Kegan's (1982, 1994) theory postulates that adulthood is characterized by change and that each person has the potential or capacity for change. However, the pace of the developmental progression is variable (Popp & Portnow, 2001), and the process is dependent on the context which may either hinder or support developmental change. Within the professional context of the day-to-day classroom environments and the expectations of the local school, the local community, and the state of Pennsylvania, is there a holding environment? Does this holding environment offer both support and challenge, both holding on and letting go, and provide some continuity during the times of change and transition (Kegan, 1982)? Are schools places where the adults as well as the children can grow (Drago-Severson, 2007b)?

Day-to-day classroom environment. All of the teacher participants shared a vision of learning within a community. This is one of the five meanings of teaching for these teacher participants. This community was primarily, though not entirely, focused within the classroom. They highlighted the joy of the day-to-day interactions with the students. They established relationships with the students and a safe and stable place for learning. Their caring included

expecting students to achieve, supporting each student in reaching his or her potential academically and personally, and encouraging students to persist in the face of challenges. In Kegan's (1982, 1994) framework, these teachers fostered student development by the appropriate mix of support, challenge and continuity within the classroom as a holding environment. Doug said:

My expectations are high. They have to be. If my expectations aren't high for them, they're not going to have expectations. That's the constant battle. They have to work hard. That's the key to education. If you instill that in them early, really there's no limit. I show my passion every single day in the classroom, every single day. You do whatever you have to do to get the kids to care, and let them know that you care about them. 'Cause if kids know that you care about them, then they'll care about themselves. You don't give up.

Barbara said:

I've always been the person that set high expectations for myself. There's no star too high . . . to reach, you just have to lower some clouds to help you step up to reach your stars, and I think that's true for anybody. You're setting your expectations high, but giving them the means to reach those expectations and helping them along the way. And there's that fine line. With especially our special needs students, of knowing how hard to push, but not push to frustrate, push to succeed.

On the other hand, the day-to-day interactions in each of the teacher's classroom communities provided a holding environment where the teachers were also supported and challenged. Even when the teachers in this study were resolutely instead of enthusiastically teaching – when the rest of the teachers' professional context was not a fit with their

developmental plateau or when there were tensions between the school's or state's expectations and the teachers' visions of education – the teachers were able to maintain a classroom community which functioned as a holding environment for themselves. The classroom community each teacher established supported and challenged both the teacher and the students. The narratives in this inquiry indicate that the day-to-day classroom interactions of the teacher participants do provide a holding environment that supports their meaning-making.

Sarah said:

I just can't imagine things not constantly changing and evolving and growing Not only are the students always different, [they] need completely different things. Because I'm reflective, I find that I'm always changing [and refining] what . . . I do in my classroom. Intellectually, I get an awful lot from my job, too. There are constantly complex questions . . . and every answer uncovers another question. I don't think I'm ever going to be done learning.

Vance said:

I really enjoy working with kids They want to think for themselves, they're anxious to get out there, and they're still the bright blue sky yet. Kids have great ideas. Formal awards cannot compete with the real awards – the small gestures of “thank you,” the simple respect . . . and the willingness of students to share their lives with me. I have shed a tear of humility and pride every graduation night since entering the profession.

Professional context beyond the day-to-day classroom interactions. This inquiry did not explore the school culture of the individual schools of the teachers as the particular professional context for the teacher. In general, however, Pennsylvania public schools are directive organizations without a “developmental stance” (Kegan & Lahey, 2009, p. 308) and

have expectations that teachers will adopt the voice of the organization, implement its decisions, deliver what it requires, and measure success according to its standards. The statement is based on the hierarchal nature of school organizations (where a labor and management industrial model of organization remains), the typical school culture (Glickman et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2003; Johnson & Donaldson, 2004b; Lieberman & Miller, 2008a; Wagner et al., 2006), and the political context of accountability and standardization from the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and the PSSAs as an essential measure of school success.

Socialized plateau teachers or teachers between the socialized and the self-authoring plateau in a context without a developmental stance. The literature would indicate that these teachers would likely want to please the principal (Drago-Severson, 2004) or adopt a reform if asked to do so (Hammerman, 2002). However, both of these studies presume that the other voice that the teacher follows is the school administration's expectations. Eric's narrative fits this assumption, but Traci's guidance came from the model of applied behavior analysis, and she actually influenced the local school to change its behavioral support plan to better fit the model. This inquiry can only support the statement that teachers from a socialized plateau adopt the voice of another person, organization, or model. This other entity may or may not be the local school organization.

Self-authoring or self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming plateau teachers in a context without a developmental stance. Most of the teacher participants in this narrative inquiry were self-authoring with an internal voice that guided their decision-making and their meaning-making. As such, there is a mismatch with the expectations of a context without a developmental stance. Kegan (1994) argued that modern culture has changed in such a way that we are *In Over Our Heads*. The title indicates Kegan's conclusion that the complexity of

cultural expectations in the 1990s required self-authoring meaning-making but at least half of the adults in his study had not yet reached the plateau. In contrast, nearly all of the teachers in this inquiry are characterized as within the self-authoring plateau and are perhaps instead “under one’s head” (Kegan, 1998, pp. 214-215). Experienced teachers are sometimes labeled as resistant to change. Based on these narratives, it is perhaps more appropriate to say that self-authoring teachers are resistant to imposed change or self-authoring teachers find a way to adapt an imposed change to fit their own sense of what is needed or self-authoring teachers make continual and constant changes within the classroom as they reflect on their practice. Prior literature supports that committed teachers are able to maintain their core values amidst change (Day et al., 2005), and Hammerman (2002) reported that teachers in Order Four (self-authoring plateau as defined in this dissertation) did not adopt a package; they needed to be convinced for themselves that any proposed changes were better for their students.

This was most evident in the narratives for the meaning of finding challenges in constraints where the local school and/or state expectations were viewed as constraints by these self-authoring teacher participants. The most frequently mentioned constraint were the PSSAs, the standardized assessments. None of the questions I posed in either interview asked about the teacher’s view of standardized testing or approached this specific topic in any way. Instead, the teachers talked about this when asked, “What bogs you down?” or “Is there anything else you want to share?” The emphasis on these assessments was not a match for the meaning of making a difference and the vision of learning for these teachers. There is a sense that they have to give up something (depth of learning, creativity, etc.) in order to include the preparation for the assessments. Johnson (2002) also reports this finding, particularly for teachers in suburban schools. The teachers were, however, still able retain enough of their own voice and sense of

mission in the classroom to remain committed to teaching. Some of their narratives were enthusiastic; others were resolute in determination.

The lack of fit between the school and state expectations and the teacher's self-authoring voice is evident when Diana said, "Everything has become – it's data driven, it's data driven, let's look at the data, but you're not working with data, you're working with kids," and Madelyn said, "It's almost like instead of [taking time and] going deep with what we're teaching . . . we're just spreading it thin . . .," and Reta said, "I think imagination is so important, and I think that's getting lost. What I'm seeing is that everyone is concentrating so much on these tests . . ., that we're never mastering the material. It feels like a constant introduction." Dale said:

As far as I'm concerned, it's dumbing down . . . – like I said, I can teach it [PSSA] in six days, so why I fear any attempts to minimize our profession into a science. It's becoming a little more tense right now because we have a new curriculum coordinator that wants us to be in line, and I'm fighting that right now.

Irene said:

I took great exception to the things we were now being told to do to children and with children. Still do. With No Child Left Behind lots of things . . . didn't seem to me to be in the best interest of the children We're assessing these kids to death. [It's like] just training cattle to . . . jump this high.

Contextual Supports and Barriers to Meaning-making

I previously reported the finding that I could not trace the development of the five meanings of teaching throughout the career of the teacher or determine developmental plateau changes within each of the meanings over the span of the teachers' careers. The methodology can only provide a snapshot of the teacher's current meaning-making plateau. Similarly, this

inquiry cannot trace the change for each teacher in what constitutes a support or a barrier for meaning-making over a lifespan. It can identify differences in what teachers find as supports or hindrances to their teaching and to their commitment to teaching within the different developmental plateaus.

Socialized plateau or between socialized and self-authoring plateaus. Teacher participants within the socialized plateau or between the socialized and self-authoring plateaus were supported by someone providing clear expectations and goals to them and by confirmation and validation of success from outside sources. Conversely, these teachers found that having little direction or recognition were hindrances.

Barbara said, “I am getting more comfortable in my position, learning my duties, my roles more. It’s draining to me [when] roles are changing. I want to know where I’m going and what I’m expected to do so I’m meeting expectations,” and Traci said, “We’ve actually become a model independent site . . . for the PDE. Receiving that status was really awesome for me.” Eric said, “There are educators who day in and day out never receive – I mean, they’re truly outstanding. They’re giants in our field, and they are never recognized,” and he also said:

You need to hear back from the educational institutions that you’re sending kids off to and get an affirmation from them; and then you need to hear affirmation from the job market; and you need to hear affirmation from administrators; and the capstone is whenever you start to receive local, state, and national recognition for what you do.

Self-authoring plateau. Teacher participants from the self-authoring plateau found support for their teaching and meaning-making when they could take ownership of their teaching. Some described this as having a voice, using their creativity, having autonomy, or having an administration that provided a vision and then stayed out of the way. Some of the

teachers mentioned how supportive it was to have other teachers in the school with a similar view of teaching and learning. Doug said, “One [past] principal . . . that I worked with was phenomenal, just gave me more confidence. He . . . let me be me.” Sarah said, “When I know my voice is valued and my expertise is respected . . . , that feeds . . . my enthusiasm and energy for my job,” and “I felt like [change] was always happening to me instead of something that I was a part of. I really wanted to . . . have a hand in what was directly affecting my students through me.” Edward said:

Good administrators, I think, have a vision. They allow the staff to buy into that vision, and then, to some degree . . . , know enough to step back out of the way . . . allow us to run with our ideas . . . manage ourselves. And I think when that happens, you see things happen that wouldn’t ordinarily happen.

Benita said:

I like teaching in an environment where the teacher is treated like a professional, where they are pretty much permitted to kinda do what they can do as long as they can show categorically what they’re doing is appropriate. Giving teachers a chance to take ownership of their – if I’m just coming every day and I’m doing somebody else’s canned plans . . . then why come?

It was a hindrance to the teachers that the daily demands and expectations limited the time they had to invest in meaning-making activities and reflection and also limited the time they had with family and other interests beyond their teaching. These teacher participants found another hindrance in expectations for them to follow scripted curriculum and directives developed without their voice. The emphasis on the PSSAs – the preparation for them and the requirement to do other assessments that were predictors of scores on the PSSA – were a

frequently mentioned directive that was seen as a hindrance to their vision of teaching and learning. Another frequently mentioned hindrance was all the time they needed to invest to meet their own standards of excellence in teaching. Nikki said the end of the day was metaphorical; Madelyn said, “There really is no end. [It’s] rare for me not to be here at least part of a weekend day. It’s not a job where you can go home and say, “Okay, I’m finished for today . . . ,” and Benita said,

I’m driven to do the best that I can and unfortunately I can’t do that within the framework of the time that I’m provided, so I just have decided that that’s the way I have to do it, much to my husband’s dismay. I feel like I’m doing a good job at home, or a good job at school, but I’m falling behind one of those two places.

Madelyn said,

The creative aspect has definitely lessened. A lot of our curriculum is very much scripted now You do this, then you do this, then you do this. I think we deliver a very effective program [but] it is far less open-ended It all comes down to time. I mean, everything is so very specifically structured

Self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming plateau. The teacher participants who were with the self-authoring with a hint of self-transforming plateau added one hindrance to the hindrances shared by the self-authoring teacher participants. Both of these teachers mentioned a frustration with fellow teachers who remain in the school system without a commitment to improving their teaching. Edwin said, “You think you’re going to make . . . a curricular change, but teachers . . . just keep teaching the way they’ve always taught, and that really frustrates [me],” and Dwight said, “It’s frustrating when [others are teaching] when teaching isn’t their niche That’s one of the most frustrating things . . . — mediocrity.”

Implications

This section explores the implications of this narrative inquiry for Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory, for adult education, and for teacher professional development.

Implications for Kegan's Constructive-developmental Theory

This inquiry supports prior studies that provide evidence that persons may have similar demographic characteristics yet be diverse in their developmental plateau (Kegan, 1994; Kegan et al., 2001; Popp & Portnow, 2001). It uses a narrative inquiry method instead of the subject-object interview that is typically used for characterization of the developmental plateaus of Kegan's (1982, 1994) in prior literature. The inquiry also indirectly confirms that if a change in meaning-making occurs persons cannot return to the prior meaning retrospectively, and therefore longitudinal studies are required to establish the process of change.

This inquiry contributes to Kegan's (1982, 1994) model by exploration of the plateaus from a narrative interview methodology, in contrast to the methodology typically used, the subject-object interview (Lahey et al., 1988). This inquiry demonstrates that the form of meaning-making could be determined and also identified participants as within either the socialized or self-authoring plateau, between these two plateaus, and just beyond the self-authoring plateau. The inquiry also contributes a rubric (see Table 3) that was used to interpret the narratives. The rubric is specific to teaching and learning. A narrative methodology is in keeping with purpose of understanding, not the experience itself, but what the experience means to the other person (Kegan, 1982) and the other's way of knowing. However, the subject-object interview has the advantage of being able to determine gradual changes between the plateaus that the narrative interviews could not determine. On the other hand, narrative interviewing uses the

language of the participant in the open-ended questions, and story-telling is a much more familiar form of communication for participants than the questions that probe about structure in the subject-object interview. Both methods are a snapshot of the meaning-making at a particular time.

The inability of this inquiry to determine the process of change in meanings of teaching or the process of change in developmental plateaus, even though the narratives span many years of teaching, indirectly confirms that once someone sees a prior event from the perspective of the current meaning-making system, it is not possible to see the meaning from the prior meaning-making system. This is a fit with the theoretical framework. A change in developmental plateaus requires moving an embedded perspective that is assumed to be true (subject) into view where it can be identified, observed, and controlled (object) (Berger & Hammerman, 2004). The rhythm is that a subject lost becomes an object created (Kegan, 1982). From that new lens, the prior subject is no longer embedded but observed; that is, the person cannot look back and see in the prior way of meaning-making. As Kegan (1982) said, “There is a *new* balance that can be achieved. We are not going back, but we are coming through” (pp. 266-267).

Implications for Adult Education

The findings of this inquiry would indicate that adult educators can expect a variety of developmental plateaus within a group of adult learners and would caution the adult educator against the assumption that adult learners are self-authoring. Rather, adult educators should assume developmental diversity (Drago-Severson, 2004, 2009). This developmental diversity can create an ethical dilemma for the adult educator. Is an appropriate role of the adult educator to create an imbalance or tension for the learner with a goal of encouraging growth (Rossiter, 1999)? What about valuing what the learner wants from the experience?

In the use of any constructive-developmental theory, including Kegan's work, there is the risk of equating more complexity in meaning-making as better, more worthy, or more effective. In spite of the premises in these theories that all persons have the capacity to develop and that what is important is the fit between the context and the person, a hierarchy in the sequence of plateaus is assumed by the models, and development always moves forward and does not regress. Kegan's change from a metaphor of a helix in 1982 to an upward sloping line with three plateaus in 2009 (Kegan & Lahey) contributes to this hierarchal view and the implied defined endpoint. It is imperative for an adult educator to consider, as did Carol Gilligan, "who has the building permit" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 414).

Considering, and then acting with a respect for, the learner is critical to avoid marginalizing those adults at different places in the quite variable developmental journey. Taylor (1996) implores the adult educator to avoid confusing worthiness and development and to honor the decision of an adult who chooses not to change; a student may be either unable or unwilling to grow developmentally (Taylor & Marienau, 1997). There is a difference between support and promoting development (Merriam, 2005). An adult educator who provides opportunity for, and assists in, the student's growth but allows the student answer to be "no" is supporting developmental change; an adult educator who campaigns for and insists on development, and expects the student answer to be "yes", is promoting development.

Perhaps the most essential message of the constructive developmentalists to adult educators is that adults are still growing and developing – not just being, but becoming — and are not yet "grown up" (Kegan interview in Eriksen, 2006).

Adult educators with a developmental stance not only attend to where the adult learner is, they also support the adult learner in becoming, and they are guided by the vision of the learner,

not their own expectations of adult learning. Supporting development of adults includes being patient enough to wait until the learner is ready (Berger, 2010). Kegan (1994) suggests in his bridge metaphor that if a student is not yet ready to take the next step onto the bridge, then the adult educator's role is to assist the student in remaining within the holding environment instead of retreating. This can be accomplished only if the adult educator suspends judgments and continues interactions with the student. Since transitions involve not only addition of a more complex meaning-making system, but also the loss of the previous meaning-making system, development is not only about growth, but can involve a sense of risk and loss. Adult educators with a developmental stance need awareness of the emotional work that attends movement toward the next plateau.

The findings of this inquiry also suggest there is not just one holding environment of high challenge and high support (Daloz, 1999), which fosters growth or development. Kegan's (1994, 2000) metaphor of a developmental bridge suggests the adult educator can be intentional in creating support structures and developmental learning experiences, beginning at the meaning-making plateau of the learner and then providing a mix of support and challenge. However, what is a support and what is a hindrance will be different for learners at different developmental plateaus. From a developmental perspective, what is supportive to one teacher may be a hindrance for another, and an appropriate challenge for one teacher may be too much of a challenge for another. Indeed, even the concept of what is learning changes within the different ways of knowing.

Since this inquiry cannot follow the process of change in meaning-making, it does not connect directly to the process of transformational learning and the adult education literature on transformative change. It does share a theoretical basis and inform the understanding of change

in ways of knowing as transformational change even though it does not provide longitudinal verification of the process of the transformative or developmental change. It does support the claim of the constructive developmentalists and the prior empirical studies (Bar-Yam, 1991, Berger, 2002; Drago-Severson, 2004, 2007a; Drago-Severson et al., 2001; Hammerman, 2002; Kegan 1994; Kegan et al., 2001; Popp & Portnow, 2001) that there are different ways of knowing in adulthood.

Implications for Teacher Professional Development

Hargreaves (1997) argued that “what is worth fighting for in our schools is ultimately meeting the learning needs of *all* students and caring for them effectively as well” (p. 22). Adopting a developmental stance for schools implies the need to also meet the learning needs of all adults in the schools, to care for them effectively as “changing adults” (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 51), as adult learners, and to apply what is known about adult learning to teacher professional development (Drago-Severson, 2007a, 2007b, 2009).

Traditional career phase models only examine the exterior tasks for developing competence in the career (development as training) and not interior development of the person (Kegan, 1994). Traditional professional development focuses on increased pedagogical skills and content knowledge or skill and behavior-based instruction – what is known. These nondevelopmental models lead to “one-shot, atheoretical, passive professional development” (Fiszer, 2004, p. xi) even though the literature notes the need for teachers to be able to think and reflect on their own about their practice, assess the needs of the individual students, and adapt their teaching strategies (Glickman et al., 2007).

The traditional professional development is only one dimension of learning; the other is the structure or epistemology or way of knowing (Kegan et al., 2001), the “how” of knowing

(Hammerman & Mitchell, 2006). Professional development from a developmental stance involves both what is known and how one knows. It does not choose curriculum that only transmits a fund of knowledge or that only assumes the need for learners to develop more complex ways of knowing. It is a “both/and” (Kegan et al., 2001, p. 24) curricular view.

Multiple reform initiatives in our schools have not had long-term effects. Hargreaves (2007) writes that “waves of government initiatives and reforms wash over world-weary schools that simply wait for the tides of change to recede” (p. 16). Perhaps a part of the reason for the short-term influence of the reforms is that the focus is not on developmental learning, but only on informational learning.

The reforms typically also apply a deficit model where the schools and teachers need fixed. Instead of finding a deficit, this study finds a capacity within experienced and exemplary teachers within the schools that is currently underutilized and constrained in the professional context; adults in a professional context that is “under one’s head” (Kegan, 1998, p. 215).

The findings of this inquiry support the need for schools and educational systems to operate from a developmental stance and provide a place where adults as well as students are supported in their learning. These teachers find meaning in learning for a lifetime (a view of themselves and their students as continuous and life-long learners on a unique journey), learning within a community, and learning that is developmental rather than merely instrumental. Such a capacity implies the potential for teacher leadership and schools that are “managed up” (Hargreaves, 2007, p. 22).

Developmental learning is perhaps the path to lasting change instead of fleeting structural and content changes in our schools. What is lost when the professional context constrains instead of supports these teachers? What could be gained in our schools if the

professional context also functioned as a developmental holding environment and more frequently treated teachers as “changing adults” (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 51) or evolving meaning-makers? What if schools provided their teachers with professional development that was both knowledge and developmentally based (both the what and how of knowing) and then provided appropriate support and challenges according to the teacher’s developmental readiness?

Summary

This chapter provided the rationale for the characterizations of the developmental plateaus as reported in the reflections in Chapter 4. It identified the following five meanings of teaching for the teacher participants: making a difference, learning within a community, learning for a lifetime, finding challenges in constraints, and receiving from teaching. This narrative inquiry was not able to answer the question of the process of change in the five meanings of teaching. Even though the teacher participants reflected on and recalled events and told stories from the entire span of their career, the retrospective look could not establish a prior meaning-making structure.

This chapter also examined the contextual influences on meaning-making. Is each teacher “over one’s head” or “under one’s head” (Kegan, 1998, pp. 214-215) or does the professional context match the developmental plateau? The day-to-day interactions in each of the teacher’s classrooms and the classroom community each teacher established functioned as a holding environment for both the students and the teacher. The inquiry also identified differences in what teachers find as supports or hindrances to their teaching and to their commitment to teaching within the different developmental plateaus. Again, the inquiry could not trace the change for each teacher in what constitutes a support or a barrier; it only provided a snapshot at a particular time.

Chapter 5 concluded with implications from this study for Kegan's (1982, 1994) constructive-developmental theory, for adult education, and for teacher professional development. It contributed an exploration of developmental plateaus in adulthood from a narrative interview methodology and provided evidence that adults with similar demographic characteristics are diverse in their ways of meaning-making. Therefore, adult educators with a developmental stance need to attend to where the learner is and then support the adult learner in becoming – and from the vision of the learner. Otherwise, the adult educator may marginalize adult learners in different modes of meaning-making in the quite variable developmental journey of adulthood. The inquiry also supported the need for schools and educational systems to adopt a developmental view of learning and provide a place where adults as well as students are supported in their learning. It argues for professional development where teachers are considered “changing adults” (Glickman et al., 2007, p. 51) and where teachers who are either “over one’s head” or “under one’s head” (Kegan, 1998, pp. 214-215) are provided with a holding environment that contributes to their developmental learning throughout their lifetime.

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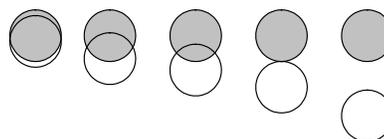
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APPENDIX A: Sample Questions for the First Interview

1. Begin with a brief discussion of demographics, primarily confirming what is known from the public record.
2. How did you become a teacher?
3. Can you tell me about your first year of teaching? Teaching that year was like ---- . Can you tell me why you chose that metaphor?
4. What would I have seen and heard in your classroom if I visited in the first years of your teaching?
5. Tell me about choosing to stay in teaching in the years that followed.
6. What would I have seen and heard in your classroom if I visited on a typical day in the years that followed?
7. Discuss significant events in your teaching career.
8. What would I see and hear in your classroom if I visited today? Teaching now is like ----. Can you tell me why you chose that metaphor?
9. Was there ever a time you felt like quitting? What happened to make you feel that way?

10. Will you describe the overlap between yourself and your teaching?



Imagine that the top gray circle represents your *self* and the bottom circle represents your *teaching*. Highlight the diagram that best represents the relationship between your *self* and your *teaching*.

Adapted from: Clore, V. and Fitzgerald, J. (2002). Intentional faith: An alternative view of faith development. *Journal of Adult Development*, 9(2), 97-107.

11. Tell me about times when you felt your work as a teacher was supported and confirmed.
12. Do you have a favorite movie or book? You choose this because --
13. What else is important to share with me about your sustained commitment to teaching?

APPENDIX B: Sample Questions for the Second Interview

1. Any enthusiasm changes over the timeline of your career?
2. What sustains you in your teaching? Is your answer the same now as it would have been earlier in your career? What changed? Which ones are so important that you would have left without them?
3. Complete the rest of the paragraph about your teaching. (Use statements from the first interview) For example,
 - a. I create by gathering things that are I know are good ideas and putting it all together.
 - b. I do not give up on a student's learning.
 - c. No matter where I am, I am a teacher. It's just who I am.
4. When does the work seem very challenging? What bogs you down? What do think would be so difficult that it would have driven you out of teaching? Is your answer the same as it would have been earlier in your career? What changed?
5. How do you decide what to teach and how to teach it? Have you changed in your ability to do this over the years?
6. You give a lot as a teacher. And in return??
7. What did you think your life would be like as a teacher when you started teaching? Has your work here fulfilled that dream? Any regrets? Do you ever envision yourself doing something other than teaching?
8. Story – most upsetting? most uplifting?

VITA

Janice E. Smith

My interest in this study began with my interest in education and support for public education. I graduated from a public high school, attended Millersville University for my undergraduate degree in chemistry, taught in a public school for a few years, and currently work for a public university. I recently completed a third term as a school director for a public school district. To complete the work and educational history, I obtained an MBA from the University of Baltimore and also taught at York College in a prior career.

I was a first-generation college student in the 1970s, encouraged by both of my parents, who had to leave high school to work on the farm, and by a high school teacher, Mr. Hall, who convinced me that I could do anything I chose. Without public education opportunities, I would not have had access to the learning that has enriched my life. I chose this study, not from some romantic view of teachers as heroes, but with empathy for the hard and complex work of teaching and learning, a passion for my own learning as an adult educator, and a belief in public education as essential in a democratic society.