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**ENACTING AN INQUIRY STANCE: EXAMINING THE  
LONG-TERM IMPACT OF LEARNING TO TEACH IN A  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL THAT  
FOSTERS TEACHER INQUIRY**

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by

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## ABSTRACT

### **Enacting an Inquiry Stance: Examining the Long-term Impact of Learning to Teach in a Professional Development School that Fosters Teacher Inquiry**

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs and practices of former interns prepared in a particular professional development school setting that attempts to promote teacher inquiry. Seven former interns that were experiencing their beginning years of teaching participated in this study. The participants in this study were all classroom teachers who had learned to teach in the context of an elementary professional development school partnership. Each had participated in a year-long internship experience.

The seven participants were purposefully selected from a larger pool of former interns who had responded to a survey that attempted to uncover the degree to which former interns espoused an inquiry stance towards teaching. The participants were purposefully drawn because they were teaching in different contexts and appeared, from their survey responses, to have differing degrees of an inquiry orientation.

The findings of this study lead to the development of a formal definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching. The data show us that this particular PDS program does seem to prepare teachers to have and maintain an inquiry stance throughout their teaching careers. The data revealed that an inquiry stance may not look exactly the same for everyone but it does not mean that it is not there. We know that different factors in a teacher's work setting can influence the extent to which his or her inquiry stance is visible. By examining the long-term impact of PDS preparation, we now have a better understanding of what an inquiry-oriented stance is and how to prepare preservice teachers with an inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching.

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## Chapter One

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background

Teachers today face increasing responsibilities. “Hargreaves (1994) suggests that teachers’ work is becoming more *intensified* – more demanding, routinized, and time-consuming – but this doesn’t necessarily mean it is becoming more professionalized” (Tye, 2000, p. 127). Teachers continually deal with the increasing pressures of teaching without getting the credit or autonomy they deserve. This has been the story for years. In the past the structure of teaching has lead teachers away from making their own decisions.

The feminization of the teaching force that accompanied the growth of bureaucratic structures in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century exacerbated this trend to move decisions away from the grass roots. It was seen as inappropriate for female teachers to make substantive decisions; rather, they would follow orders generated by men in the superordinate system (Anderson, 1968; Darling-Hammond, 1997). In any case, historically teachers have been viewed as *employees*, not as autonomous professionals (Stiles & Robinson, 1973). (Tye, 2000, p. 126)

Tye, 2000, goes on to say that the bureaucratic structure of schooling tenaciously holds the old paternalistic patterns in place (p. 126). “...it comes as no surprise that today’s teachers often feel marginalized; there is ample evidence that their experience and knowledge are devalued. The popular belief that teaching is a job that anyone can do has roots in our history” (Tye, 2000, p. 127).

Teachers are asked to do more and more and yet there isn't enough time to do it all.

The school day hasn't changed a great deal since mid-century – the “official” day is still around 6 hours long. What has changed is the extent of society's expectations as to what will be included in that 6 hours. The role of the school has expanded enormously in the past 50 years. There are more demands competing for teachers' time, attention, and energy than can possibly be accommodated in the hours available. (Tye, 2000, p. 136)

The increasing demands on teachers match the increasing attempts to improve education for children. Teachers and students alike are faced with increasing regulations and standards. Norlander-Case, Reagan, & Case (1999) describe this:

Teachers have recently been subjected to more and more regulation. Standards and testing dog them from the time they apply for admission to a preparation program until they retire. The rules of their work, always changing, allow little time for analysis of reflection on their own practice or the knowledge they choose to impart to their pupils. Prescribed curricula and assessments have greatly curtailed the freedom to tailor curriculum and instruction to the needs and interests of individual children. States are tempting once more to “teacher-proof” schooling. What is happening is a far cry from what we find in the call of John Goodlad: a teaching profession grounded in the judgments that teachers in schools must make to maximize the education of all children and youths. (p. 17)

This is very troublesome. “Tyack and Cuban (1995) note that teachers are frequently left out of the loop when it comes to designing reform efforts” (Tye, 2000, p.

127). Unfortunately there may be some teachers that don't care about this, or at least don't do anything to stop this. Tye (2000) supports this claim:

Then there is the disquieting possibility that teachers can feel marginalized and voiceless *but not feel too bothered by it* as long as they can close that classroom door. To many, it simply might not matter that they aren't involved in school or district decisions, or even that the community doesn't hold them in very high regard. (p. 130)

This can't continue if we really want to improve education. What can we do about this? The answer may be in how we prepare our teachers. Expectations for how teachers are prepared are increasing right along with the standards for students and practicing teachers. "As the challenge for students increases, so does the challenge for their teachers and so does the challenge for those who teach their teachers. Teacher educators are being asked now to prepare the next generation of teachers – teachers who will be responsible for a higher level of P-12 student achievement; and for student learning at deeper levels of understanding" (Levine, 1997, p. 63).

Tye (2000) claims that we do not seem to be very disturbed to be told that our teaching training programs, for the most part, prepare teachers to fit into the system and do their part to maintain it (p. 139). I disagree with his claim that suggests we are still preparing our teachers to fit into the traditional educational system. This may have been true at one time, but there are changes taking place in how we prepare teachers. In fact, "NCATE standards require teacher education programs to prepare future teachers to conduct reflective, intentional study of the impact of their teaching on student learning. Teacher education programs must re-vision their importance as both training agents and

supportive collaborators in preparing graduates to document positive impact” (Sanders, Sterner, Michaelis, Mowry, & Buff, 2004, p. 110).

Teacher educators have increased responsibilities and one of the ways they can fulfill their obligations to future teachers is to provide them with the opportunity to inquire into their practice. I agree with Poetter & et al. (1997) when they state that:

I firmly believe that one of the responsibilities that teacher educators have, among many, is to help our prospective teachers to become inquirers and generators of knowledge (Boomer, 1987; Hollingsworth & Sockett, 1994; Rudduck, 1985). It is no longer okay, or even reasonable, to make attempts at educating teachers without asking prospective teachers to learn and to inquire about teaching in their coursework and in their practice of teaching. (p. 11)

They clarify this further by stating:

We have a moral responsibility as teacher educators, teachers, students, and citizens, given the changing nature of knowledge in the world both in type and in quantity, to help our teachers understand and generate knowledge in order to empower them as human beings and as professionals. To fill our teachers with supposed knowledge of teaching without asking them to reflect on practice, or study their practices or school cultures, is to treat them as mechanics of teaching and not as artists or craftpersons of teaching. (Poetter, T & et al. (1997), p. 11)

This means that we need to expand our thinking about teaching as more than a set of procedures to be followed. “If we see professional knowledge in terms of facts, rules, and procedures applied nonproblematically to instrumental problems, we will see the practicum in its entirety as a form of technical training” (Schön, 1987, p. 39). We need to

help teachers to become reflective inquirers that view their practice as problematic. I believe that reflective teachers that inquire into their learning and teaching are teachers that can positively influence education in several aspects. This type of teacher can help validate the teaching profession through the knowledge they find and share as they inquire into their teaching and learning. As they do this they are likely to improve the education their students receive. There is plenty of research that supports the idea of reflective, inquiring teaching. Norlander-Case, et al. (1999) share its roots:

Recent emphasis on the need for reflective practice in education has been largely inspired by and grounded in the work of Donald Schön, which has been widely used by educators and others interested in the preparation of classroom teachers. Such concerns with reflective practice are also tied closely to efforts to empower teachers, as Catherine Fosnot has noted: “An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and investigating the teaching/learning process – one who views learning as construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development.” (p. 30)

Norlander-Case et al. (1999) share how this way of teaching can influence the traditional culture of teaching:

Susan Lytle and Marilyn Cochran-Smith have suggested that such an approach to research inevitably involves epistemological and political differences from traditional practice: “As a way of knowing, then, teacher research has the potential to alter profoundly the cultures of teaching – how teachers work with their students toward a more critical and democratic pedagogy, how they build intellectual communities of colleagues who are both educators and activists, and

how they position themselves in relationship to school administrators, policymakers, and university-based experts as agents of systemic change. (p. 43)

It has been recommended that we train our prospective teachers to be reflective.

“When understood as a critically reflective process, good teaching becomes synonymous with a continuous and critical study of our reasoning processes and our pedagogic actions” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 42). We also need to teach prospective teachers how to inquire into their work through inquiry or action research. Fortunately, reflective practice is becoming more and more common in teacher education programs. “Reflective practice and teacher research are beginning to be more widely incorporated into teacher education programs and teacher practice. A commitment to inquiry is imperative to improving practice and service and is therefore a central tenet of all professions” (Norlander-Case, Reagan, & Case, 1999, p. 12-13). What exactly is inquiry? Inquiry has different names: action research, teacher research, and teacher inquiry. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) briefly explain teacher research as:

Teacher research is a powerful way for teachers to understand how they and their students construct and reconstruct the curriculum. By conducting inquiry on their own practices, teachers identify discrepancies between their theories of practice and their practices, between their own practice and those of others in their schools, and between their ongoing assumptions about what is going on in their classrooms and their more distanced and retrospective interpretations. Inquiry stimulates, intensifies, and illuminates changes in practice. Out of inquiry come analytic frameworks, as well as questions for further inquiry. (p. 458)

They further explain that “Teacher research is concerned with the questions that arise from the lived experiences of teachers and the everyday life of teaching expressed in a language that emanates from practice. Teachers are concerned about the consequences of their actions, and teacher research is often prompted by teachers’ desires to know more about the dramatic interplay of classroom events” (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 466).

A good place to prepare reflective, inquiring teachers is in a professional development school. Professional development schools are places where educational change is taking place. “In fact, almost every commission and report on teacher education (Goodlad, 1994; Holmes, 1986, 1990; Levine, 1992) advocates the professional development school as a powerful vehicle for provoking educational change” (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2004, p. 126). A professional development school is also the perfect setting to prepare prospective teacher researchers. “The Holmes Group (1986) deemed teacher inquiry as a central feature of any PDS” (Dana & Yendol-Silva, 2004, p. 144). Professional development schools are places where significant educational changes and school reforms, including teacher inquiry, are taking place. “Important changes are already taking place in teacher education and school reform. One institution is increasingly playing a critical role in this process – the professional development school” (Levine, 1997, p. 63).

What can we expect if we prepare our teachers to be reflective and inquire into their teaching and learning? Hopefully, these teachers will have their own voice. “Teachers, as professionals working within a powerful institution, have the opportunity to shape their identity, to take a stand even when they are in conflict with others, and to



question common practices. Yes, teachers do implement someone else's ideas, but there is always room for personal judgment, decision, and criticism" (Posner, 1996, p. 24).

With their voice, hopefully these teachers can "come to know what constitutes reasonable justifications for their educational actions, be able to respond to criticisms of their actions, be cognizant of their own implicit social and cultural beliefs, and have a solid understanding of schools as institutions and the communities that surround them" (Liston & Zeichner, 1990, p. 244).

As teachers' voices are developed and heard there is hope that they can influence student learning as Meyers and Rust (2003) explain, "While action research has been a valuable method for the educational community to help teachers understand and reshape their practice, we now know that inquiry-oriented teachers can use action research to communicate to a larger audience how policy affects student learning" (p. 158). As they do this, teachers may have the ability to influence social change. "When teacher development is reconfigured as inquiry and teacher research as challenge and critique, they become forms of social change wherein individuals and groups labor to understand and alter classrooms, schools, and school communities" (Lytle & Cochran-Smith, 1992, p. 470).

Hopefully teachers will no longer just shut their doors to what is going on around them and they will begin to be seen as educational reformers helping to improve the quality of education for our children. "This international movement in teaching and teacher education that has developed under the banner of reflection can be seen as a reaction against the views of teachers as technicians who narrowly construe the nature of the problems confronting them and merely carry out what others, removed from the

classroom, want them to do” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4). As they do this, the bureaucratic structure of education mentioned earlier can begin to be broken down. “The movement toward seeing teachers as reflective practitioners is also a rejection of top-down forms of educational reform that involve teachers as only conduits for implementing programs and ideas formulated elsewhere” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 4).

In summary, these teachers “should be active in formulating the purposes and ends of their work, they examine their own values and assumptions, and that they need to play leadership roles in curriculum development and school reform. Reflection also signifies a recognition that the generations of new knowledge about teaching is not the exclusive property of colleges, universities, and research and development centers” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 5).

### **Purpose of Study**

“We began and continue to examine the assumption that the research process can enable people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations (Lather 1986)” (Miller, 1990, p. 29). Becoming a teacher let alone a teacher researcher is an on-going process. Coles & Knowles (2000) describe this process:

Becoming a teacher or other kind of educator is a lifelong process of continuing growth rooted in the “personal.” Who we are and come to be as teachers and teacher educators is a reflection of a complex ongoing process of interaction and interpretation of elements, conditions, opportunities, and events that take place throughout our lives in all realms of our existence – the intellectual, physical, psychological, spiritual, political, and social. (p. 15)

We know that we cannot create a teacher inquirer in a year, but we can begin the process. “Reflection as a slogan for educational reform also signifies a recognition that the process of learning to teach continues throughout a teacher’s entire career, a recognition that no matter how good a teacher education program is, at best, it can only prepare teachers to begin teaching” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 6). Since a reflective teacher researcher can not be “made” instantly, we look to find out ways to best help inspire and motivate prospective teachers to take the risk and study their own learning and teaching. “Questions and challenges remain as to the most efficient way to train future teachers to be reflective gatherers and users of student performance data” (Sanders, Sterner, Michaelis, Mowry & Buff, 2004, p. 108).

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs and practices of former interns prepared in a particular professional development school setting that attempts to promote teacher inquiry. “With hundreds of prospective teachers now learning to teach in the situated context of a PDS, little is known about the relationship between teacher preparation in this context and how PDS graduates experience their first year of teaching” (Gerono-Snow, Silva, & Dana, 2001, p. 35). My objective was to gather more data about how a number of former interns are experiencing their beginning years of teaching, particularly in relation to their inquiry stance. We say that preparing interns to be reflective and conduct teacher inquiry is essential to school reform. “However, Valli, Cooper & Franks (1997) also note that inquiry and research are not typically elaborated upon in PDS literature, claiming “we know far less about these activities than we do about teacher education, professional development, and collaboration (p. 281)” (Snow-

Gerono, 2003 p. 76). This study helps build the PDS literature about teacher inquiry and research.

## **Research Questions**

This study was a case study of a particular PDS that claims that teacher inquiry is a core feature of its program. The main question of this study was, **“What is the long-term impact of learning to teach in a professional development school that fosters teacher inquiry?”**

As I looked into that question, I needed to investigate the answers to the following sub-questions:

**Do former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance?**

**How do they define their inquiry stance and how is it seen through their teaching?**

**Do they continue to engage in teacher inquiry projects?**

**What aspects of the PDS preparation program impacted former interns’ inquiry stances? And**

**What conditions/factors in their current work setting impact whether former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance and engage in teacher inquiry?**

This study shows how the PDS program prepares teachers to have and maintain an inquiry stance throughout their teaching careers. It illustrates that an inquiry stance may not look exactly the same for everyone. It shows that different factors in teachers’ work settings could influence the extent to which their inquiry stances are visible. This study helps teacher educators learn more about how to plant a seed of inquiry in prospective teachers that will hopefully blossom and continue to grow throughout their

teaching careers. In summary, the importance of this study is that it examines the long-term impact of PDS preparation, provides us with a better understanding of what an inquiry-oriented stance is, and gives us a better understanding of how to prepare preservice teachers with an inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching.

## **Chapter Two**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will give a general description of what a Professional Development School (PDS) is and share why they were created. I will help readers understand the main purposes of PDSs and how they help to improve and transform education for all involved. You will read about the great variations between different PDSs. One PDS may be completely different from another despite their likely similar goals. Then you will see how PDSs differ from traditional student teaching programs. To help readers understand the context of this case study, I will describe the particular PDS being studied. I end the chapter by clarifying what teacher inquiry is and give my initial definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching.

#### **Definition/Description of PDSs**

Professional Development Schools (PDSs) are partnerships between schools and colleges. (Teitel, 2003, Holmes report, 1990, Darling-Hammond, 1994). “A PDS is viewed as the vehicle for simultaneously transforming teacher education and K-12 education by building a new culture of professional learning with schools that will better meet the needs of today’s students (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Goodlad, 1990; Holmes, 1986, 1990; Levine, 1992, 1997)” (Snow-Geron, Silva, & Nolan, 2002, p. 62). As Robinson & Darling-Hammond say, PDSs cannot exist alone. They depend on the mutual collaboration of the college and school in order to grow and develop (Robinson & Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 203). PDSs typically exist in public schools. Mentors (experienced teachers) and interns (preservice teachers) work together in the classroom.

College personnel are often found in the classrooms too. They observe interns and sometimes help teach lessons. All work together to provide outstanding instruction for the students.

The PDS movement has been growing throughout the past decade and has received support to do so. “The Holmes Group, The Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, the National Network for Education Renewal, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and initiatives sponsored by Ford” (Teitel, 2003, p. 6) are a number of the organizations that have helped the PDSs in existence to form and grow.

An exciting feature about PDSs is that they are intended to be schools for the development for all educators, not just new teachers. The Holmes Report (1990) explains:

By ‘Professional Development School’ we do not mean just a laboratory school for university research, nor a demonstration school. Nor do we mean just a clinical setting for preparing student and intern teachers. Rather, we mean all of these together: a school for the development of novice professionals, for continuing development of experienced professionals and *for the research and development of the teaching profession.* (p. 1)

Levine (1997) explains this further, “PDSs weave what are thought of as separate strands of activity – children learning, pre-service teacher education, professional development, and research – together into an integrated learning environment. This integration results in children learning and teachers learning in the course of practice” (p. 67).

Colburn (1993) compares a PDS to a teaching hospital. Not only do the doctors in a teaching hospital work with interns and residents to help them become the best doctors possible, they also continue to conduct research in order to further their own development and keep current in the best medical practices available. PDSs are similar. They are intended to prepare new teachers and also allow university and school faculty to collaborate on research and development. As Darling-Hammond (1994) claims:

PDSs aim to provide new models of teacher education and development by serving as exemplars of practice, builders of knowledge, and vehicles for communicating professional understandings among teacher educators, novices, and veteran teachers. They support the learning of prospective and beginning teachers by creating settings in which novices enter professional practice by working with expert practitioners, enabling veteran teachers to renew their own professional development and assume new roles as mentors, university adjuncts, and teacher leaders. They allow school and university educators to engage jointly in research and rethinking of practice, thus creating an opportunity for the profession to expand its knowledge base by putting research into practice – and practice into research. (p. 1)

Inquiry is fundamental to the PDS model. Inquiry is a way for teachers (and sometimes in partnership with professors) to conduct research. They may inquire about something in their classrooms, such as the best way to improve classroom management. For example, teachers might inquire into the different models of classroom discipline and experiment with different management techniques in their classrooms. This may help them manage their classrooms in a way that also fits into their beliefs. This could also



help them feel less stressed by the end of the day because they spent less time trying to “control” their classrooms and more time teaching their students. Teachers also may inquire about the best ways to help an individual child or even how to improve their curriculum.

Robinson & Darling-Hammond (1994) discuss the importance of investigation by both school and university into the daily happenings of PDS existence. As teachers inquire, frequently in partnership with university professors, they often merge theory and practice together. Robinson & Darling-Hammond write that schools and universities need to change their way of doing things in order for teachers and professors to create a common ground to inquire together:

In PDSs, public school and university interact in a conscious effort to merge theory and practice, knowledge and skill development. Practitioners in both organizations must change the way they relate to each other in order to support the development of teaching professionals – and of a teaching profession – grounded in a synergy of theory and practice as the basis for reflection and action. (p. 204)

What does a PDS look like? PDSs can vary greatly from site to site. “However, most PDSs are committed to the six guiding principles of The Holmes Group (1990) for creating Professional Development Schools: committing to teaching for understanding; organizing classrooms and schools as learning communities; setting ambitious goals for all children; establishing an environment that supports continuous learning for all; making reflection and inquiry central to the school; and developing a new type of organization to adhere to these principles” (Hopkins, Hoffman, Moss, 1997, p. 37).

Colburn (1993) explains how PDSs may look different from traditional schools:

However, the main difference a visitor sees is that many more teachers than usual are collaborating with each other. In formal meetings, informal meetings, even in the teachers' lounge, teachers are discussing issues of content and pedagogy. A fair number of PDS teachers admit that they spend a lot more time discussing professional issues since they became involved with PDS activities. Many PDS teachers take on extra duties in addition to regular teaching. Thus more teachers are present in the evenings and weekends than are found in many schools. (p. 11)

As you can see, many PDSs look very similar to typical public schools. The main difference is that there are usually more adults working in the classrooms than in a non-PDS school. Interns are working with their mentors. University personnel may also be seen more in the classrooms. They may be watching an intern, helping with a lesson, or even teaching a lesson. All members (interns, mentors, and university personnel) are working together to create the finest possible preservice preparation for novice teachers, as well as the best educational experience they can provide for their students.

## **Development of PDSs**

PDSs are not entirely new. John Dewey's lab schools shared similar characteristics to today's PDSs. For example, Colburn (1993) writes that the lab schools were to educate new teachers, as well as serve as research sites. However, the lab schools did not endure because they were thought to be unrealistic schools for teachers to be prepared in. "Lab schools flourished until about 20 years ago. They eventually were condemned for being too different from the typical public schools and too expensive for many universities to operate" (Colburn, 1993, p. 13). An advantage of today's PDSs is

that they are situated in typical schools. Today's PDSs have a greater chance for survival than lab schools due to the fact that PDSs are characteristically found in autonomously operated public schools that educate the same type of students and receive the same amount of government funding as in any other typical public school. (Colburn, 1993) Abdal-Haqq (1998) supports this by writing that most PDSs are in public schools. He also shares that there are more elementary PDSs than middle and high school PDSs.

During the 1980s, after the decline of the lab schools, people again began to take a closer look at education and how educators were prepared. The need to improve education for all students and improve the preparation of our teachers was clear. Abdal-Haqq (1998) claims that "Professional Development Schools (PDSs) emerged in the mid-1980s as a potentially significant vehicle for advancing both the revitalization of teacher education and the reform of P-12 schooling" (p. 2). With the apparent desire to improve our educational system, the PDS movement was strongly supported by the Holmes group, as well as the National Network for Educational Renewal and other education associations such as the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, the National Education Association, and the American Federation of Teachers. (Darling-Hammond, 1994) Teitel (2003) tells us corporations such as Exxon and Ford also played a large role in financially supporting the start of many PDSs.

An aspiration of PDSs is that they can help to advance the professionalization of teaching. "They represent a response that involves universities but also tries to put some credibility back into teacher preparation in the face of the public lack of confidence that has led almost every state to provide some kind of alternative certification route (Frazier, 1994)" (Teitel, 2003, p. 3). It is hoped that PDS work can help ease public worry about

the training of our new teachers. When schools and universities work together, they have a better chance of creating outstanding teacher preparation programs.

This work has not been easy though. Schools and universities were often known for their adversarial relationships. A goal of PDSs is that schools and universities would work together to breakdown and overcome their negative relationships for the benefit of all educators. “PDSs can be seen as places in which to resolve the tensions historically existing between schools and universities” (Teitel, 2003, p. 2).

In the past, schools and university members have blamed each other for the failure of properly preparing new educators to teach in today’s society. However, in a PDS, school and university educators work together to prepare new teachers. Teitel (2003), explains that “Professional development schools (PDSs) are innovative types of school-college partnerships designed to address this disconnection and finger-pointing and bring about the simultaneous renewal of schools and teacher education programs – restructuring schools for improved student learning and revitalizing the preparation and professional development of experienced educators at the same time” (p. 2).

Classroom teachers and university professors often collaborate to educate novice teachers. The classroom teacher may even help instruct courses for novice teachers. This joint effort helps the novice teachers have a more connected field experience. The PDS helps connect the student teaching experience in the classroom with their experiences from the university. As classroom teachers and university personnel work together to create this experience for interns, the negative relationships begin to disappear as trust and collaboration begin to strengthen the relationship. It is essential for this to happen in order for a PDS to be successful. However, “Achieving these conditions may take a

relatively long time and involve considerable effort. PDSs often begin as the work of individuals in schools and universities who have a shared vision. The efforts of these individuals to shape a new relationship are absolutely critical to achieving the threshold conditions. The building of trust across institutional boundaries lays the groundwork for institutional commitment which is necessary for institution building” (Levine, 1997, p. 71).

## **Purposes of PDSs**

### **Transformation through Collaboration**

PDSs are attempting to transform the way we do things. Today’s world has changed and today’s students are different from twenty years ago. So, why do we continue on the same as always? The Holmes Report (1990) questioned this too:

A real key is ‘Why do we do things the way we do?’ As long as teachers are in this little eggcrate school and isolated in their classrooms with no time to talk there is little access to information that would be empowering. We need to begin a process where those things are up for grabs in the faculty room, as a legitimate part of the school day. (p. 43)

Teachers need to be able to communicate with one another; they need time to share ideas, and collaborate to find new ways of doing things. The bureaucratic organization of schools often prevents this. When teachers stay in their classrooms and administrators stay in their offices day in and day out, educators miss the opportunity to work together to create new, better understandings about how to educate their students. PDSs serve as an avenue to change this. “We see Professional Development School faculty confronting the conventional forms of school organization and beginning to

develop new ways to organize the staff, assign children to classrooms, schedule the school day, and apportion teachers' work time, tasks, and responsibility" (Holmes Report, 1990, p. 42).

This will only work with genuine collaboration, a truly necessary component for a PDS to exist. "Collaboration, which is constitutive of our most life-supporting and growth-producing values, offers those of us who care about children and schooling a potentially powerful tool for transforming our environment. It is difficult to dislike the concept of collaboration, of people working collectively to accomplish something that none of them could have accomplished alone" (Dickens, 2000, p. 37).

### **Improvement of the Preservice Experience**

Nevertheless, PDSs hoped to accomplish more than achieving collaboration between schools and universities. PDSs came into existence to better the education of all children, including those students of different race and economic class backgrounds. In order to do this, new teacher education needed to be improved. "The push in the late 1990s for enhanced teacher content knowledge has helped propel PDSs, and at the same time it has nudged them to include arts and science faculty from the university" (Teitel, 2003, p.5).

Beginning teachers must be able to handle the intense demands that are placed upon them daily. Teachers must be able to educate their students while dealing with the many daily obstacles they are likely to face. Just to begin with, teachers must "learn to manage the different personalities and needs of 25 or 30 children while prioritizing and juggling often conflicting goals doesn't happen quickly or easily" (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 6). These skills have to be developed and PDSs provide the means to do this.

Intern teachers are able to learn from mentor teachers through “intensively supervised opportunities for practice. PDSs promise to develop more effective teachers and to reverse three aspects of socialization to teaching that have defined schools’ approaches to teacher learning in the past: “Figure it out yourself”; “do it all yourself”; and “keep it to yourself” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 8).

All Teachers (new and experienced) are facing more challenging and demanding teaching situations. “It is no wonder that teachers are finding their time more and more limited. With workloads and demands increasing, teachers today have less and less time available for professional reflection and growth. PDSs offer new and novice educators a unique opportunity to deal with teaching pressures and still find time to reflect and grow” (Bacharach & Hasslen, 2001).

The research shows that PDSs “are redesigning both teacher preparation and the practice of teaching, building the foundations that will support a profession of teaching” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 3). Interns in a PDS have a valuable experience of learning beside their mentor teachers. They are often encouraged to reflect in journals and conduct some sort of inquiry or research project. This helps them become better educators because “they are learning that research and reflection are key parts of professional development and we hope that the experiences they have will lead them to continue this practice in their profession” (Thomson, Maxwell, Kelley, & Carnate, 2000, p. 197).

When interns are taught to teach through reflection and inquiry, they are more likely to continue these practices throughout their teaching careers. “The year-long internship in a PDS provides the context for learning how to survive in a classroom so that when first-year teachers are on their own in the classroom they can move toward

more advanced stages concerning “teacher performance, the limitations and frustrations of teaching situations (Kagan, 1992, p. 160)” (Gerono-Snow, Silva, Dana, 2001, p. 41). This shows how interns have the benefit of learning how to balance professional growth with the demands of teaching right from the beginning. Hopkins, Hoffman, and Moss (1997) help explain one of the ways a PDS helps interns gain the experience necessary to get beyond the survival stage during their preservice experience and enter the field of teaching with realistic expectations:

Clustering preservice teachers in one site also provides preservice teachers with an increased sense of self-worth. They know the school and staff, are often more confident, utilize peer support, and move away from developing survival skills to focusing upon their own learning as a function of their students’ learning. Administrators within the building will become actively involved in the preparation of these preservice teachers by scheduling meetings to help them learn support services such as counseling and by providing them with amenities such as faculty mailboxes, faculty parking places, and other non-monetary statements of the importance of the preservice teacher structure of the school. This immersion in the school culture provides preservice teachers with a more realistic idea of what teaching is while it stimulates and enriches individual learning through on-site collaborative work and reflection with peers (Devaney, 1990). (p. 38)

### **PDSs –Growth for all Involved**

Mentor teachers are also provided with the time to reflect and inquire. Mentors often inquire on projects together with their interns. For example, in one particular PDS,



a mentor teacher and intern conducted a joint inquiry project to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their morning routine. Together they searched for best morning routine practices and most effective morning meeting format. The mentor and intern greatly improved the start of their day for their kindergarten students by implementing some of the new strategies they learned through their inquiry. Mentors also are pushed to reflect on what they do daily as their interns question them about how or why they teach the way they do. Many PDSs additionally provide university courses for the teachers that encourage continuous professional growth. “A second trend associated with the PDS is the emergence of a greater number of workshops and seminars to prepare and support cooperating school personnel in their mentoring of prospective teachers” (Zeichner & Miller, 1997, p. 16).

Since PDSs are to be schools for the development for all educators, including university personnel, PDSs provide university personnel ways to grow too. University professors continue their professional development by working with interns and mentors. They continue to learn more about teaching as they spend more time in classrooms. They also continue to gain knowledge about how to teach interns as they collaborate with mentor teachers to construct the courses and field experiences the interns will experience. These experiences all allow for “school and university educators to engage jointly in research and rethinking of practice, thus creating an opportunity for the profession to expand its knowledge base by putting research into practice – and practice into research” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 1).

Most importantly, PDSs were created and exist with the hope to make things better for all children. We know that we need to improve the education of our children –

“All children – not only the most privileged and most accomplished, but the most needy as well” (Holmes Report, 1990, p. 9). A PDS can provide extra help to needy students since the intern often spends the entire school year in the classroom with the mentor teacher. Students’ individual needs are more likely to be noticed and addressed with two teachers working in the classroom daily. Due to the extra adults in many PDSs’ classrooms to help these students, and to the nature of PDSs, it is likely that there will be a great deal of reflection and inquiry into how to improve the education of our most needy students.

As shown by the literature, PDSs are places where all educators can continuously grow and develop. PDSs have common core features such as the goal to improve education for all through collaboration between schools and universities. Many PDSs teach interns through inquiry and reflection while providing support for mentor teachers. Also, most PDSs are found in common public schools that educate typical students. PDSs continue to grow and develop. The many PDSs that exist are different and unique to their own settings.

### **Differences between Existing PDSs**

There are many different types of PDSs. “The term *professional development school* has been attached to a variety of collaborative efforts. These projects range from university personnel supervising a small group of preservice teachers at a school site to what Goodlad calls a *symbiotic partnership*, where “school and university personnel share the decisions of operating both the school and the entire length and breadth of the teacher education program: (Sirotnik and Goodlad 1988, p. 85)” (Bacharach & Hasslen, 2001, p. 8). Some of this variety is due to how evolved a particular PDS is.

Many PDSs begin small, maybe with a few interns, mentors, and a few university professors. At first the decisions made by a PDS affect those most directly involved in the PDS. It may not affect the whole school or the university much at all. For example, a decision about where interns have their classes or which interns are placed with certain mentor teachers may not affect the teachers at the school that are not involved in the PDS. As a PDS grows, more decisions need to be made. Eventually, the decisions impact those in the school building even if they are not directly involved in the PDS. For example when the number of interns increases at one school, something as simple as parking, could become a factor for everyone that uses the school parking lot. However, typically as the decisions grow bigger, the PDS is able to handle them because they have been building a trustful, collaborative relationship between the school and university the whole time. Teitel (1997) explains this type of growth below.

Some PDS decisions are self-contained, with only a limited impact on the rest of the workings of the school or university. Matching student teachers with cooperating mentors and selecting the content of field-based courses are examples. But as PDSs move beyond these mutual adjustment-type choices, and begin to explore broader aspects of the PDS change agenda, decisions will have greater impacts. As they develop, PDSs may begin to explore the whole scope and sequence of teacher education curriculum, or push for a greater role in the budgeting processes in their districts. (p. 118)

As a PDS grows, more people from the school(s) and university become a part of it. The relationship grows and strengthens making more things possible. One particular PDS began after a period of trust building. It began with 14 interns and mentors and grew

to over 60 interns and mentors. The PDS began in two elementary schools in the district and is now a part of every elementary school in the district. Over the years the relationship between the university and school district continuously strengthened and the program continued to grow. For example, teachers from the school district help plan methods courses for the interns and now some even help instruct the courses. Teitel (1997) helps to describe the growth that took place in this PDS by talking about the development growing PDSs experience as a continuum.

In PDSs, examples of mutual adjustment might be a university placing a cluster of student teachers in a single school without changing the approach to supervision or to any other aspects of the student teachers' experience, or a university agreeing to allow an interested faculty member to teach an existing course on the site at the school. These are minor mutual adjustments that do not challenge the status quo in either institution. In partnerships closer to the collaborative end of the spectrum, the school and university would meet to jointly plan common activities, with the understanding and expectation that the activities would be different from "business as usual" because they were being done jointly. More fully developed PDSs are further along the continuum toward collaboration and recognize that governance has to promote a real change agenda whose goal is the renewal of both organizations. (p. 117)

Different PDSs have unique features, yet you can see how they all strive to improve the education of their students while reforming teacher education and professional development. Levine (1997) helps describe this:

A PDS school partner need not have all the answers nor be an “exemplary school site,” but it does need to have a commitment to developing certain characteristics. The characteristics are relevant for all schools – not just those with a teacher education function; however they are critical in the PDS. The new teachers who are socialized and prepared in schools with these critical attributes will carry with them high expectations, not only for student learning and teaching practice, but also for what schools should be like in order to support that kind of teaching and learning. Furthermore, they will have developed the skills they need to put these expectations into action. (p. 66)

### **How PDSs Differ from Traditional Student Teaching Programs**

PDS partnerships differ from traditional student teaching programs. One difference is the time the university supervisors spend with their student teachers – and how that time is spent. Johnston (1997) explains the difference:

In a traditional supervisory role, the university supervisor seldom got to know the cooperating teachers well and was usually working with students in several schools. In our case, they were assigned to a school for the year. We decided that they should individually work out their roles collaboratively with the teachers and student teachers in their schools. Rather than taking a traditional supervising role, they searched for ways to integrate themselves into the life of the school as they worked with teachers and student teachers. (p. 31)

Having a stronger university supervisor’s presence in the school and classroom increases the positive, collaborative relationship between the school and university. Due to the extra time university supervisors spend in the classrooms with the student

teacher(s), mentor teachers have more confidence in the supervisor's ability to judge the student teachers' growth. The university supervisor has a more thorough understanding of the interns' growth processes and is better able to help them develop their teaching skills.

Just as teachers and university supervisors are taking on new and/or more involved roles in the education of student teachers, the student teachers often commit themselves to a different, perhaps more demanding experience than they would have if they had just enrolled in traditional student teaching. Chase and Merryfield (2000) explain how this intense experience is supported by the PDS:

We find that high expectations bring about a high quality of performance. We focus on the PDS methods block as the beginning of their careers as professionals, not just a college course to be taken for a grade. Although many preservice teachers are initially overwhelmed by the workload and responsibilities of their field, most rise to the occasion and greatly improve their interpersonal, organizational, and teaching skills and their content knowledge from one week to the next. (p. 128)

Although the interns are faced with high expectations, they are not expected to meet them on their own. They are offered a large amount of support. Chase and Merryfield (2000) explain this as a caring process in which university supervisors and mentor teachers work together to support their preservice teachers.

From the research, we know that "PDSs provide an opportunity to bridge the gap between the abstract and the authentic in the preparation and development of teachers and other educators" (Teitel, 2003, p. 3). We hope that eventually all new teachers can begin their careers in a PDS. We know that beginning teachers have a lot on their plates. It is

hoped that “PDS internships, like those of other professions, would offer opportunities to observe, practice, debrief, and be counseled, as well as to consult, attend seminars, and reflect with colleagues. This combination would help interns acquire a broad set of understandings and abilities rather than a formulaic set of behaviors that ultimately prove inadequate” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 9).

### **This PDS**

The PDS in this case study is well developed through a partnership between Oak Wood University and a local school district located in the Northeastern United States. The PDS is a member of the Holmes Partnership. “Preservice teachers complete an undergraduate internship where learning to teach is accomplished through teaming with a mentor teacher for an entire school year” (Silva & Dana, 2001; Snow-Geron, J., Silva, D., & Nolan, J. 2002, p. 65).

The PDS partnership began its development over an eight-year period. Gimbert and Nolan (2003) help explain the beginnings of this program.

This partnership emerged from a shared vision of university faculty and administrators and the school district’s principals and teachers. Members of this community believed that their collaborative efforts could yield better teacher preparation opportunities for pre-service teachers and enhanced learning environments for children. The school faculties and university faculty members spent a year planning for the initial pilot year of actual PDS work that began in August 1998 in two of the district’s elementary schools. A successful pilot year of operation led to the addition of two more elementary schools to the PDS community for the next school year. (p. 358)

Now this partnership has grown from two elementary schools to ten elementary schools. All elementary schools in the district are now involved, making the partnership a Professional Development District (PDD). There are now over 60 interns working with their mentors and supervisors, known as Professional Development Associates (PDAs) in the PDS school sites.

Dana and Yendol-Silva (2004) explain the goals of this partnership, “As part of its collaborative work the partnership committed to achieve three goals. The first and foremost goal emphasized a commitment to enhance the educational experience of all children. The second goal focused on ensuring high quality field experiences for prospective teachers. The third and final goal called for furthering the professional growth of school and university based teachers and teacher educators (Dana, Silva, & Colangelo, 1999).” (p. 130)

Senior undergraduate interns go through a selection process to become a part of the PDS. They then leave the university calendar and spend an entire year in the school while receiving 12 credits in math, science, social studies, and classroom learning environments in the fall and 15 credits of student teaching and three credits for a teacher inquiry course in the spring. The interns begin their year with Jumpstart before the school and university year begins, attend all inservice days, attend method courses and seminars on site, and conduct an inquiry project in the spring. (Snow, Yendol-Silva, & Nolan, 2002)

Snow-Gerono, Silva, and Nolan (2002) explain the development of the interns’ methods courses:



Four redesigned methods courses emerged during the second year as school-based and university educators collaborated around the methods curricula. This new interest in collaboratively planning the courses stemmed from several sources. First, as a result of the frustration experienced during the pilot year, the university faculty members became motivated to better integrate their syllabi and course work in the PDS context. Second, out of a sense of responsibility to their interns, mentor teachers from the pilot year became committed to revising, improving, and connecting the coursework. Third, a grant from The Lucent Technologies Foundation provided funding and momentum for team meetings and collaborative planning around each methods course. Fourth, district curriculum specialists from each of the content areas agreed to participate. (p. 67)

Now methods courses continue to be planned with a team of mentors, administrators, curriculum specialists, and university faculty. They continue “to rethink the individual courses with a goal of integrating the experiences into the daily work of PDS interns” (Snow-Gerono, Silva, & Nolan, 2002, p. 67) as courses are modified and improved. University faculty, mentor teachers, and graduate students work together as instructors for the courses.

In addition to the methods courses, interns reflect upon their learning in journals throughout the entire year and conduct an inquiry project in the spring. Inquiry is a core feature to this PDD. Interns, mentors, and teacher educators join together to work on inquiry. Mentors can support their interns throughout their inquiry (inquiry support), conduct an inquiry with their intern (shared inquiry), or conduct their own inquiry simultaneously to their intern (parallel inquiry). Sometimes interns work together on their

inquiries. “The inquiry projects focus on some type of pedagogy, a particular child in the classroom, one’s own teaching beliefs, or the district curriculum” (Gerono-Snow, Silva, & Dana, 2001, p. 36).

These inquiry projects are presented at the annual Teacher Inquiry Conference each spring. This conference is well attended. Friends and family members of interns, school teachers and administrators, university faculty and administrators, and the interns for the next school year all attend to share their knowledge and accomplishments as well as to learn from others. This partnership has won national awards due to inquiry being a core feature of the program. They received the 2002 Award for The Distinguished Program in Teacher Education at ATE (Associate of teacher Educators) and the Holmes Partnership Nancy Zimpher Award in 2004.

## **Inquiry**

What is inquiry? Inquiry is known by several different names. It is sometimes called action research, teacher research, or teacher inquiry. Basically, they all mean the same thing. Nolan and Hoover (2004) describe the history of inquiry, or action research in education.

Action research is not a new phenomenon in education. Some trace its roots as far back as the work of John Dewey near the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Glanz, 1998). Although Dewey’s emphasis on problem solving, reflection and the scientific method are certainly key components of action research, most experts agree that Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist, brought action research to the social sciences during the late 1930s. In his work, Lewin

attempted to have groups of people use scientific inquiry to solve real-life problems that they were facing. (p. 137)

Perry-Sheldon and Allain (1987) support the claim that action research can be traced back to Lewin, “the term “action research” can be traced to the 1940s when it was used to describe Lewin’s work involving a series of community experiments conducted after World War II” (p. 14). They also share that “Stephen Corey at Teachers College, Columbia University was among the first to use action research in the field of education” (p. 14).

Snow-Gerono (2003) warns of the danger of inquiry not being specifically defined. “As the movement of teacher inquiry has evolved, a variety of definitions have come into the foreground, giving the rise to the danger of inquiry becoming “anything and everything” (p. 2). She goes on to discuss why teacher inquiry needs a more formal definition. “This danger indicates the necessity for deliberately applying definitions of teacher inquiry in order to maintain credibility and avoid the potential marginalization of teacher inquiry, as a movement, that is overused and trivialized. When teacher inquiry is thought of as anything and everything, it takes on a meaning of nothingness” (Snow-Gerono, 2003, p. 2). So, we need to make sure this doesn’t happen as inquiry is a vital component of good teaching.

Teacher inquiry is a way for teachers to make sense of their teaching. “In its simplest sense, research helps us gain control of our world. When we understand the patterns underlying the language we use or the interactions we have with others, we have a better sense of how to adjust our behaviors and expectations” (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 2). Most teachers are constantly thinking about their world in the classroom and about

the children they teach. “The overwhelming majority of educators are thoughtful, inquiring individuals who are inclined to solve problems and search for answers to pressing questions. The inquiry/action research model of professional development provides them with opportunities to do just that” (Guskey, 2000, p. 26). Guskey goes on to say that the inquiry/action research model is based on the belief that teachers do ask valid questions about their practice and have the ability to look for answers to their questions. (p. 26)

Inquiry differs from traditional research. Schmuck (1997) explains how:

Traditional researchers look at what others are doing and strive not to become personally involved within the study situation. Action researchers look at what they themselves are or should be doing, reflect on what they are thinking and feeling, and seek creative ways to improve how they are behaving. In other words, action research is reflection and inquiry conducted by educators who want to improve their own practice. (p. 20)

When looking into the literature about inquiry and action research. The terms “reflective” or “reflection” often appear. “Dewey defines reflective action as that which involves active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or practice in light of the reasons that support it and the further consequences to which it leaves” (Zeichner & Liston, 1996, p. 9). Reflection alone is not inquiry. In fact, you can reflect without being a “critically reflective” teacher. Brookfield (1995) clarifies this:

Reflection by definition is not critical. It is quite possible to teach reflectively while focusing solely on the nuts and bolts of classroom process. For example, we can reflect about the timing of coffee breaks, whether to use blackboards or flip

charts, the advantages of using liquid crystal display (LCD) panel over previously prepared overheads, or how rigidly we stick to a deadline for the submission of students' assignments. All these rest on assumptions that can be identified and questions, and all of them can be looked at from different perspectives. But these are not, in and of themselves, examples of *critical* reflection. (p. 8)

Reflection alone then is not enough. Liston and Zeichner (1990) explain the importance of teachers being able to do more than reflect:

Lately, the sense within teacher education seems to be that as long as teachers 'reflect' on their action and purposes, then everything is all right. When this is the case, calls for further reflection becomes groundless, that is, such proclamations lack any substantial basis for discerning what will count as good reasons for educational action. We sense that teacher education ought to aim directly at developing teachers who are able to identify and articulate their purposes, who can choose appropriate means, who know and understand the content to be taught, who understand the cultural and cognitive orientations for their students, and who can be counted on for giving good reasons for their actions. (p. 236)

Posner (1996) goes on to explain that "teachers (especially effective ones) balance intuitive and reflective thought, using any resources they can find and adapting materials to suit their own purposes and methods" (p. 25). Brookfield (1995) also supports that, "Critically reflective teachers have researched their teaching and their students enough to know that methods and practices imported from the outside rarely fit snugly into the

contours or their classrooms. They are aware that difficult problems never have standardized solutions” (p. 19).

Reflection is crucial to inquiry, but it alone is not inquiry. Dana & Silva (2003) help separate reflection from inquiry, while noting the importance of reflection.

In addition, reflection is a key component of teacher inquiry. Yet teacher inquiry is different from daily reflection in and on practice in two important ways. First teacher inquiry is less happenstance. The very definition of teacher inquiry includes the word *intentional*. We do not mean to suggest that reflection is never intentional, but in the busy, complex life of teaching, reflection is something that occurs most often in an unplanned way, for example, on the way to the teacher’s room for lunch, during a chat with a colleague during a special, when the students are engaged in an independent activity, on a drive home, in the shower, or during dinner – wherever and whenever a moment arises. (p. 7)

Dana and Silva (2003) go on to explain how inquiry is more visible.

Second, teacher inquiry is more visible. The daily reflection teachers engage in is not observable by others unless it is given some form (perhaps through talk or journaling). As teachers engage in the process of inquiry, their thinking and reflection are made public for discussion, sharing, debate, and purposeful educative conversation. As inquiry raises the visibility of teachers’ thinking, the profession garners a new respect for the complexity teaching entails. (p. 7)

As the research shows, reflection cannot be dismissed in the process of inquiry, but just reflecting is not conducting teacher inquiry. Inquiry can be thought of as a circle

– reflecting, researching, taking action, reflecting some more, etc. Taking action by inquiring into or questioning reflections helps increase the teacher’s ability to do both. “The inquiry/action research model of professional development helps educators become more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers (Sparks & Simmons, 1989)” (Guskey, 2000, p. 26).

Cole & Knowles (2000) explain how reflective inquiry works. “Reflexive inquiry into teaching practice, classrooms, and schools is a straightforward and commonsensical enterprise that requires only a genuine commitment to know and an openness to observe, listen, and seek understandings. The methods of inquiry are simple: looking; listening, asking questions, and listening some more; and collecting and reading artifacts or documents of various kinds” (Cole & Knowles, 2000, p. 88). Schwalbach (2003) shares that inquiring teachers look at what is happening in their classroom and school, sometimes because what they see is different from what university researchers are studying and what they find happening in their classroom. (p. 1) She goes on to share that “action research is the process of investigating something you are doing in your own classroom” (Schwalbach, 2003, p. 1). Hubbard & Power explain that there are many ways that teachers can conduct inquiry (or research) as they put their reflection into action. “Teacher-researchers use their inquiries to study everything from the best way to teach reading and the most useful methods for organizing group activities, to the different way girls and boys respond to a science curriculum” (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 2).

Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) consider inquiry to be like conducting a case study.

Almost by definition, teacher research is case study – the unit of analysis is typically the individual child, the classroom, or the school. Whether and how case studies function in knowledge generation is part of a larger set of questions about the relationships between qualitative research and practice, which have been topics of considerable debate. As Eisner (1991) points out, this debate hinges on what is meant by the accumulation of knowledge in a field – on whether we mean that knowledge accumulates in the sense that dollars and garbage do, a view that presumes that knowledge is an “inert material” that can be collected stored, and stockpiled. (p. 466)

In spite of the differences in definitions of teacher inquiry, there are some things that are certain. Inquiry takes dedication and a considerable amount of time. Guskey (2000) supports this claim, “the process requires significant initiative on the part of the individuals involved. Depending on the complexity of the problem addressed, it also can require the commitment of substantial time” (p. 26). Inquiry is also something that is enduring, “Reflection, inquiry, and problem solving are ongoing, never-ending procedures” (Schmuck, 1997, p. 20). Inquiry may lead you to find answers to one set of questions but as it does, it opens the doors to a whole new set of questions.

In summary it is essential to always remember the significance of teacher inquiry. Teachers that conduct inquiry contribute to the field of education as they continue to strive to improve the education of their students. Prospective teachers that have the opportunity to learn from these teachers have a great advantage as they begin their



careers. Teacher educators that work with these teachers also have the opportunity to continue to learn even more about teaching and student learning. Frakes, Valli, & Cooper (1998) sum this up nicely, “As teacher researchers they contribute to the development of the knowledge base; as teacher educators they participate in the clinical supervision and development of novice teachers; as activists they collaborate with others in seeking justice and equity in the greater society; and finally, as decision makers, they determine school goals and instructional decisions” (p. 71).

### **Inquiry Stance Defined**

Many teachers conduct teacher inquiry. Sometimes they do so for college or university course requirements and sometimes they do so just for their own learning. But, how do you tell if a teacher has an inquiry stance toward teaching? We know from the literature that reflection is a key part of inquiry, but how can you really tell if someone is reflective? Zeichner & Tabachnick (1991) help explain this difficulty.

One reason for the difficulty is that reflection is commonly considered to be a private activity, while reflective teaching, like any kind of teaching is expected to be a public activity. Reflection, even when it is conceived to be a private activity may have public consequences as people say or do things we can observe and that we guess are result of reflection. In this view, thought and action are connected but separate from one another. (p. 10)

Norlander-Case, Kay, Reagan, and Case (1999) share research that helps us to see more clearly what a reflective teacher looks like. “As Dorene Ross, Elizabeth Bondy, and Diane Kyle have argued, ‘Reflective teachers are never satisfied that they have all the answers. By continually seeking new information, they constantly challenge their own

practices and assumptions. In the process, new dilemmas surface and teachers initiate a new cycle of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting” (p. 40). With this in mind, teachers with an inquiry stance must be reflective teachers. We could see this through their constant asking of questions, searching for new research, acting on the research, and asking more questions.

Nolan and Hoover (2004) list the questions such teachers continually ask themselves. “They do not wait for problems to arise before questioning what they do.” They continuously ask themselves five questions:

1. What am I doing?
2. Why am I doing it that way?
3. What impact is it having on learners?
4. How might I do things differently?
5. If I did things differently, what impact might it have on learners? (p. 144)

Nolan and Hoover (2004) go on to explain that teachers with an inquiry stance not only ask themselves questions, but they are also not offended when others ask them questions about their practice.

Teachers who have an inquiry stance are open to questions from others and to unexpected evidence concerning the impact of their practice on learners. When students, parents, and administrators ask those teachers questions about what they are doing in the classroom, the teachers view those questions as an opportunity to learn. They can tolerate the ambiguity of temporarily not knowing the answer, but they are not content to stay in that position. They take action to find the answer. They listen to the question carefully, reflect on it, and try to gather good information to begin to answer it accurately.

Such teachers do not change their practice simply because someone else raises questions about it, but they do not shut down and become defensive either. (p. 144)

Another researcher, Snow-Gerono (2003), shares how she defines a teacher inquiry stance.

.. I considered an “inquiry stance” to be inclusive of teachers who, as an integral aspect of their professional persona, raise questions about their practice and their classroom in order to systematically study those practices/contexts and take action(s) to make change(s) for the benefit of all involved. In my mind, they would have an openness to systematic evidence, a commitment to following that evidence, a desire to look beyond themselves for answers and deeper questions, a sense of self-reflection, and an openness to considering new ideas critically. (p. 8)

A different researcher, Irvin (2005), shares that inquiry as stance developed from action research but took the notion to the next level. “Rather than isolated projects, inquiry as stance describes a teacher who fully embodies the notion of questioning practice to serve both professional development and social justice agendas” (p. 33). Irvin goes on to explain that “an underlying component of the work in inquiry as stance is the way knowledge is conceptualized” (p. 33). For example, they have a “critical self awareness in how they gained knowledge and constructed frameworks of practice. They also show thoughtful consideration to their actions and through their inquiry work” (Irvin, 2005, p. 34).

Recent research helped me to describe the defining features of an inquiry stance and create an initial definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching as shown below. Having an inquiry stance toward teaching includes the posing of questions or problems

and looking beyond one's self to discover answers. Teachers with an inquiry stance are reflective and constantly evaluate their own practice. They use research to look for answers to their questions and to improve their practice. However, they don't just implement new strategies because they are out there. They are able to inquire into why they do or do not work in their classrooms and defend what is best for their students that year. Teachers with an inquiry stance are always striving to improve their practice for themselves and for their students and use teacher inquiry as a means to do so.

Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:

1. Reflect upon their practice
2. Ask specific questions about their practice
3. Search for answers/solutions to those questions
4. Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs
5. Are able to articulate their findings and why they do the things they do
6. Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)
7. Remain open minded to new ideas
8. Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers

How do teachers develop their inquiry stances? We need more research to say for certain how an inquiry stance is developed. Nolan and Hoover (2004) do not believe that all teachers naturally have an inquiry stance toward teaching. "Yet experience indicates that only a small percentage of teachers adopt an inquiry stance naturally. Most people need help and support developing such a stance. Action research offers that support. Undertaking an action research project requires a teacher to adopt many of these characteristics and behaviors" (p. 144). They further continue their claim that by

conducting teacher inquiry or action research, teachers are likely to develop an inquiry stance, “By providing practice in those behaviors, an action research project can be the stimulus that leads the teacher to adopt an inquiry orientation” (Nolan & Hoover, 2004, p. 144).

Snow-Gerono (2003) supports Nolan & Hoover’s claim. “Teachers who continually question their practice and study their classroom contexts and instructional impact have the potential to develop an inquiry stance toward their profession in general and their classroom in particular” (p. 4). She goes on to say that, “this inquiry stance may be cultivated by initial engagement with teacher inquiry as a process and the eventual appreciation of it as a way of being” (p. 4).

We need to look into the belief that conducting teacher inquiry may help teachers develop an inquiry stance toward teaching. If this is true, then it is important for teacher preparation programs to include inquiry or action research as part of their program for prospective teachers. It is also important for these programs to inquire into how well they are able to “plant the seed of inquiry.” We know that a preparation program can only begin the process of helping a teacher develop an inquiry stance. Since research has shown the great benefits of teacher research and having an inquiry stance toward teaching, we need to search for the best ways to help teachers learn about inquiry and develop an inquiry stance toward teaching. Teacher inquiry not only helps us to improve education for all children, but it also helps give teachers a voice in the process. Teachers realize that they will never have answers to everything but that it’s exciting to keep trying. Miller (1990) helps capture the work of inquiry by stating that, “we now at least understand that, although we often would like to find definitive answers, the crux of our

work lies within the constant raising of questions in spaces and in voices that, although complex and differing and internally changing, are our own” (p. 168).

## **Chapter Three**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **Theoretical Framework**

The goal of this study was to investigate the beliefs and practices of former interns that were prepared to teach in a Professional Development School (PDS) that attempts to promote teacher inquiry and that is a collaborative program between a school district in central Pennsylvania and a particular university. A qualitative case study was the best theoretical frame work for this study. A case study is a basic design “that can accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives, as well as philosophical perspectives on the nature of research itself. A case study can test the theory or build theory, incorporate random or purposive sampling, and include quantitative and qualitative data” (Merriam, 1988, p. 2). Merriam (1988) explains that case study is “one such research design that can be used to study a phenomenon systematically” (p. 6). She explains further, “That is, a case study is an examination of specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group” (Merriam, 1988, p. 9).

By doing a case study I had the freedom to choose how to collect and analyze the data in this study. Merriam (1988) says that most case studies in education are qualitative and hypothesis-generating. This particular study was framed around the case of a PDS teacher preparation program that aims at preparing teachers to develop an inquiry-oriented stance towards teaching. The case study is evaluative of the program’s ability to help prospective interns develop that inquiry stance toward teaching over time. Merriam (1988) says that “evaluative case studies involve description, explanation, and judgment”

(p. 28). A qualitative case study often builds theory. This study helps to build theory on whether or not including inquiry in prospective teachers' preservice training will result in these teachers having an inquiry stance toward teaching.

When doing qualitative research, "the process of data collection and analysis is recursive and dynamic" (Merriam, 1988, p. 123). The data I collected came from a variety of sources. "Unlike experimental, survey, or historical research, case study does not claim any particular methods for data collection or data analysis. Any and all methods of gathering data from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study, although certain techniques are used more than others" (Merriam, 1988, p. 10).

The data collected in this study is detailed and obtained primarily from surveys and interviews and secondarily from observations. "Qualitative data consist of "*detailed descriptions* of situations, events, people, interactions, and observed behaviors; *direct quotations* from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories" (Patton, 1980, p. 22). Merriam (1988) says that, "Qualitative case studies rely heavily upon qualitative data obtained from interviews, observations, and documents. Quantitative data from surveys or instruments can be used to support findings from qualitative data" (p. 68). The data gathered from the surveys determined the participants in this study.

## **Initial Data Collection**

### **Surveys**

To begin collecting data, I created a survey that helped me begin to determine if former interns had an inquiry stance toward teaching and that also assisted me in the



selection process of the participants for my study. The survey was posted on SurveyMonkey and consisted of four sections. The first part of the survey included the Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research from the University. This was a necessary step in order to fulfill the requirements of the University's Office of Research Protections. This section informed the survey participants all about the study including: the purpose of the study, the risks and benefits involved in participating in the study, the procedures that would be followed, and the duration of the study should they agree to participate in any follow-up interviews. At the end of this section if they clicked 'I agree' they began the survey. If they clicked on 'I disagree' they were taken to a screen that thanked them for their time and they did not complete the survey.

The second part of the survey provided background information about the former interns. This section asked the former interns the year they completed the PDS, about their teaching experiences (grade levels and years teaching), and about the school district in which they were currently teaching. Then the survey participants were asked to compare the school district they were currently teaching in to the school district they completed their PDS internship in. Finally the survey participants were asked to share their beliefs about teaching and how they have changed or remained the same since they left the PDS and began their teaching careers.

The third section of the survey provided four vignettes about four teachers and how they handled particular teaching situations. The survey participants were first asked to read the vignettes. Then they were asked to think about the teachers in each vignette and how they did (or didn't) relate to them. They checked whether they felt they were a lot like the teacher, somewhat like the teacher, or very different from the teacher. Then

they were asked to explain their responses. The last question in this section asked the survey participants if they were willing to discuss this survey in more detail and participate in 1-3 interviews. If they were willing they provided me with their name, grade they were teaching, email and mailing addresses, telephone number, and the best way for me to contact them. If they were not willing to participate further in this study they left this question blank. The final section simply thanked them for their time and allowed them to either click on a previous page or click on 'done'.

In order to make the survey more reliable in helping me to gather the information that would best help me determine the study participants, I first tested the vignette section on teachers within the PDS that had a known inquiry stance toward teaching. These teachers were recommended to me by one of the co-facilitators of the PDS and members of my doctoral committee. These teachers were known to have an inquiry stance toward teaching based on their reputation within the PDS, their work in teacher inquiry, and/or due to their selection as participants in former doctoral students' dissertations relating to teacher inquiry.

### **Analyzing Surveys**

Once the surveys were returned I printed them and separated them into piles. Eighty-three out of 120 surveys (69%) were returned. Ten of these surveys were only partially complete. These participants did not complete the third section which contained the vignettes. Seventeen survey participants did not agree to be interviewed. Fifty-six survey participants provided their contact information for a follow-up interview.

I put the non-interview surveys aside and separated the interview surveys by the participants' graduation years.

Table 1  
Survey Compilation

Graduation year	Number of surveys
1999	2
2000	7
2001	10
2002	8
2003	7
2004	5
2005	17

I set aside the 2004 and 2005 interview surveys because I wanted to look at former interns with teaching experience of three or more years (2003 graduates were finishing their third year at the time). I then took out five of the 1999-2003 surveys because they were not still teaching, were not in at least their third year of teaching, or did not explain ALL the vignettes. I took the remaining twenty-nine surveys and gave them a score between one and four. Based wholly upon the survey, a score of four portrayed the greatest possibility of an inquiry stance toward teaching while a score of one did not reveal an inquiry stance toward teaching.

### **Scoring Surveys**

In order to score the surveys I looked at the survey participants' beliefs about teaching and their responses to the vignettes. When studying their responses to their beliefs about teaching, I looked for any indication that this teacher may or may not have an inquiry stance toward teaching. I reviewed my original definition of an inquiry stance and decided to look for words such as reflection, inquiry, questioning practice, life-long learning.

Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:

1. Reflect upon their practice
2. Ask specific questions about their practice
3. Search for answers/solutions to those questions
4. Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs
5. Are able to articulate their findings and why they do the things they do
6. Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)
7. Remain open minded to new ideas
8. Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers

What did I look for in vignettes?

In the vignettes I also looked for evidence of an inquiry stance toward teaching based upon how they related themselves to each teacher in the vignette as well as their explanation of this relation. I compared their responses to the responses given to me by teachers with a known inquiry stance toward teaching. Finally, I used Table 2 to match the inquiry dimensions with the examples/non-examples provided within the vignettes.

Table 2  
Inquiry Dimensions and Vignettes

<b>Inquiry Dimensions</b>	<b>Vignettes</b>
Reflect upon practice	Vignette 2, 3, 4
Ask specific questions about their practice	Vignette 2, 4
Search for answers/solutions	Vignette 1, 2, 3
Try solutions out and adapt them	Vignette 1, 2, 3
Articulate findings and why they do things the way they do	Vignette 1, 2, 3
Share work with others (formally and/or informally)	Vignette 2
Remain open minded to new ideas	Vignette 2
Continue to utilize the concepts throughout their career	Vignette 4

**Vignette 1** is a “non-example” of a teacher with an inquiry stance. A teacher with an inquiry stance would hopefully use the guides to make sure he/she covered the material but would teach the unit in his/her own way – a way that fit his/her beliefs about teaching science. I looked to see if they did or did not change how they would teach the unit to fit their beliefs.

### Molly

Molly was excited to begin a new science unit with her second grade class. However, once she read over the lessons included in the unit provided by the district she was disappointed. The lesson guides did not match her ideas about how she was hoping to teach science. After talking with a few other teachers, Molly decided that it was best if she taught the unit the way it was written. That way she would be sure that she covered everything she was supposed to even if it wasn't the way she would have approached the unit.

**Vignette 2** is an example of how a teacher with an inquiry stance may work to meet a child's needs. I looked to see if they did (or did not) identify with the teacher as she tried to reach all students.

### Natalie

Natalie always thought a great deal about the students in her second grade classroom. This year she had one particular student that really seemed to occupy her mind. His name was Dudley. Before the school year began, Natalie was warned about Dudley by teachers that had taught in the district longer. She was told that Dudley would not be a very bright student and that his sister had been the same way so she shouldn't expect much from him. Once the school year began, Natalie found that Dudley did seem to be a little behind the rest of her students, particularly in reading and writing. However, she was determined to hold him to high expectations and wondered how she could reach him. After getting to know Dudley better, she found he had a lot of knowledge about automobiles and helped his grandfather often in a car garage. Natalie wondered if Dudley's love of automobiles could help interest Dudley in reading and writing. Natalie began to tailor Dudley's instruction to meet his needs and interests. For example, she found books about automobiles for Dudley to read and encouraged Dudley to write about his experiences helping his grandfather. Natalie kept a log of her adjustments to Dudley's lessons and their impact – successful or not. By the end of the year Natalie was still worried about Dudley's progress in both areas. He was still not where he should be. She thought it would be helpful to share her findings with Dudley's teacher for the next year. She hoped to share what she had tried and what was and wasn't working for Dudley.

**Vignette 3** is an example of how a teacher with an inquiry stance would research the best ways to teach reading and writing but a non-example in the way she went about her discussion with the concerned parent. Hopefully a teacher with an inquiry stance would say that they would share the research with the parent and invite them into their classroom. I looked for whether or not they mentioned anything about researching, and sticking to beliefs. I also looked to see if they would handle the conversation with the parent differently, for example, sharing explanation with parents and/or inviting them into the classroom. Or, did they think Wendy handled it perfectly?

#### Wendy

Wendy believed in using stations to teach reading and writing to her students. She has researched different ways to teach reading and writing and experimented with different methods. As a result she developed different reading and writing stations to meet the developmental needs of her students. One parent didn't like the sound of "stations" and stopped by to see Wendy after school. The parent complained about the students moving around so much and sometimes working at an independent listening station. She felt with all the moving around the children didn't have much time to learn. Wendy listened to the parent's complaint, thanked her for sharing her feelings, and simply told the parent that she still felt using stations worked best for her and her classroom. The parent left not looking entirely convinced but appeared happier that she had shared her thoughts.

**Vignette 4** is a non-example because teaching is completely automatic for Julie and she doesn't spend very much time thinking about her teaching (she is not reflective). I

looked to see if they do feel more comfortable with teaching – but yet still spend time thinking and reflecting about their teaching – do they disagree that teaching is automatic?

### Julie

Julie is currently in her fourth year of teaching. She has worked very hard to learn the curriculum and develop her lesson plans over the past few years. Julie feels that she has become the teacher she had hoped to be. This year Julie really feels her classroom is running smoothly and her lessons are going well. Teaching has become automatic for Julie and she doesn't have to spend too much time thinking about her teaching. Now she has much more time to focus on things other than school.

Scores ranged between one and four with one being weak and four being strong. Six surveys were given a score of one. Eight surveys were given a score of two. Nine surveys were given a score of three. Six surveys were given a score of four.

Table 3  
Scoring of Surveys

Score	Explanation of Score
4	Vignette responses matched criteria given of how a teacher with an inquiry stance might respond to the vignettes AND mentioned a key word(s) that I was looking for in beliefs.
3	Vignette responses matched criteria given of how a teacher with an inquiry stance might respond to the vignettes. Key word(s) in beliefs were missing.
2	One vignette response differed from how a teacher with an inquiry stance might respond to the vignettes. Answers were not thorough. Beliefs did not play a significant role.
1	Two or more vignette responses differed from the criteria given of how a teacher with an inquiry stance might respond to the vignettes. Beliefs did not play a significant role.

After the surveys were scored I met with the chair of my committee to discuss the results and choose the candidates for further participation in this study.



Two candidates, Lydia (1999) and Luke (2000), were chosen because they were currently teaching in the same district that they completed their PDS internship in. Lydia received a score of four on her survey and Luke received a score of one on his survey.

The third candidate, Hannah (2000), received a score of four on her survey. She was chosen because she was teaching in a very different teaching context from the PDS. She was teaching in a diverse school district in Fairfax County, VA. The fourth candidate, a 2002 graduate, was chosen because she also taught in a diverse school district in Fairfax County, VA. She received a score of one on her survey. This candidate chose not to participate further in this study once contacted for a follow-up interview. The new fourth candidate, Jacob (2001), received a score of two on his survey and was teaching in a diverse school district in VA. Candidates three and four received similar scores (one high, one low) to the first two candidates. The first two candidates were teaching in the same context as the PDS and candidates three and four were both teaching in diverse contexts in VA.

Three more candidates with scores of three or four were chosen because of my interest in knowing how they came to their inquiry stance toward teaching. Candidate five, Eve (2003), received a score of four on her survey and taught in a school district in PA in a somewhat similar teaching context as her PDS internship. Candidate six, Chloe (2001), received a score of three on her survey. She was teaching in New Jersey in a somewhat similar teaching context as her PDS internship. Candidate seven, Joanna (2001), received a score of three on her survey. She was teaching in a diverse school district in Florida. Both candidates six and seven had solid vignette answers but did not mention key words in their beliefs about teaching.

## Participants

The participants of this study are seven former PDS interns that are teaching in the Eastern United States. The study was limited to former interns in the Eastern United States because it was more practical for me to go to their schools and interview them in person. All the participants have taught for three or more years and were still currently teaching in the classroom. I was able to choose interns from the following cohorts: 1998-99, 1999-00, 2000-01, 2001-02, and 2002-03. There were fourteen interns the first year and thirty interns the following years – 134 interns total. Patton (2002) calls this purposeful sampling. This is because I am “selecting information-rich cases strategically and purposefully; specific type and number of cases selected depends on study purpose and resources” (Patton, 2002, p. 243).

All 134 former interns were emailed an invitation to participate in the study that included the link to the survey discussed previously in this chapter. The participants were a product of nonprobability sampling rather than probability sampling. Chein (1981) explains the difference. “Briefly, the difference between the two types is that in probability sampling “one can specify for each element of the population the probability that it will be included in the sample,” whereas “in nonprobability sampling there is no way of estimating the probability that each element has of being included in the sample and no assurance that every element has some chance of being included” (p. 423). I was not able to predetermine the chance a former intern had of being a participant in my study.

Seven participants were chosen for follow-up interviews based upon their survey scores. These included one 1999 graduate, two 2000 graduates, three 2001 graduates,

zero 2002 graduates (since the one candidate declined), and one 2003 graduate. There are two male candidates selected (only 2 males responded to the survey) due to candidate 4 declining to participate in the study. Three participants received scores of four on their surveys, two participants received scores of three on their surveys, and the remaining two participants received a score of one and two on their surveys. I purposefully chose these candidates because of their different scores and different teaching environments. Their narratives are shared in chapter four.

Table 4  
Study Participants

Participant	Survey Score	Years Teaching	State
Lydia	4	7	PA
Luke	1	6	PA
Hannah	4	5	VA
Jacob	2	4	VA
Eve	4	3	PA
Chloe	3	5	NJ
Joanna	3	5	FL

### **Site of the Study**

The survey was conducted online. I was able to travel to each of the participants' schools. I had the opportunity to spend time with them and their students in their classrooms. The initial interviews were conducted in person at each of the participants' schools. Follow-up interviews were conducted via email.

### **Data Collection Part II**

#### **Interviews**

My second type of data collection was done through interviews. Interviewing has been done for centuries. It can be traced back as far as the ancient Egyptians that conducted population censuses. More recently forms of interviewing have been used for

opinion polling, market research, survey research to quantify data and even for psychological testing. Today interviews continue to be widely used to collect data for research. “Interviewing, administering questionnaires, and observing people and phenomena are the three main data collection methods in survey research” (Sekaran, 2003, p. 223).

We interview to find more answers. We cannot see or observe everything and sometimes we want to dig further into the meanings of what we see. “Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

Interviews have various benefits over surveys and regular questionnaires. When you interview someone you have the chance to explain the questions you ask if the respondent does not seem to understand your question. If the respondent does not understand a question in a questionnaire, she or he may decide to just skip the question. Groves, Fowler, Couper, Lepkowski, Singer, & Tourangean (2004) found that interviews may help provide more complete responses. “Interviewers can also assist in clarifying, probing, and motivating respondents to provide complete and accurate responses. This appears to be directly related to the percentage of questions unanswered in a survey questionnaire” (p. 141). The degree of interaction in an interview may also increase the respondent’s comfort and willingness to provide thorough responses to the questions asked.

There are different ways to conduct interviews. “Interviews could be unstructured or structured, and conducted either face to face or by telephone or online” (Sekaran,

2003, p. 225). Some researchers use different names for the similar types of interviews. For example, unstructured interviews are similar to the informal conversational interview and the structured interview is similar to the standardized open-ended interview. You may conduct a structured or unstructured interview, or some combination of both in a number of ways.

## **How Interviews were Conducted**

Before I began my interviews I took care of ethical considerations. My respondents were informed about my research and their right to privacy when they conducted the survey and again at the interview. They already signed an implied consent form that explained the study and stated that they would be protected from harm – physical and/or emotional. At any point during the interview the participant knew that they could refrain from answering a question or stop the interview entirely.

I combined the structured and unstructured interview styles. Since my time with the participants was limited, I needed to create some focus questions to make good use of my time, as well as their time. I created an “interview guide” in which there were a few main questions but then I had the freedom to expand and adapt as I conducted the interview (see Appendix B). Patton (2002) explains the interview guide below:

An interview guide lists the questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview. An interview guide is prepared to ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a

particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a particular subject that has been predetermined. (p. 343)

I conducted face to face interviews. Face to face interviews allow you to adapt questions or clarify them as needed. You are also able to pick up on nonverbal clues. Nonverbal clues such as nervousness, eye contact, and gestures, can give you an even better picture into the interviewee's responses. It was harder to conduct face to face interviews due to geographical spread of the participants but it was worth the effort.

As I conducted the interviews, I asked singular questions. When asking questions, it's best to remember to ask singular questions – questions that ask about only one idea or concept. If you ask questions that contain more than one area to respond to, you may confuse your respondent or cause them to not go into as much detail as they would if you asked about one idea at a time. Patton (2002) further explains this:

The interviewer bears the responsibility to pose questions that make it clear to the interviewee what is being asked. Asking understandable questions facilitates establishing rapport. Unclear questions can make the person being interviewed feel uncomfortable, ignorant, confused, or hostile. Asking singular questions helps a great deal to make things clear. (p. 361)

I made sure my questions required the respondents to go into greater detail than a simple “yes” or “no”. I ended the interview with a closing question that allows the interviewee to add any last comments or thoughts that they may have that I may not have thought to ask.

I tape recorded the interview sessions and took notes. The notes helped me later when I went back and listened to the tape. The purpose of tape recording is that it allows you to pay more attention to the interviewee because you don't have to worry about writing everything down.

After the first interview, I decided that I needed to ask a few more clarifying questions. It was not possible for me to return to each of the participants' schools again so the follow-up interviews took place via email.

## **Observation**

The power of observation helped me with my study. Patton (2002) describes the benefits of direct observation. By observing my participants, I had a better understanding of the context my participants were teaching in. "Understanding context is essential to a holistic perspective" (Patton, 2002, p. 262). Also, I did not have to solely depend upon the descriptions or details given by the participants. Patton (2002) explains, "by being on-site the observer has less need to rely on prior conceptualizations of the setting, whether those prior conceptualizations are from written or verbal reports" (p. 262).

As an observer I had "the opportunity to seek things that may routinely escape awareness among the people in the setting" (Patton, 2002, p. 262). This was important because the teaching day can go by quickly and sometimes a good deal of teaching has become so "natural" that I might be able to observe things that the teachers may possibly not even be consciously aware that they are doing. As Patton (2002) says, sometimes things become so routine that they are only noticeable to an outside observer.

Observation helped enhance my data by making it thorough. The interviews provided the most important data but did not capture everything. My participants were

fully aware that I was observing them. I observed them as an onlooker rather than a participant observer. That gave me a better outsider perspective. The duration of my observations was short, approximately two to three hours per study participant. The observations were short in frequency– meaning that I did not need to spend months or years (what Patton considers long-term observational fieldwork) to gather the information needed. “Fieldwork should last long enough to get the job done – to answer the research questions being asked and fulfill the purpose of the study” (Patton, 2002, p. 275).

While I observed the participants, my focus was broad. “The scope can be broad, encompassing virtually all aspects of the setting, or it can be narrow, involving a look at only some small part of what is happening” (Patton, 202, p. 275). I used a broad focus in order to better contextualize my study. For example, a broad observational focus allowed me to look at the teaching context as well as the teacher. I recorded everything that I noticed. I also recorded what I didn’t notice. “If social science theory, program goals, implementation designs, and/or proposals suggest that certain things ought to happen or are expected to happen, then it is appropriate for the observer or evaluator to note that those things did not happen” (Patton, 2002, p. 295).

## **Data Analysis**

As my data was collected, I immediately began to organize and analyze my data. I began with the surveys that were discussed previously in this chapter. After the interviews were conducted the tapes were transcribed. I also checked the transcriptions with my notes from the interview. The participants were asked to review the transcription from their interview. This was a form of member checking and increases the credibility of the study. This gave the interviewee the opportunity to make sure what I have recorded



in his/her interview is what he/she intended to say and that I correctly portrayed his/her approach to teaching.

As I analyzed the data, I first looked at each individual participant. One case study approach to analyzing qualitative data is to organize the data by people. "If individuals or groups are the primary unit of analysis, then case studies of people or groups may be the focus of case studies" (Patton, 2002, p. 439). Next I compared the findings for each participant. I looked for patterns and pieces that stood on their own and created assertions for these. These assertions are discussed in Chapter Five.

Then I used my original definition of an inquiry stance to help answer my research questions about whether or not former interns have an inquiry stance toward teaching. In order to do this, I determined to what degree their stance towards teaching matched my original definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching. As I did this, I found that my definition needed to be modified in order to more clearly illustrate what an inquiry stance toward teaching looks like. The results of this analysis as well as the modified definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching are also shared in Chapter Five.

It is known in qualitative research that there is not one single interpretive truth. How I interpreted the data may be different from another person's perspective on the same data. Also, the participants were only able to tell me so much. They may not have been able to or want to put all that they know into words. Therefore, it must be kept in mind that I tried to share their story the best that I could. "Our subjects always know more than they can tell us, usually even more than they allow us to see; likewise, we often know far more than we can articulate. Even the most ardent social science

wordsmiths are at a loss to transform nuances, subtleties, and the sense of the sublime into symbols” (Altheide & Johnson, 1998, p. 296).

It is important that a qualitative study be thick in description “– in such a way that we can understand the phenomenon studied and draw our own interpretation about the meanings and significance” (Patton, 2002, p. 438). As I shared the process I went through, discussed each participant, and shared my themes and findings, I made sure that my descriptions were detailed. A reader should be able to look at my data, see how I made my conclusions, and choose to agree or disagree.

### **Researcher Position**

My position as a researcher is important to explain because “in a qualitative case study, the investigator is the primary instrument for gathering and analyzing data” (Merriam, 1988, p. 36). I am a graduate student with experience working in Professional Development Schools. I am also a former intern of the particular PDS being studied. I discovered teacher inquiry during my preservice experience in the PDS. Since being introduced to teacher inquiry, I have conducted teacher inquiry in informal and formal ways.

After returning to Oak Wood University for graduate school, I have had the opportunity to work in the PDS as a Professional Development Associate. The fact that I was a former intern and have returned to work in the PDS is a benefit to this study. Patton (2002) helps describe why, “Our very first conclusion was that we would never have understood the program without personally experiencing it. It bore little resemblance to our expectations, what people had told us, or the official program description. Had we designed the follow-up study without having participated in the

program, we would have completely missed the mark and asked inappropriate questions” (p. 262). This unique opportunity has allowed me to further my knowledge about PDSs and in teacher inquiry. I have been able to work with prospective teachers as they learn about inquiry and conduct inquiry projects. I have also witnessed mentor teachers working on inquiry. After helping with the teacher inquiry course in the PDS program, I was able to take the course to the district in which I had formerly taught. The power teacher inquiry can have for teachers still intrigues me. This interest directed me toward a study in teacher inquiry and its development as a stance toward teaching.

### **Limitations**

A qualitative case study seemed the most appropriate way to evaluate if this particular PDS prepares prospective teachers with an inquiry stance toward teaching. Merriam, 1988, helps explain why this is so.

The case study offers a means of investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of potential importance in understanding the phenomenon. Anchored in real-life situations, the case study results in a rich and holistic account of a phenomenon. It offers insights and illuminates meanings that expand its readers’ experiences. These insights can be construed as a tentative hypotheses that help structure future research; hence, case study plays an important role in advancing a field’s knowledge base. (p. 32)

Although a case study is most appropriate, it has its limitations. “Guba and Lincoln (1981, p. 377) note an additional limitation of case study narratives: “Case studies can oversimplify or exaggerate a situation, leading the reader to erroneous conclusions about the actual state of affairs.” Furthermore, they warn readers can be

seduced into thinking case studies are accounts of the whole: “that is, they tend to masquerade as a whole when in fact they are but a part –a slice of life” (Merriam, 1988, p. 33). With this in mind, I must reinforce that I looked at seven interns out of a possible 134. Even though all the participants showed signs of having an inquiry stance toward teaching in various degrees, it does not mean that most or many of the other interns do. Since I used purposive random sampling, I can make a generalization about former interns and their inquiry stance. However, I am not able to say that this generalization will hold true for all former interns.

Another limitation could involve the reliability and validity of my data. “An unethical case writer could so select from among available data that virtually anything he wished could be illustrated” (Guba and Lincoln 1981, p. 378). By sharing the details of my study I showed that I am writing about the data I collected. Finally, another limitation to consider is that I am human. “Conversely, the investigator as human instrument is limited by being human – that is, mistakes are made, opportunities are missed, personal biases interfere” (Merriam, 1988, p. 37). I am aware of my own biases as I collected and interpreted the data for my study.

## Chapter Four

### PRESENTATION OF DATA

#### Introduction

In this chapter I will introduce each participant. I have combined their surveys and interview responses to share their experiences with teaching and teacher inquiry. Their narratives are shared in their own words. I only changed or eliminated words so that their stories can be easily read. I made sure that any changes did not interfere with the meaning of the story they tell. The participants each, in varying degrees, share about their teaching context, curriculum, view of teaching, the factors played in shaping that view of teaching, what they remember about their intern year, and their experiences regarding inquiry.

#### LYDIA

##### TEACHING CONTEXT

I have been teaching for seven years in the same school district that I completed my PDS internship in. I teach in a University town in Pennsylvania. 96% of the students in my class are of Caucasian descent and 4% of the students are of Hispanic descent. About 9% of my students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

I'm teaching third grade in a K through five elementary building. I teach on a team of intermediate teachers who teach third and fourth grades so we work closely together in the intermediate division. There are six teachers on my team, three teach third grade and three teach fourth grade. I have twenty-two students which is actually one of the lowest numbers of students I've had in awhile. Half my students are female and half are male.

I have an inclusive classroom with one designated learning support, one labeled learning support child, three title one reading, and three title one math. Some of them get pulled out briefly during the day but overall most of them are with me all day.

## **CURRICULUM**

I teach all areas of the curriculum to my students, except of course for their specials. We have a unit driven curriculum where the units are very integrated. Language Arts and Social Studies is one of the units and we have a Science unit. Our units last for about three months. So for instance right now we are doing a Pennsylvania unit. That is how we teach all of the reading and writing through that topic (Pennsylvania) as well as all of our social studies and geography contents. Our science unit is rocks and minerals and they kind of complement each other. We look at the rocks and minerals of our state. So those are very interconnected and connect with a lot of the other work we do in the areas of (like I said) reading, writing and word study.

Outside of that, I am piloting a new math curriculum this year. This is kind of a new reform of teaching math, the approach of teaching math conceptually. I actually have done some of it on my own in the past years. Up to this, we had to do the first three units or modules of the curriculum. Then it was our choice if we wanted to continue throughout the rest of the year, so I was a volunteer.

I completed my internship (student teaching) in this district so the context of my teaching preparation is pretty much the same. Although in the seven years since my internship things have changed a lot. The math curriculum is entirely changing. It is being rewritten and I have actually been on a math revision and rewriting team for the past three years. We started with revising the kindergarten through second grade and now the

third grade. I am on the math committee to revise and rewrite that, so it is a really big change. Our spelling curriculum has changed twice in my seven years. We do more of a word study/whole language approach to spelling. So that's definitely different. We are starting to change the writing curriculum. So a lot of things actually are changing – improving. Some ways are more complicated and also things change to shift towards state testing as well. So, that's a double edged sword of which I don't necessarily believe in, but feel the pressure of.

### **VIEW OF TEACHING**

When I think about my view of teaching, I definitely think about my students. I definitely believe in getting to know them first and work really hard on that the first several weeks of school. I dedicate that time to building the community in my classroom and trying to get a feel for who they are, what their needs are, and just who they are as people, and their likes and interests so I have kind of an in to draw them in. I feel very strongly no matter if I'm teaching something that prepares them to take a standardized test or teaching them a boring social studies lesson about laws, reaching them somehow in a creative and different way than just going page by page through a unit. So even though we have a lot of things provided for us I still feel like I need to tailor it to my kids.

My teaching is very much individualized. I get to know a group of kids, find out what works for them and what doesn't work. It's a day by day changing, something that might really work with them one week and then they quickly get tired of it and then I change and rethink how I'm doing it, week by week or even within a lesson. I believe in child centered classrooms where students can think for themselves, develop into problem solvers, and make decisions that drive classroom events and routines.

## **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

When I think of the factors that shape my view of teaching I would have to say that number one is just experience - just being on my own as a teacher. There are a couple of other factors too. One of the first things I think of is watching my mom as a teacher. She has been teaching for almost twenty-five years. So I spent lots of time in her classroom, talking to her, watching her teach, and just getting her view points with things outside of school as well. My internship definitely was the most influential. It helped just by being in the classroom and watching my mentor, getting to know the kids, and seeing what her beliefs were, and how they impacted her teaching. I saw how she would meet the needs of children and hold their interest to draw them into lessons. The PDS created a true network of support for me. These relationships helped me to feel more comfortable and confident as a teacher. It was a community where you knew you were valued, and you knew it was okay to make mistakes and ask questions. It was a community (and is) that truly values teachers and what they do.

All aspects of the PDS shaped me as a teacher. I walked away with a huge variety of professional experiences that I looked back on often during my first years of teaching (and sometimes still do.) I referred back to the experiences as an intern when I encountered similar situations in my own classroom. I recognized the importance of building a network of colleagues that I could trust and rely on to collaborate with and to answer my questions, so I have relied on this network in each of the schools that I have taught in. My continued work with the PDS also enhances and enlarges this network of professional colleagues that I have and depend on for support, friendship, professional development, and advice.



I try hard to be as big of an influence and support to my interns as my mentor was to me (but I don't think I'll ever measure up.) Experiencing and conducting inquiry as an intern has carried into all of my first seven years of teaching. I continue to inquire on many levels, which I hope enriches my teaching, modifies my classroom environment for the better, and helps me grow as a professional.

Another thing was just through the modeling of my colleagues – one of my favorite things to do is to watch other people teach. I have been fascinated just by going into other peoples' classrooms and seeing them interact with children and taking little bits away from everywhere that I go or everyone I talk to.

Now I have had the opportunity to be a mentor. Having an intern, definitely frees you up to be popping in and out of other peoples' classrooms. I definitely don't get to do it as much as I would like to. I know of other teachers in the district that I would just love to go and see what they are doing. I'm sure that if I wanted to do that there would somehow be time for me to do that, but I don't think any teacher ever gets to see as many teachers as they would like to. Being a mentor in the PDS program has also shaped and given me ideas of how to change or rethink. I see interns bring new things into the classroom from their methods classes or I find new resources. I'm one of those people who is always thirsty for new resources. I'm always searching on Amazon.com for a great new resource and trying something out. I have a couple of favorites that I use a lot too. So, other renowned educators also inspire me and shape my teaching.

Talking to my colleagues influences my teaching, even people who were interns with me and I'm so close friends with influence my teaching. Of course every time you get together you talk about what you're teaching and what you're doing and how things

are going because we can't ever stop talking about teaching. I also talk to the people I work with to get new ideas from them too.

Inquiry also continually influences my views on teaching. I think that since it was kind of a part of my training to become a teacher that it's something built in that I'm constantly thinking about. More on an informal level. Just doing that self questioning and reflecting. Not any written journal or anything, but just while you are driving your car thinking and questioning why isn't this working? What's going wrong with this? How can I change this to make it better? That's like a small level of inquiry that I do. So I think that helps me to change, modify, and try new things. I'm open to that and open to admitting – I think that with inquiry – it's knowing that it's ok to ask questions about your teaching and to look deeper at things that you are worried about. It helps if you want to try something new because it allows you to be able to take a risk, or to admit that something isn't working, and it's not a bad thing. You don't always have to pretend that everything is going smoothly and going well. Opening yourself up to asking yourself those types of questions lets you see the positives and negatives to what you are doing.

I've also used inquiry in the formal level; you know taking the course, doing research, following through with a paper and so forth. I guess I have done definitely four, four or five formal inquiries. I have also supported the interns that I have had and their inquiry as well helps me, it's naturally changing the things I'm doing or questioning. This year my intern is looking at one student in our classroom. She is looking into how to motivate a challenging, obstinate individual and all of her questions turn into my questions. We have a dialog between the two of us and it helps us bring some ideas and different approaches to the table. We are trying things out and admitting.....you

know...wow!..the way we handled some situations with him the first few months of school might not have been the best ways to handle him. Definitely now we know new ways. Maybe the way we handled it at first set him off or whatever.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR AND LEARNING INQUIRY**

When I think about inquiry from my internship year I think about STRESS! From my intern year, it seemed definitely kind of like walking blindly down a path and you weren't sure where it was going. The end was like the great discovery and then you realized what it was all about. So I was learning a lot about the process of how to do a formal inquiry into teaching as well as definitely seeing it play out on the effects of children. Like noticing how just looking deeply at one question opened my eyes to everything that was really happening in my classroom. If I hadn't asked that one question, I never would have realized the impact of how it organized or structured language arts centers or whatever. Yes, I definitely remember the confusion and the worry and stress of it. Trying to teach and do such a formal project on top of that. At the end, when it all comes together, you do make sense of it. I walked away also thinking about how could I do this practically when I was out on my own teaching?

My mentor definitely was a big support in completing my first formal inquiry. You know, just by asking me questions. She allowed me the freedom to change a couple things in our classroom and change routines a little bit. For my research, I also felt supported because I had a lot of conversations with our language arts curriculum support person in our district. My PDA was another level of support because she helped by reading your paper, helping you revise, asking you questions, giving you other things to think about during the writing process.

## **IMPACT LEARNING INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

I would say learning inquiry has had a huge impact on my teaching. I would make a big advocate for interns doing inquiry. I've spoken at conferences all over about having an inquiry stance and how that turns you into a teacher leader. I think that inquiry definitely made me feel stronger and more confident as even a young teacher. It helps you know that it's ok to ask questions about your practice and to know that it's ok to look deeper at your practice. It keeps you from teaching in a place where you close the door and you keep everything from everyone else around you. It's very public – I'm working on this question, I'm researching how this child develops as a writer, or whatever your question is – it's important that you share that with other people. You get other ideas and feedback from them. You feel the power of feedback from other people. It gives you a voice. The way we set up and do inquiry in a way that celebrates teachers asking questions, gives teachers more of a voice in a profession that for a long time didn't give teachers a voice. It was just a system imposed on us. I think even through our inquiry that we're making changes and that it's an avenue for actually having a voice – for speaking and sharing and celebrating the work of teachers and viewing them as researchers, too. It helps show that we're not just people who are given a text book and just do what we're told. If we can change the way things are we can have an impact.

I would indeed say that I have an inquiry stance toward teaching. Yes indeed. Inquiry drives everything I do as an educator. It is a way of looking at and analyzing while planning, carrying out a lesson and changing the direction on the fly, and reflecting post lesson. I often find the reflection piece to be the most helpful. It allows me to plan for the next step, the next lesson, the next question, etc.

Inquiry is also a way of thinking that I acclimate my intern to AND my students to. I train my students to question and dig deeper into subjects or topics that interest or puzzle them. Thus, they become really good researchers who pose and search for answers, and often end up with even more fascinating questions. Often it is their questions that drive (or change the direction of) a social studies, science, or math lesson. I believe in the power of allowing my students to investigate so that they are creating their own knowledge that they can share with the group. That's what inquiry is about for teachers, interns, and our students.

An inquiry approach to teaching and learning requires time for thinking something through, trying it out or experimenting/investigating, reflecting and discussing, and perhaps making modifications AND THEN it goes full circle all over again. It's a constant cycle that inquirers go through in their daily thoughts and work. But, I think it happens without thought, as if it's a habit, once inquiry has become a true part of what a person does and believes in.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

I guess I feel fortunate because as an intern, I kept saying, how would I ever do that? I tried to be independent with it as intern because I never imagined that I would teach in this district. I thought I would teach somewhere else, in a district that didn't have nearly as much support as the PDS program did. So when I did my inquiry for the very first time as a teacher, I think it was my second year of teaching, I still felt very strongly that I wanted to try to do it all on my own without any outside note takers or observers, I was really just trying to do it on my own to prove that somebody could, even though I was in a district with high levels of support. Since then I've worked on inquiry projects

with other colleagues and interns and I had outside observers and so in this district it's really easy to do inquiry. It's easy to find helpful and supportive people at the university level, even just as resources from our curriculum support people, or to have PDA's, or interns, or other colleagues come in and help you out or to work on teams of people to do an inquiry; there's lots of levels of support. So, I think that it's relatively easy with the resources and the people that we have available to us.

### **MORE REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR**

Well, as you know, we're the first year, and it was quite stressful just because we were setting up the routines and the regulations and we were laying all the groundwork for everything to come, and we were all walking down the path blindly, everybody, trying to figure out what would work best. So, my experience in the classroom was absolutely wonderful, extremely powerful, but it definitely was stressful with just the fact that whenever you're doing something for the first time there are some bugs to work out and conversations to be had and discussions and stress and frustration.

The PDS program made me feel very empowered as a teacher and I still believe that I definitely have a voice. But I guess I'm not as positive now. I left the PDS program, you know, thinking that I was going to change the world. I think our district allows us to have a voice and lets us get involved and we're on curriculum writing teams and we work closely with the university. In the PDS, you know, we have a lot of say in how things change and develop and are carried out. But overall, as I have grown older and more aware of the political system and implications that has, I realize that there is still a higher system imposed upon us. I think we've become sour and bitter in some ways about the public's view of what we do and that nobody really has any idea about what a teacher's

job really entails. As more standardized testing and more standards are imposed on us, I always question if actual, real teachers did have a say in this. Districts in the last couple of years are really worried about what their image looks like in the paper. Immediately people want to change. You know, what kind of workbooks should we buy? I guess that's definitely why I'm more negative about the system. My thoughts on the knowledge students walk away with has changed some. I guess what I'm getting at is that so many just teach a unit about rocks and minerals. I used to think that the students needed all these little content blurbs. I thought that it was really important that they could tell you all these facts about it. Now my belief is more that it's the big picture. What kind of skills did they learn throughout that unit? Did they learn how to be an observer? It's the big concepts. How do they learn to be a researcher? Do they learn how to test out a problem? I'm doing social studies - they don't need to know every state in the United States, but they need to know the big picture, the bigger concepts. I want them to walk away and be prepared to be a thinker and not just a person who thinks in just little bitty facts here and there – it helps to see the overall connections among their lives.

## **EVE**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I have been teaching for 3 years. I teach in a suburban school district in Chester County, Pennsylvania. About 97% of my students are of Caucasian descent and about 10% of my students are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. My teaching context now is somewhat similar to that of my PDS internship. It differs in terms of the curriculum and there were more opportunities for teacher enrichment where I completed my internship.

I teach first grade and I am in my third year of teaching. I have 16 students because I have the smallest classroom. My room is not truly a classroom; it's actually more of an office for ESL or Spanish, but we're building a new school and so this is kind of overflow for this year; so that's why I'm capped at 16.

In this building there are six of us and we do work in a team. It's not the same as where I did my student teaching because there the teams were more formally set up. Here it's very much just our own preference that we're working as a team. Our team is by choice and it has looked differently over the years. When I was in my first year of teaching and my first year here they had a new program and so we worked differently as a team the first year of the program. Then last year I went to second grade and they worked together much differently too. Now I'm back to first grade and we're experimenting a lot between ourselves with new ideas. We kind of scrapped the curriculum and it looks a lot different than it did my first year.

We're really a good mix of new and experienced teachers. I'm by far the least experienced and then there's one of us who's been teaching for probably 30 years. One of them, my mentor teacher from my first year, she's been teaching for maybe 10, but she's been the Pennsylvania Teacher of the Year, so she has tons of experience, like with the government and things; she does lots for that. She speaks a lot at places. She has really cool experiences. So, we're all kind of spread out in terms of experience.

Right now the team is reading Reading with Meaning by Debbie Miller. We're reading it together and we come together in groups and we talk about it and we've implemented reader's workshop and writer's workshop from this. This is the first time we've ever formally said, "Let's all buy it, let's all do it." But we discuss Lucy Calkins



and different people in that reading research end. But this is the first we've ever really all done it together and it doesn't really have a leader.

## **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is pretty different from where I did my internship in a lot of ways. For example, for language arts we use the Harcourt series and we also use Harcourt for science and social studies. We use Every Day Math for math. It's a little bit like Investigations. I really like that and I'm happy with that, but the Harcourt series, not so much. It's like a basal. But, then again, we're not really totally mandated that we have to follow it, but most people do. So, we're kind of in the gray. We're still feeling like we're not really technically supposed to be doing what we're doing. They never said don't, but they never said go ahead and do whatever you want. So every once in a while we open it up and we see what the basic skills are - just to make sure we have covered them in our own way. But the stories are just so prescribed - they're just contrived - that we just prefer to "loosely" follow the curriculum. So I guess I'm a rule breaker. I feel that way. I think that the others in my grade level feel like that too. It's kind of a sad thing that we feel this way, but we have to because we feel that in order to give the kids what they need, we have to break the rules. Just because the curriculum that we're given is so shallow and not deep - it's really like it's a mile wide and an inch deep. So we do feel like rule breakers because we know that what we're doing isn't what's written down and prescribed for us in the curriculum.

Luckily our principal is extremely supportive. Thank goodness! It's the administrators above that aren't. I don't think they really know what we do in our classrooms, but I'm sure they wouldn't endorse it. They're kind of going the same way as

everyone else in America. Everyone has to be teaching the same thing at the same time so that all the kids are coming out with the same knowledge. So, if they knew what we were doing, I'm sure they would say it's not uniform enough. But our principal has observed us doing reader's workshop and observed us doing these new kinds of things and he loves it. So, we're lucky to have him. It could be a different story if we had a different principal.

### **VIEW OF TEACHING**

I approach teaching in my classroom mostly just as responsive – I take a responsive approach, meaning that I have a list in my head of what a first grader needs to know and I have the basal, but really what I'm doing each day is looking at their writing, seeing what they need to improve on and then doing mini lessons on that, looking at their reading and seeing what strategies they are or aren't using and doing lessons on that, and so my approach, my philosophy mostly is that you just learn from the kids and take them from where they're at and try to move them forward each day.

I also try not to listen to any preconceived notions that teachers have had about kids and I've seen that in motion. Last year I had a student, who came in with such negative, negative reviews, and he ended up being totally fine and it was just that he wasn't motivated and I think that every child has something that makes them tick. There's one thing that you can get to get them going and once you find that I don't think there's anything that can't be accomplished. I don't think that there aren't kids who have issues that need to be resolved with special education or anything like that but I just think most of the time it's because we have low expectations and it transfers to them.

I believe that teachers are life long learners. I think that if teachers want their kids to be life long learners they have to also be every year trying to learn more and more about how kids learn. Students learn best when they are involved and questioning. One of the best ways to do this is inquiry. Students learn best when concepts are connected and make sense. Kids can see the big picture.

I just think that there's never going to be a year when you're not changing and learning from the students and from your colleagues and from parents and from reading other books. There's always going to be new research and I think even if I come to a point where I feel like I've read all the major works out there, there's still never going to be a time when I'm done trying it in my classroom so the more you try it, it kind of cycles and then you learn more and then you learn, and you know what I mean, it branches and there is always math – I can always get into math. I haven't done as much training in math.

### **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

Just trying the given curriculum helped shape my views in teaching. At first I did try to give the Basal a shot and so I really did follow it mostly and I didn't see enormous growth. The kids who were at the bottom were still at the bottom at the end of the year. I guess I've found that I've seen more student responsiveness from my reading because I've just read so, so many books over the past couple years on my own. Reading has definitely shaped my views on teaching. The books that I'm reading are mostly written in the kind of language where the teacher is writing about her own classroom – not just about research. I'm reading these and I'm looking at exactly what they're doing. I guess I've kind of used the teachers in the books as my models in some ways by seeing the

ways that they respond to their kids and seeing how they can fashion a lesson from what they see one day on to the next day. So, I guess really mostly it's been the reading and then when I go to try it in my classroom it's really working so then it's kind of a cycle I just keep going with it.

My mentor teacher my first year definitely helped shape my views about teaching. She's been really instrumental in that she definitely is always right there with me reading the books and she's always so excited to try new things. It's just nice because when I got here people would always be so open-minded if I had an idea. It wasn't like, you're new, you know what I mean, and so that always has kind of encouraged me to keep going with it.

I would say that first and foremost, the year-long experience was an incredible experience. I still feel lucky to have had it. Not only has my principal told me that that was what first caught his eye on my resume, but I feel like it gave me an enormous advantage my first year of teaching that I otherwise wouldn't have had. Also, just the overall philosophies of the program still stick with me today. I don't think it was necessarily the act of creating an inquiry project (although that's a large part of it), but more just that the inquiry stance on teaching permeated everything we did in each class. We looked at everything through a constructivist, student-centered lens, and I take that with me even when those around me were not teaching that way. I guess you could say that a lot of that also was a direct result of being a part of the PDS.

I have learned to plan for lessons with an awareness of what is meaningful for my students. I reflect on my teaching a lot. I read many books. I am in a constant state of

professional growth. Thankfully, I know what I believe, and that confidence has made me a leader in my school.

### **IMPACT LEARNING INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

I'd say that, to be quite honest, I associate inquiry a lot more with science, especially after PDS. We don't really do as much science and social studies in first grade as we should. We spend so much of our day on reading that I haven't been very good at doing inquiry in my science lessons. I've done some questioning and then following through with that but mostly I'm doing reading all morning, then math and then I like to do writing and then I do a little bit of science. So, inquiry, I would say in the purest sense hasn't really had too much of an impact except that in reading my kids are constantly questioning the author, they're questioning purpose, they question each other, so I think there's a lot of questioning and a lot in fact to it, real problem solving based curriculum, but I don't think it's necessarily the inquiry that you see in science.

However, I would say definitely I've done informal inquiries. I would consider my professional reading and then trying it and reading and then trying it to be informal inquiries. I've really worked hard at it and I've worked with my colleagues and we've talked about what works and what we're seeing and we recommend books and so I would say that's definitely an informal one in itself.

I view teaching as a work in progress – an art that will never be perfected, but I can continually work on and add to. I truly enjoy trying new things in my classroom and then tweaking them in hopes of better results. I enjoy the fact that I am in a profession that is not static – in lots of ways. The group you have is never the same, the circumstances of the year are never the same, the community influences change, outside

research changes, policies change. Even though I love this aspect of change and challenge, I am cognizant of the fact that my very basic, most core philosophies are not changing. The way they manifest themselves in the classroom may look different to me now, but in a large way, those philosophies are still intact from the day I graduated Oak Wood. For all these reasons, I feel that I have an inquiry stance toward teaching.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR**

I have all pleasant memories from my internship year. I loved it! I remember the collaboration. I remember the wonderful connection we had between professor, teacher, intern, and PDA. I remember the great connection I had just between my mentor and my PDA. We had a nice back and forth and I loved being able to reflect. I actually liked writing my reflection journals. I loved that my PDA would write back to me and then my teacher would write on that. I loved that we had like a three-way journal going and I just felt like I learned so much that way.

I still reflect. I don't write it down, but I definitely, definitely reflect each week before I plan anything. I have a college student who comes twice a week just for a language arts practicum but I love having her because I feel like I can talk to her. Whenever I have another adult in the class I feel like I reflect more. I remember a lot of reflecting, too.

I still remember the basic philosophies that we were taught. I definitely remember math. I still remember him when I'm teaching, I still think, oh would he do that? I definitely remember the basis of our science learning, just the inquiry basis that we got there. I remember kind of the whole process that we followed through to do our own inquiry. I still do things like that now like when I ask kids interview questions I'll

transcribe it so that I can have a hard copy of what they said about their reading and about themselves as a learner and I just think that a lot of the things that were in the inquiry process have kind of bled over in a different way, but they really have, like listening closely to what children are saying and reflecting on it and coming to new conclusions, that kind of has bled over.

My mentor most supported me with my inquiry by helping me talk through it. The whole process made me view teaching as something that is never complete, you can always ask a question about something and that question can turn into a really big project that you learn a lot from.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

I think the context that I'm in right now with the colleagues that I'm in with right at this moment makes having an inquiry stance easy because we are constantly able to talk and bounce ideas off each other and they have the same basic philosophical ideas that I do. So it would be different if we all had different philosophies. Then we really couldn't work together as well as we do. We're all together and we're kind of trying things together at the same time. I think it's mostly my colleagues that make it easy and the fact that my principal supports me, too.

At this present point the only thing that makes it difficult is that people who are outside of the school don't share our team's philosophies and we have PLC's (Professional Learning Communities) in our district and we can form our own PLC and my team formed a PLC. We wanted to collect data and we wanted to show that there are some things missing from Harcourt. We wanted to show that we're missing sight words and a certain kind of writing approach and just some other things that our basic reading

program is really, really missing. So we wrote it all up for our PLC and we even had a handout just for parents and basically to make a really, really long story short, it got cut a week ago. We had been planning for it this whole year and it basically got cut and we know the reason was basically just because they don't agree with our philosophy. "They" is the administration in the district office like the assistant superintendent of curriculum, basically him, and then there are a couple other assistant superintendents.

They support us to our faces but when we wrote we would collect very hard data because data is what they love, we decided to collect numbers and we wanted to present our findings, whether good or bad, we wanted to present our findings. They kind of just ignored, ignored. We sent more, sent more, sent more. They ignored. Finally it just kind of looked like, well, you can't do it. So that just shows us that we can't do it. They're building a new school and we're all terrified that next year we're going to be split up. Then we will be under different principals and it will be so different. So we are all kind of in that position right now where we know we're not really supported higher up.

We've heard kind of through the grapevine that they want to split us six up, just because we kind of stir things up at meetings. We're not rude, but we say, like, look what we've been reading. We've learned not to do that so much anymore but at first, in grade level meetings, we'd share that we've been reading this and it's really working well and usually our kids are producing and other first grade teachers kind of just, ha, that's not Harcourt. You know what I mean? They don't really care, so we've just learned to keep our mouths shut and we're lucky to have each other; but we're really nervous that we're not going to have each other and that will be really hard.



My immediate inclination will be to just shut the door and do what I want but there are certain principals who I know are extremely, you know, they'll come in and they'll watch. I don't know how much I could do without losing my job. I mean, I don't know yet where my boundaries will be for sure, but I'll start as "rebelish" as I can and I'll have to just pare it down. I'll probably have to read the Harcourt story once a week so that I can say I'm doing it and I'll have to do some other things too, I guess.

### **BLOG EPILOGUE**

\*\* After conducting the interviews Eve created a blog and she shares about it below.

I started the blog last August as I was preparing my classroom and getting ready to go full swing teaching via the reader's workshop format. I felt that I needed a place to reflect and journal, and the blog offers a bonus because it's two-way communication. Additionally, (and perhaps best) is that with the blog, people from all over the country and sometimes world read and respond to the blog, so I feel like I'm in some ways breaking the bubble of our little school district. You can only learn so much in one place-- the blog vastly extends my boundaries.

I post blogs for different reasons (I only realized that they can be categorized like this in looking back over a year). I posted a lot of them because of dissonance-- the blog was a great way to resolve confusions and barriers in my year. Simply writing them helped me clear up some confusions and then of course, hearing from other teachers helps even more.

Another reason I blog is to celebrate. Teaching is a different profession in that, when something really great happens, the only people who truly understand are other

teachers. The ones at my school are great, but I never want to sound like I'm tooting my own horn too much and we don't always have time for great in-depth conversations. The blog gives me a place to reflect on what works.

The third reason I blog is simply to share. I explain how I've tried doing something. Those are really more for the purpose of my readers. It's so cool because I actually have A LOT of them (in the hundreds!!!), and they send me questions often, so instead of just answering them individually, I blog about it for everyone. The last kind of blog that I find myself writing quite often are more of the professional nature-- like after I've read a new book or heard a speaker or something like that.

From the readers who are regular responders to my blog, I suppose the blog's purpose extends to them in a similar way. Most of them are either a few steps ahead of or behind me in starting reader's workshop and breaking the "basal mold" and so they seem to really draw the same support from reading about my ups and downs as I draw from reading their comments.

I have felt so enriched since starting the blog, and I think it's something that I'll probably do from now on as a teacher. It's hard to know what I've learned from the blog because it has meshed seamlessly with my day to day teaching. I'll do something and not remember if I learned it from a reader of my blog or a book or a colleague. Of course, besides getting great ideas and professional knowledge from readers of the blog, I've gained a lot of confidence in myself as a writer and as a teacher. Until you write things down, you just don't know what you know, you know?

I was an intern who always liked the reflection part of the internship and I thrived on it. One of the reasons was because both my PDA and mentor teacher would write on

them and it became a three way form of communication--ironically, it was in every way like a blog except the fact that it had only 3 readers. True blogging could be such a great tool for the PDS... I can see it now! Students could start their blogs to reflect on and recount their internship- to be used as an informal source of support. But AFTER the internship would be where the real power of blogging could be realized. First year teachers, still having their PDS friend readers, could blog about the real teaching world and support themselves beyond college. It has real promise!

## **JOANNA**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I have been teaching for five years in several different states. Currently I am teaching in a suburban school district in Alachua County, Florida. Approximately 65% of my class is of Caucasian descent, 25% of my students are of African American descent and 5% of my students are of Hispanic descent. 40% of my students are eligible to receive free or reduced lunch. The context in which I am teaching is similar to that of the PDS internship experience.

I am in a unique situation this year in that I am team teaching fourth grade with another teacher. I'll explain how this came to be. Another teacher and I worked together last year teaching third grade and we found that our philosophies were very similar. We were both teaching in a regular classroom with twenty kids each and we started planning together and our school is trying a lot of new cooperative learning techniques. So we presented the idea that we would like to co-teach together to our principal at the end of the year. I had done it before when I taught in New York. But it was as a special ed teacher with a regular ed teacher. So this is the first time I have ever co-taught with two

regular ed teachers and having forty students. So we have forty kids and our principal was really excited about it. So, there are forty students and two teachers. We do all our planning together. We do pretty much everything together. We've looped a lot of our students from last year when we taught them in third grade. We think that it has been a great year. The kids are really independent. They are able to function and critically think. So that is what we're looking for, to see if this would be a structure that would work.

I have not seen in my five years of teaching, especially with traveling around to different states, many teachers that have similar philosophies and similar teaching strategies to what I have. And we do and I think when we started planning and working things out, and we realized that we were very similar and we knew it would work out. Another situation is not working out quite the same because their philosophies are a little bit different. Their teaching styles are a little bit different. So they have the same co-teaching structure, but it's not fluid as what's going on in here.

We still work with the other fourth grade teachers. There are six fourth grades. We have 140 fourth grade students. That's the largest grade level in the school. That's why I moved up to fourth grade. Last year I knew that since it was my first year at the school, I was low man on the totem pole in third grade. So before the principal could bump me up, I volunteered. But, I said I'll loop. I want to loop some of my kids. So there are six fourth grades, all the rest of them have twenty or twenty-one students. We meet on a weekly or bi-weekly basis and do teach the same curriculum. Our pacing is similar for the most part. Our long term planning is the same, but our short term is a little bit different. But, our teaching styles are also different.

## **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum where I completed my internship had units that were very integrated and that's what I loved about that school district. Whereas here, there are times where you try and integrate but there is a lot of separation as well, you just have to work the clock and transition from one subject to the next at times without being able to integrate. I think the curriculum is more text book based whereas the curriculum where I student taught is more literature based. We try and pull as much literature as we can into the textbooks because I'd much rather teach that way.

## **VIEW OF TEACHING**

I have a strong belief that every kid can learn and it's my job and my challenge every day to try and get them to learn and if they don't get it, then it's my responsibility to find a different way or different strategy to help them to get it. I think that's just it – I will never put it on the kids. If they don't get it or they don't understand it, I think that that's my job. That's my strong belief that I can get them to do pretty much what they need in order to learn the curriculum. I just have to find as many different strategies as I can to do that. So, that's probably my main underlying building block of what I think about teaching. It's just trying to find the strategies to meet challenges of kids and their different needs.

For example, we have finished working with something as simple as money. We have some students in here that have a difficult time still in the fourth grade counting money, counting coins, being able to build up. Dry and erase didn't work, paper and pencil didn't work, working in pairs and having another student help them didn't work, working in small groups didn't work – we pretty much had spent a week exhausting the

possibilities of typical strategies. Then we decided to create something more hands on; it was more about a learner that needed a manipulative and a tactile thing in order to be able to accomplish the task. So, we created money, it looks like a time line, but it's money, and so she could place the coins where they need to be on that time line and then she was able to count. So, for example, if she had three quarters she knows that a quarter is worth 25 cents, so she puts that first quarter on where it says twenty-five on the number line and she knows the next quarter is worth 25 cents so she counts by five up to twenty-five and places it on the 50 cent mark and does the same thing again. She knows the values of the coins. She's just not able to put them all together. So that would be an example of a time where we had to really stretch our thinking and come up with a strategy for just one student out of forty. But, it made her successful and she was able to use it on the test and having those manipulatives has made it much easier for her.

### **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

Well, I think the PDS was a great start for me. I think spending that whole year with a pretty diverse group of third graders really opened my eyes to see that all students have the capability to learn and all students should be challenged and have individual needs that need met and that was my job and my challenge. So I think the PDS, being in that year-long program, and staying with those kids for a full year was a great starting point for me. And then, I think working with veteran teachers has really helped me to shape that belief as well.

My first year of teaching I taught in Virginia and I taught with four women who had all been teaching for fifteen or more years. So I was the new kid on the block and they were fabulous. I mean, I still keep in contact with them to this day and they really

showed me how you overcome obstacles of students with behavior problems, or students with learning disabilities or difficulties. They really pushed my belief of if this is what you believe, then how are you going to get these kids to achieve, no matter what their obstacles are? So, I think those two things probably from the start were the PDS and veteran teachers really helped me to confirm that belief that I can do this, I just have to find the different avenues to be able to do it.

Some of these teachers had similar philosophies as mine, but I think the best part about them is that they let me do my PDS stuff. They made me realize that that year in the PDS had given me the confidence to be able to stand up to them and say, "Hey, I know you've been teaching for twenty years, but how about this idea?" Or, "I really don't like this basal story next week. Do you think I could do something else with literature?" I think from the moment they met me they knew that I was a pretty confident person because I could back up what my beliefs were because of the PDS. And then, they were like, this girl really knows what she's doing. So, it was fun to see them actually take on some of my ideas. As veteran teachers they were doing some of the things that I was coming up with and they were thinking, hmm, maybe my philosophy should be switched a little bit, so that was neat as well.

They said you would never have guessed that it was my first year teaching and the principal said the same thing and I felt that way; I truly did. I never felt that it was my first year of teaching. I felt that I had been doing it for a life time, just because of the experience of that first PDS year just really gives you that jump start.

I would have to say that the most influential part of the PDS was the year-long experience. Seeing the entire school year from beginning to end really helped to give me

a jump start with my first year of teaching. I was able to see and experience so many things that you don't get in a traditional student teaching experience. Simple things, for example, how to line up students and walk quietly through the halls, behavior management, consistent consequences, and transitions were all tools that I learned and witnessed from day one and still use today.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR AND INQUIRY**

My inquiry project was on the benefits of parent communication. My project was on a weekly newsletter and the benefits of that. So, my first year of teaching, being new to the school – there were only three new teachers hired at that school – I continued the newsletter and actually the other teachers starting doing it as well. So that was something that I brought that actually the whole team saw me do which was nice. I've carried that with me. Now I do a briefer version of it, but the same kind of thing; and yes, I still do a lot of the things that I did in my project. Besides the newsletter I think I documented phone calls and all that kind of stuff which I still do today.

### **IMPACT LEARNING INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

I definitely think that my preparation in learning how to do inquiry impacts my view of teaching. I think it kind of taught me another avenue, I kind of see them similar to reflection and what you do after you reflect and how you can take your reflections and your thoughts to the next step and so reflection is more of an easier thing; I think it's the inquiry that really brings it about. So, that project for me helped me really realize that you can take this a step further.

I think, probably, I use inquiry more on myself and of teaching methods and teaching strategies – always trying to get better with those kinds of things as I think for



my students it's more challenging to do the inquiry based lessons. Just because our school uses text books and has a state-tested oriented kind of curriculum. But, we do try and incorporate that as frequently as we can. It is not as much as I would like to. So, you could say I see inquiry as my role as what I do within my own teaching and what I have my students do in their learning.

For example this year in fourth grade we have the writing state test in fourth grade and I really felt very unprepared to teach the students writing. So, I did some research on my own and also did some work with other teachers in fourth grade and we actually were able go and meet the author of this book. She actually travels from district to district and tries to help schools improve their writing scores. So, we actually got to go and meet her and spend a day of training with her. I didn't even know who she was; but she is very well known around here in the state of Florida with her writing techniques and those kinds of things so we were able through inquiry to find out more about the whole writing process and then were able to meet her. Then I felt more comfortable coming back here and teaching my students.

We (the other teachers and I) did this ourselves because we had just moved up from third grade and we knew we had to prepare these kids and we were just very unsure as to how to go about that in the best way knowing that we had a limited time span, only up to February, to get them to be able to write an expository or a narrative piece. So we kind of jump started it and looking through research and things we kept coming up with this name over and over; and once we pushed it with our curriculum and resource teacher she was able to say, "Oh, actually she's coming into town here," and then I was able take two days off of work and go and sit in with her and she was fantastic. So, I really think

that our kids benefited; I know our writing would have been no where near what it turned out at the end, had we not had that experience.

So, I've done mainly just informal inquiries since I left the PDS. Another push in our school is this whole cooperative learning thing, and I don't know if you noticed today, but the kids were writing on think pads and they were sharing. I don't think that think, pair, share is a very common practice, but I don't know if you noticed that they were in groups of four and they were each numbered and I was spinning the spinner and certain numbers were standing up. All of that is a type of cooperative learning and what they have is all these different structures so this is another thing that our school is trying to promote in the district. It's also about how can you have maximum participation and these are different cooperative learning structures. So, last year we were presented with this and a lot of us went to our principal and said we need more training in this because it's really awesome and so this summer we spent three days in training. They're called different structures. And so I can say to the kids, "we're going to do show down," and they know what it is. Typical ones that we do are rally robin where they talk with the person sitting next to them or a rally table is where you actually write it. So there are all different types of structures but we can say it to the kids and they know exactly what structure and what we're doing and what we mean. So, that's been another informal thing that we found pretty helpful.

You could say that some of my inquiries have come out of what the school is asking us to do and it's how I go about preparing to do it. This has been true for me and especially with being at so many different schools, there are so many different things, schools do things so differently, I mean, New York was very different. They had the

Reading 180 and success for all and I didn't know what any of those things were because I was coming from Virginia and Pennsylvania – I wasn't familiar with those programs. They had Fountas and Pinnell and guided reading. I had to level all my books and it allowed me to still continue with inquiry because there were so many things in each new district that I was unfamiliar with. In being in several school districts and states I could tell just from observing other people that my strategies and my teaching style can be somewhat different. But I really have just tried to keep them because I know that the stuff I learned in PDS works and that's what I believe in and so I'm going to try and twist as much as I can to make the curriculum fit the way that I want to do it.

I think that I would say I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching. In my teaching I question and reflect on the things that I do and lessons that I teach. I am more aware of what my students need and how I can best teach it to them because I am questioning and reflecting constantly. These are valuable skills that I learned in the PDS.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

I think some things make having an inquiry stance toward teaching easy and some things make it hard. I think they have the resources here and that they know that people are very willing to help but if they don't then sometimes you can feel like you get to a dead end but we're pretty persistent, so we just keep trying to stay on top of it or maybe take a different avenue to get to the same result. But I've never felt like I was shut down or anything.

I'm constantly reflecting like we did in the PDS – I think I'm constantly doing it. I don't think I'm writing it down and being as detailed and descriptive, as I was during the PDS, but certainly that was a great skill to learn because you're doing it throughout

the whole day and I know having another teacher in the room and being able to discuss it back and forth, like after the math lesson today she said do you think that was powerful using the overhead manipulatives and you know we were going to go back and discuss that and see if they could have got it without it or if using the manipulatives was really helpful, so we were constantly doing that.

Having another teacher in the room helps me to be more reflective. I love when people come in and watch and I love hearing feedback from people. My principal says we're coming, I'm like, great! We're going to let some interns come in and watch, great! I love to hear people, and I never take anything as it is. I just take it all in and I take in what they say, good, bad, and indifferent, I really like hearing what other people's perspectives are on things because I think that helps me get better.

I remember the PDS being very challenging, that going to classes and then being expected to be in the classroom for the day was very demanding.

## **HANNAH**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I'm in my sixth year of teaching. I taught second grade, then kindergarten, then first, then second, then second again and now kindergarten. Currently I'm teaching in Fairfax County, Virginia. Most (approximately 65%) of my class is of Hispanic descent and about 80% of my students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The majority of my class right now speaks English as a second language. The school in which I am teaching now is very different from where I completed my PDS internship. I teach in a very large school district so that everything is done pretty much by school. You rarely have whole district meetings or whole district decisions on curriculum or something. There is a very

broad curriculum that's basically very similar to the state standards, just reworded for this particular district, and there are some very basic units, like magnets and that kind of thing. But, how you do it within your school and how you teach math and get to those objectives is more of a school based decision. Some schools are very traditional and some schools are very open ended. So unlike most districts where the district kind of decides things on whole, this is like a school by school decision making. The school that I am in is a magnet school so it has a bunch of different kinds of programs like arts and division programs and a lot of resources and technology and science. It has a Spanish emersion program. So it has a population of students from the neighborhood who are mostly lower income and Hispanic and then a population of magnet students that choose to come here and are chosen in the lottery.

We have once a month all school meetings, faculty meetings for the whole school. Then once a week we have team meetings with our grade level. I've only been in this school since September. I like how large it is because there are a lot interesting people and you keep meeting people and you keep having more resources to draw on. There's a lot of emphasis on professional development. Like our faculty meetings are never about details. We have a once a week newsletter the principal puts out and all the busy work is taken care of in that. So that if there needs to be announcements about so and so, this grade is doing testing, this grade is going on a field trip, and she needs to give us information about someone coming and painting the building, that's all in an e-mail. So that when we get together as a faculty, it's always a professional development experience. Maybe somebody comes in or maybe it is people within the school training other people. So that once a month we are getting professional development and it always

felt like such a waste of time in other contexts where the faculty meeting was always everybody getting together and talking about little things and so this is much more productive, I think. I really like the arts and science emphasis – it's making me grow a lot as a teacher and do things that I hadn't tried before, hadn't thought of trying, and people are very creative and independent here so there is no pressure for everybody to do the same thing at the same time. People expect that you will go in your own direction and aren't insulted in any way if you do. I dislike teaching where everybody gets sort of insulted if you decide that you want to have a little class play or something and they get anxious like it's a sort of competition or something. But here everybody just goes on their own and says, "Hey, I have this idea, and if you take it, fine and if you don't fine." And everybody just shares. It's a good context.

It is really hard to have as many ESL children because right now most of them speak English to some extent but when they came in I had a good percentage who didn't understand anything I said. That was really, really difficult. And I don't speak Spanish, so I had a really hard time. I used a lot of hand motions and I used the children as translators and I quickly learned some Spanish, too, some basic words that I needed to know and to do lessons we focused on things that were hands on or providing experiences for them. I didn't just sit down and read a story about going to a circus or something. I tried to make sure that we would have a common experience and then any lessons would be based on that so that I knew that they had that background knowledge so that even if they couldn't understand what I was saying they were seeing pictures and realized that we were talking about something that we had all just had the experience of so that if we all went outside and blew bubbles and then I read a book about bubbles or we wrote about bubbles, they

were making the connection and I knew that they would have some sort of interest in it. Also I read a lot of rhyming books. Even if it wasn't in their language the rhyme sounds neat and that helped too.

### **VIEW OF TEACHING**

I definitely like hands on and that kind of thing that I definitely feel like students need to be directly involved with what they're learning and not just being told about it. For math I'm a firm believer in understanding all the concepts and the background before they start learning to just put down plus signs and for writing that they don't need to spell all the words right, they need to have an understanding of what letters are and what writing is for. For reading we focus on comprehension, even though they can't read yet they are already working on comprehension strategies because, you know, the whole point of reading is understanding it. The understanding and the big meat of it is always what I'm focusing on and all the little skills and details kind of just circle around that. I also like to try to integrate the subjects to have better use of the time when I can to write about what we're learning in social studies or read books about things we're learning in science and that kind of thing.

I think that it's really important to keep reflecting on what you're doing and keep changing and keep learning, not to get stuck in a groove where you keep doing the same thing over and over each year without really thinking it over and without ever looking and asking if this is really working. So that it's just constantly – I don't really like that, let me change that for tomorrow or change that and make a note because next year when we get to this unit I want to make sure I do this. So I'm always trying to find opportunities to talk to people and learn more about what people do.

## **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

The way that I learn best and most enjoy learning is always when I'm involved with it and not just sitting down and being told or talked to. There was an emphasis on that in the PDS internship and so that was obviously a big part of it, in learning how to do it. There was another teacher that I observed during my college that I just was working with, that I worked in her classroom, and she did that as well as my mentor teacher when I was an intern. That's pretty much what has influenced my views, I guess, because in my previous job there wasn't really very much of that so I was really trying to keep that alive and then I got here and now that's all confirmed again. I guess from the PDS there are the things that I do naturally now. I look at something and think "I don't really like that" and then figure out a way to change it instead of just complaining about it. I think that is something that I learned there – how to problem solve in your classroom.

The year-long experience of the PDS, my mentor, and learning inquiry were the most influential aspects of the PDS program that influence who I am as a teacher today. It was important to see how a classroom is started and how the teacher changes as the children change throughout the year. I loved working so closely with my mentor and getting to know someone well enough that I can "see inside their brain". I feel that learning inquiry – to be a teacher researcher – has made me more of a "professional" in my profession.

## **BACKGROUND INQUIRY FROM INTERN YEAR UNTIL NOW**

During my internship year I did an inquiry on making a website for your classroom because back then that wasn't as new. My mentor was very supportive. She thought it was a great project and allowed me to do whatever I needed to complete it and



the principal was supportive of it, and of course all of the PDA's helped. I had two PDAs because I was in the honors program, so I had my honors program advisor so he was unofficially my PDA and I had my official PDA. I learned how to do it from our science course method's instructor because she taught us how to do the website so I learned the skill to do the project, so I guess everyone was supportive. The parents also in my classroom were really into it so that encouraged me.

In my grad program there's another girl who's from the internship but she was a more recent graduate, like 2002 or something like that and it's funny because we're taking this class on action research and so we basically have to do an inquiry project. I view inquiry and action research as pretty much the same thing. You see, I asked the professor. I didn't say it in those terms but I was trying to find out the difference between them. From what I was reading in our text, I was thinking maybe action research had to be a little bit more based on social, like making a difference socially. Like addressing an issue such as like race or socioeconomic, addressing a group of children or people that are usually minimized or don't get as much. That's what I was thinking and I asked him that and he said no. I'm wondering if he is right because I felt like that is what the book was getting at. I felt that maybe inquiry was more just like looking into your everyday practice, whereas action research is how you can make your classroom into a place where there is more social change going on or something. That is just my own personal thing, but he didn't confirm that, so I am not exactly sure. Basically, what he was saying that we had to do for this action research project was just an inquiry project where we did some pre-research, we did a lit review, we did something in our classroom, and then we

assessed what had happened. The other former intern and I were kind of laughing because we're in this grad program to do something that we had done as undergrads.

I think this made us more comfortable than others in our class. There were some people in there that had done that kind of thing but there were some people in there that had never done something like that and didn't even understand how to start. So, unfortunately this class is like a review. However, I don't mind doing the project because it will be interesting.

### **IMPACT INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

For myself, I'm constantly changing and learning. For the children, it's harder because it looks different when they're really young in kindergarten, when I taught second grade I did more the way it looks, the way that you typically think of the way inquiry looks. For example, I had to teach a dinosaur unit, this was first grade, actually it was a unit on animals, and I knew that they had rewritten the dinosaur unit in Squirrelwood (school district in which I completed my internship) to be an inquiry based dinosaur unit where you could discover the mystery dinosaur and I took the animal unit that we had to study to rewrite it. Basically, in the unit we just were like this is what mammals are like and then we studied all the mammals, this is what amphibians are like and we studied all the amphibians and it was really boring and didn't have a lot of motivation. So I read the dinosaur unit from Squirrelwood and then wrote my own version of the mammal unit to be like that so that there was a big question, "What is the mystery animal?" and then all of our learning and discovery went into a journal where we were trying to answer clues and figure out the identity of this mystery animal based on whether or not it had attributes that would make us think it was a mammal or a reptile. So

that's what I think is a typical inquiry, where you've got one big question and you're solving something that is a valid, interesting question and all your information goes to that. But in kindergarten we've more just been focusing on it as being like it's an experiential thing. So that I'm always trying to focus on making sure they're having real experiences that have to do with what they're learning, but I can't say that I'm really doing anything quite as structured as that was previously right now.

I've completed other inquiries myself and with children since I've left the PDS. I'm in a grad program right now, so I'm working on one right now and I did one last semester, too. It is set up similar in some ways to how we were taught inquiry in the PDS. The program that I chose is pretty similar in their philosophies, and the last semester's program, the big project was just was very broad, it was just sort of what kind of thing would you like to try in your room? Try something. It was really kind of just that broad, and report on what happened.

My question and my interest was to try to validate the children's home experiences a little bit more and show them that I appreciated and recognized the value of them so that it wasn't like this is the school environment and everything I do here is good and everything you do at home doesn't belong here. So I had parents come in and share an expertise with us and I was making that connection between what we do at school like we control our body and we control our voices and what the parents were doing. By making tortillas they have to control their body and they have to work safely. So I was making this connection between things that I was trying to get them to do in school and what they're doing at home. I was trying to see whether that would help them be more in tune. That wasn't really a complete research project. That was just a trial project, so that I

never did like a pre-assessment and then a later assessment. But this semester the course we're taking is actually a research course, so that the one that I'm going to do this semester is actually going to have a pre-interview with some children and then an action and then a later assessment. So this inquiry will be more formal.

It's going to be on the gender roles, how they develop gender roles and whether doing some critical literacy stuff with certain books that address gender role issues, like Oliver Button is a Sissy, or that kind of thing, whether having some class discussions and reading some books like that will have any effect on what they feel is appropriate for different genders. It's just something that they talk about every day, like, "That's not for girls," or "Boys can't do that." My instinct is always to say, "Yes it is," but then that's not very valid for me to just tell them so I want to explore if there is any way for me to help them learn that; because there are a lot of messages going against that in their daily life with what their families are saying or what they're seeing on TV or wherever they're getting these messages.

The impact learning inquiry really has had on my teaching is how I problem solve in my teaching. I have the responsibility to be aware of what's going on and not just come here, go over my lesson plans and make new ones for the next day. But I need to go over my lesson plans and as I'm doing it to think about what I'm doing and how I want to change it for tomorrow or the next week. I think I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching because I rarely do the same thing twice. From year to year and day to day, I am constantly re-evaluating, reflecting, and researching for more information (with colleagues and books) to improve my practice. I am always asking myself questions, looking for patterns, and reflecting on the meaning.

## **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

Here it's very easy to have an inquiry stance toward teaching. In a team of eight you've got everybody doing something different, but most people who are hired at this particular school, you know, the principal is looking for someone who is pretty open minded and so there's a few people on the team who maybe are a little bit more traditional and lean that way but still they're not in any way going to be upset if I say "Well, I did it this way and I thought it was really great." They'll just be like, hmm, "Yes, I might consider that, but I really like doing it this way." We just sort of, oh, Ok I recognize that you have a little bit of a different philosophy.

But where I was teaching, most of the people wanted to go home as quickly as possible at the end of the day and so the easiest way to do that was to have a set thing that you do every year. Some of the kindergarten teachers there even had a box for each month that they had on top of their shelves, and they'd just pull it down and go right through the September box, go right through the files, Ok now we're going to do this paper, now this, now this, now this. Then before they put it back up they'd have the assistant go copy everything for next year. So they were ready for next September when September was done. There was very little thought about whether all those were really valid experiences or not. You know, it was just like, this is what I do. This is how I've got my whole year set and I'm ready to go, and so that's a nice feeling but not very good for the kids. Anyway, with certain teams that I taught with there, when we came together and talked about things, which didn't happen like it does here; it happened much more infrequently, we would accidentally at lunch or something be talking about things and if I knew that I was doing something that was a little different I just wouldn't mention it. And

if it was something that was pretty obvious like a class play I soon learned I needed to tell everybody ahead of time and I would sort of belittle it like oh it's just this little thing and it's not really a big deal, because everybody would feel guilty, or something. It was strange. So I would try to make it seem like it was nothing and it really didn't matter so I didn't make enemies.

With the one team I was on I started off kind of being that way but then I read them and then I realized, oh, they're kind of interested. I'll just suggest a little bit of what I tried and then they would want to take a little bit more. And so, with that team, I could try some new things and share some ideas. But my first year there I didn't understand how to play that game at all. I just went in expecting that everybody would be doing their own thing like it was in the PDS, and I just went in with, I'll just do it this way and make sure I'm hitting everything that I need to hit and they were really upset with me. I realized, wow, I just made these enemies and I totally don't understand why. Then I realized how to play it and I was more political about things when I taught the second two times and so then I could decide Ok this person I can see that they're going to be interested in just this amount of information. If it's something that's going to save them time so that they can get home earlier they might be interested. So like if I had made up an activity, you know, like a contractions activity or something, and I could say, "Would you like to try it?" They would be like, "Yes," because they don't have to make a contractions activity then. So I would just sort of figure out what people were interested in and figured out that game. I never really had any problems with the administration. They always seemed to be fine with us doing whatever we wanted. It was just the teachers who had been teaching forever the same way that they just wanted to keep doing

that and anything that seemed to challenge that was frightening to them and they didn't want to stir the water.

Then I came here. I was just quiet for a little bit until I read everybody. Then I was like, oh, this is like normal land again. I can just be myself and I came out of my shell. It was like I was hiding for four years. There are a lot of people here to talk with. I've been working on my reading workshop a lot this year and there are a lot of different people to whom I can ask, "What do you do and how do you run your reading workshop and how do you solve this problem?" It's not just teachers; there's a coach and there's a reading teacher; she just came today just to watch my reading workshop for me and give me feedback and ideas on it so there are people that can do that kind of thing for me that I really respect their opinions. One of the things that I missed most when I left the internship was that nobody was looking at me anymore to give me advice. They were only looking at me to say, "Yes, you can keep teaching here." But there really was very little constructive feedback anymore. It was just, you know, once or twice a year someone came in the room, sat down with a pen, the principal or whatever and it was like, yes, you're good enough to keep teaching, thanks that was good. It was very meaningless. So it was a difficult adjustment because when you're in the internship someone is in there every single day, and sometimes two or three people giving you advice and feedback. That was good, but at the same time, I had a really hard time not having it. So here there is a little bit more of that so that makes it easier.

## **LUKE**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I have been teaching for six years now. I teach in the same suburban school district in Pennsylvania that I completed my PDS internship in. About 85% of my students are of Caucasian descent and about 15% of my class is eligible for free or reduced lunch. I teach sixth grade in a middle school and we are what I call semi self-contained. I see my students for probably about four to five periods a day and we switch for ability math groups for an hour a day. I teach social studies and science to a large group of students. Then I teach reading, writing, spelling, and language arts to a somewhat smaller group because three of the students for social studies and science are in learning support English.

We work in teams that are five person, five classroom teams and then within those teams there are partner teams. The partner teams have like Phys. Ed at the same time and all the specials are lined up so the teachers can plan within the partner teams that they switch from reading groups or science lessons, things like that, we can do flexible grouping, and we can regroup at any time. The math groups are determined by the school, that is through the whole five person team, when I say five person I mean five regular classrooms and there is also a learning support teacher and an instructional support teacher that works with both and there are two large sixth grade teams; there used to be six on each team, now there's five because the numbers went down so one teacher works without a partner.

We go by cycle days here, so this cycle day is one through six, and our day is a little longer than the elementary day but what it means is our division, what we call



division meetings in elementary, are held after school usually or before school. Ours are during the day when the kids go to what they call exploratory classes, they don't like to use the word specials all the time, and then the meeting today is a day one regularly scheduled meeting and is what we call a curriculum team meeting. We discuss team planning and things like field trips and things with the curriculum and on day three we have what we call a student services meeting which is a meeting where we discuss students' concerns like things you might see in your math class or homeroom or about kids and the ways we can help them and on days five or six the partners have time to meet and plan. We can obviously do it more, but there are three scheduled blocks of time for meetings each cycle.

I'm the PTSO representative - the parent-teacher-student organization, commonly known as the PTA. There are other roles like webmaster, newsletter, communicator with the rest of the school, recorder, and team leader.

I did my internship in an elementary school and I'd say that there are definitely some similarities in terms of like philosophy and terms of integrated social studies and language arts and things like that. The general structure of the day is totally different. It's a lot more structured here.

## **VIEW OF TEACHING**

I view teaching in that I'm a facilitator most of the time, not like a sage on the stage type person. I like to use a lot of different methods. I believe every child learns in a unique way, so I try to provide multiple ways to either go about learning something or teaching something. I like a lot of hands-on activities but I always have said this even since the internship like hands on and minds on. There needs to be a component where

it's not just kids playing with clay or, you know, doing a science experiment and not being accountable for any of it. I really like hands on activities but there has to be some kind of real critical thinking component that goes with a lot of it, even if it's just discussion sometimes. You know, not everything has to be in writing. I like to make it a safe, nurturing classroom. I like to build community. I'd rather use positive reinforcement than negative. I like to build community a lot. I like to do things with my own classes, and that's where I see myself as a father figure to the some of the kids and as the last chance they really have to get a teacher that really knows them as an individual.

Sometimes we say in sixth grade we still teach children, not subjects. By the time you get to seventh grade it's very content driven, and every 44 minutes they switch classes. They're great teachers and they get to know kids, too, but you're talking about every 44 minutes changing classes and then having to know a hundred and some kids well.

Today, in the lesson that you saw, was the itinerary lesson for Canada, but I had a good number of students who were working on finishing reading portfolios in, I guess you would say, at different levels of complexity. These are the kinds of assignments and the kinds of projects that we do to allow kids to be challenged and give them more room to do a little more or to add a little extra and I even allow kids that have challenges to do modified assignments. So it's not like just worksheets. It's kind of like real life skills a lot of the time, making those kinds of connections. When reading a book, you see kids read at different paces, so by providing skills in how to choose a good book a lot of times like I have some kids during that last instructional book period read three or four books. I still

had one kid, as you may have noticed, struggling to finish this book. So, trying to meet them where they are and to teach them from it; you know, there's a lot of ways to do that.

When the district asks us to try something for the first time you pretty much do what they ask us to do to try it because you don't know how it's going to work. But I don't think there's ever a time when I go from a script, read word for word, or something like that. Then after we try it out for a year or so you might come up with your own ways of meeting the same objectives, just slightly different. The same thing with different kids each year, certain things might work better, certain styles, certain types of activities. Maybe one year you do more group work, another year you might do more individual inquiry because I'm really into that. Some kids might be more proficient with technology in general and classes sometimes tend to take a different direction.

I have never wanted to be a filing cabinet teacher where I just pull things out that I did last year. At the same time, I always thought that it would get a little easier than it has now and it really hasn't since things have changed so much every single year. I think that's a good sign. It's a sign of a living breathing district, a living classroom. I think that's why we keep up with what I consider best or at least better practices because we found spelling that seemed to work better so we changed. And laptops, you know we had to learn a lot to be able to use them but that's a better practice now than some other ways. But it took a lot of work. We're constantly revising things as simple as worksheets or lesson plans as a team, because just because it's in the unit that way, doesn't mean that's the best that it could be and when they wrote it they may never have tried it with kids anyway. So, you're always making new materials for the classroom, spend a lot of time in the summer, sometimes I take the class through Maplewood where you get to make

learning centers or visuals, and stuff like that. If you didn't do stuff to stay fresh, it would get really boring and monotonous as a teacher. Yes, I could probably use more time in my personal life, especially since I'm getting married now and all that good stuff. If it's the kind of job that you never think it's going to be 8:00 to 3:30, it just doesn't happen. Every year you have different kids. You have to grade their papers. Each kid is different. You have to give them time they deserve, get to know them as a learner. There's always a lot to do and there's always new things coming down the pipe.

### **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

I think a lot of the experiences I had in the school district have shaped my views of teaching. Starting from when I volunteered during my LLED block and then later did some volunteer work with ESL back when I was in college and just seeing that made me want to be a part of this school district and then I had more experiences obviously with the internship and that was a huge ... it formed a lot of my beliefs and ideas. I would say the thing that sticks out more than just theory or a textbook or sitting in a class was the fact that most of the classes that we had, which would normally be DI classes, they were taught in conjunction with the internship, so that we got to try out stuff in the classrooms that we were in and they were the same classrooms that we were in the whole year. The year-long experience and my mentor teacher were the most influential factors of the PDS program. Seeing the classroom from start to finish had such a big impact on me, setting it up, seeing the kids from day one, and knowing how they ended up after the last day, setting up the room, tearing it down. I learned many interesting strategies from my mentor that would be tough to learn in a course. As an intern, you really get the full picture of what it takes to run and manage an entire school year, from before it starts until

after it ends. When I think about the PDS it is hard to say that just one or two things were the only things that influenced me. I think the whole package deal of PDS, the inquiry, constant reflection, etc. is what really helped me become who I am today. And then and now, working closely with a lot of teachers who had a lot to offer, getting a lot of ideas, that's kind of made me into the teacher I am today. Just trying to think and get good ideas and mold them into what works for me, what works for my particular students in a given year shapes my views as a teacher.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR AND INQUIRY**

I remember my mentor. When I found out who I had been placed with I was pretty excited because I thought we were going to be a good team and that's what happened. I never remember him really like leaving the room or being like ok you're going to be teaching now, taking over the whole classroom. There were times, that, yes, I was more in charge of everything or he was. But I guess what I remember about it was a lot of co-planning, co-teaching, having two teachers to help all the kids, like one-on-one, sorting some groups, that's one big memory I have. Another big memory is being accepted by him and by the division and by the whole school community, like being made a part of the school, being able to participate in extracurricular activities, social activities with the school community, getting involved with some kids. I remember a lot of trying to differentiate instruction in math because we had the highest grouping and that's helped me now. I remember it being really tough in the fall sometimes in some of the methods courses, just time and wanting to do more and put more into certain things, but there were only so many hours in the day, so I remember it being extremely busy but

just being generally really positive. I remember the interns, being there to support each other and the PDA's and being able to run ideas by them.

I remember I learned some new things in math ed. I remember how I learned finally why regrouping works and things that were kind of neat, like I made some neat discoveries, too, in my own learning that I just did because they were automatic, I was just taught the procedures. That's another thing that kind of stands out.

I can remember my inquiry too. I remember the exact student and I can remember he was an honor student. He struggled socially and emotionally a little bit. He was a pretty bright kid and I did a whole project on what we could do to help him in particular, but in general, kids with lower self esteem and problems getting along with their peers. I learned a lot from it. At times, I just struggled with the whole time thing and having enough time to do it right, to conduct the research properly, your data collection and then I just struggled a little bit with time. You want to do it right but just as a teacher, there are so many things you're supposed to do. I say the other interns helped me the most in getting through everything. I mean, everyone was helpful and supportive and it was something that was part of the whole culture of the school so a lot of people were engaged in it.

### **IMPACT LEARNING INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

I guess I'd say inquiry plays a big role but not as big as sometimes I would like it to play because there's not always enough time to make everything inquiry based. Because when things are inquiry based kids can go in many different directions, and that's generally a good thing, but when you are required to teach certain lessons or teach to certain standards, it sometimes limits the amount of inquiry that you can truly do. We

do inquiry based research for Canada and then for another country and then for other parts of our social studies unit, Passports to Understanding. We use a lot of inquiry in science, things that they want to investigate. A lot of it is somewhat predetermined, but still somewhat inquiry based. A lot of times I'll let the kids have an offshoot wondering, you know, we investigate it as a class. We might stray from lesson plans and say well, you know, maybe we could find that out. Other times it's like formal inquiry, like this last Canada presentation that they did, was totally all the steps in the inquiry process, as far as learning about good questions and different strategies for carrying out the whole process and planning, searching, reflecting, organizing data, then revising it, presenting it and then going back and evaluating it. So inquiry does have a pretty good role in sixth grade.

I've done informal inquiry. Well, I guess I've done some formal inquiry for a middle level educational philosophy class I took. I did some inquiry into middle level learners and motivation, and I guess some informal inquiry into homework and struggling students now for a committee that I'm on with the school. I'm sure there's been more. I think it's just a part of me, so I don't realize that I'm doing it; it's more informal.

I think learning inquiry did have pretty big impact because it teaches you to be reflective, it teaches you to try to be a teacher leader, to go about and systematically gather data and perhaps make some changes based on what you find is working or not working. It allows you to see what you thought or maybe you didn't realize was happening. There are still some things, it's hard to pinpoint, but like you learn from the other interns and the teachers that did the inquiries when I was in the PDS. I still remember some best practices and some little hints that they gave me about a certain way

to teach a better math concept or a way to group your classroom. I remember a lot of stuff like classroom community building. I think there's a lot of inquiry into that and it helped me shape who I was as a classroom teacher.

I think that we (teachers) reflect all the time. I just don't think it's necessarily formal, but I think by having middle school teams, it allows you a place to be reflective because in those meetings sometimes we'll talk about what worked and what we're going to change for next year. One thing I wish I could do better is at least, like some of my colleagues are better at this, to be better at just writing down on a sticky note or writing in the unit when things need to change for the next year, because I forget to actually do that, to actually write it and then I'm like I know there's something I wanted to change and when you're planning for it the next year for that particular lesson or something similar, you can't quite remember exactly what it was. It's frustrating. I'm still thinking of a way to do better reflectively. I think I put the majority of my time into going around and helping kids, and that's number one.

Overall, I think that I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching although I wouldn't say I am obsessed by it. I really like to have kids asking questions and finding answers to things they're truly interested in. It helps that so much of our science, social studies, and even math curriculums are inquiry based and very conceptual.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

I guess one of the things that I always wondered even when I was in the internship was that having an inquiry stance takes time, and I think that's one of the things that by being able to be a mentor teacher you have the support structure that kind of forces you to take the time. Now that the middle schools aren't part of the PDS there's not that support



structure here. If there were and it was like something that a couple of us were doing, we could support each other. So it would be one thing that we would do, it's just that time is really tough; it's a time factor.

I'd say that it would be easy because you have the support of your teammates, we have some common planning time during the school day, but it's hard because there's like eight hundred thousand things that you need to do during that time and we're being pulled in more ways than ever. It's time and it's always going to be time but I really feel pressured for time this year, both time to get prepared because of all the things they're asking us to do new and just time with the students because I feel like every class, every student works at a different pace and this particular year they like to go deep into stuff which is great and it just takes longer to do certain projects, to do certain assignments as a whole.

## **CHLOE**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I have been teaching for five years in a suburban school district in New Jersey. Approximately 9% of my students are of African American descent, 4% are of Asian-Pacific Islander descent, 74% are of Caucasian descent and 13% are of Hispanic descent. About 10% of my students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

I teach in a smaller school district than where I completed my internship. But I do teach in a pretty large school. There are nine fourth grades and that's the whole fourth grade for the district. There are not other schools that have fourth graders in them. My school is third, fourth, and fifth. So that's a little bit different from the K to five building that I was in as an intern. In terms of the economic nature of the community, I think it is

very similar. Obviously there isn't a college located in our town, but I think the socioeconomic status is pretty comparable to where I did my internship.

I do work with four of the other fourth grade teachers. It does make things easier and helps to improve the things you keep doing year after year. For example if I'm teaching a novel that I've taught before, I've already read the novel. I've already come up with four years worth of activities times four more teachers who have been doing the same thing because I collaborate with them. So, what we're doing now, and this partially just because of our personalities and partially because of the set up that those teachers in this pod at my end of the hallway really get along and really work well together and most of us share really similar philosophies of education and how we approach things. When we're getting ready to start a unit we spend time together after school. Everybody brings out their binder. We flip through it. This activity was good. This activity stunk. I found a new one. Here's this. So we do spend time refining and revising and trying to make what we've done better, but it's not nearly the time commitment of that first time you set out to teach something. So, now that I've been here for four or five years, it's a lot of the stuff that you've been doing that you're constantly thinking about how to try to make it better.

## **CURRICULUM**

Our district is in the middle of turning over the curriculum. We're becoming a lot more progressive. We got a new superintendent the same year that I started teaching and before then the superintendent wasn't all that into progressive education movements and he was here for a very long time. There were a lot of veteran teachers who were under the impression that the curriculum was the text book and that literally was the curriculum. Since I've gotten here I sat on a couple of curriculum committees. I've helped write the K

to five science curriculum. I wrote the fourth grade curriculum for that. For math I sat on the committee and instead of just writing one grade level, there was a teacher from each grade and I was an additional person, and I was the person who would oversee the connections between each grade level and also I wrote the philosophy of math education for our district for K to five. Not many second year teachers get that opportunity, but like I said our district was in a period of transition. We still are still moving towards there.

Just this year we had a language arts committee that worked for the past two years and this year we implemented a lot of new language arts programs. And I say new because they are new to our district. They are not really new, its things like guided reading, stuff that I did with my mentor a couple years ago in the PDS but that are new to our district. Stuff like guided reading and a developmental spelling program has also been implemented this year, writer's workshop, so a lot of the things that were new to many teachers in my building, weren't new to me. And luckily our administration was of the mind that as long as you were covering the standards by the State of New Jersey they really didn't mind which resources you used. So through Scholastic and their bonus points I have built my own mini library of guided reading materials that I used on my own. And I have used those, you know, through out the year even if it wasn't something our district had purchased.

Now the district is beginning to follow what I've been doing so it is kind of nice to be on the forefront in that. Some teachers do come to me because I've already done this. There is always a mix. A lot of teachers come to me. There's one other teacher in our building who was also extremely progressive and did the same kinds of things that I did with the guided reading. She's actually one of my partners right across the hallway,

and it helped a lot. Actually, there was a third one, but she's out on maternity leave this year. The three of us actually helped in-service the other teachers in development of the spelling program. We piloted it the first year and now that everybody's implemented it, we presented an in-service program. We're here if teachers want to come and see us. We've also opened up our classrooms to anyone who wants to come and see a guided reading lesson – sort of a peer coaching kind of thing. I've only had one or two people actually take us up on it between me and the other teachers. I think that people are willing to ask questions but I don't think they're quite comfortable enough yet to really be in each other's classrooms all the time. It's a big professional culture shift.

### **VIEW OF TEACHING**

My biggest goal in teaching is the children's learning and understanding. I approach it in such a way that I believe heavily in constructivism and all the things that were talked about in the PDS when I was there. I try to approach everything that I do in that way. I try to think about multiple intelligences and various learning styles. I try to plan different activities. But my biggest goal is that the kids are the ones who are doing the learning. That I'm not just going to stand up and tell them all the information they need to know. I'm going to try to plan activities and experiences that they'll discover the information on their own and they'll build that information and make those constructs in their minds. Their learning takes place when you take where the students are right now. You figure into their prior knowledge, their prior experiences, and what scenarios they have in their mind. Then you allow them to have experiences to build on those areas and to build on what they've already learned; but they're actually doing the work.

In terms of preparing to teach the curriculum – I’m not going to just sit around and do something if I don’t think it is the right thing to do. And that’s just part of my personality. If I think something needs to get done, I’m going to get up and do it. We have a new principal this year, but for the past four years we’ve had the same principal. She was very supportive. You know how sometimes when you have new teachers in the building and some of the old teachers kind of feel like, you know, who do they think they are? They just graduated from college and they think they know everything. There were some teachers that were like that especially since there were a whole bunch of us who were pretty new that first year. But, our principal was really good at encouraging us and my mentor teacher was also very good at encouraging me. The way they viewed it was that these girls are coming right out of college and they have all this new knowledge. How could we grow from this? How could we take what they know and sort of compare it with our experience and really get something better out of it? That’s the kind of climate that I was in. We had a text book, a basal text book, which we still have and it’s good for a resource for about four or five of the stories in there. But there are teachers who viewed the themes as that was the curriculum and you have to do the theme and you have to do the theme test. And they never even did a novel!

I actually asked in my interview what the resources were. The principal said they have a text book in every subject. I asked if they encourage and allow their teachers to use other resources as well and use the text book as only one resource or if they make them use the text book for everything. She said that they encourage whatever resources as long as you are teaching the standards set forth by the state of New Jersey. So, I did that.

You know I did that with reading. I did it with science and then I helped rewrite the curriculum. And I did it with math and then I helped rewrite that curriculum.

My bottom line is that if I'm doing anything in the classroom it's because I've thought about it. I'm not just doing anything just because it's there, just because that's the lesson that the district gave me. I've thought about it. I've thought about how to implement it and I'm constantly thinking about how I could make it better.

### **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

I think learning to teach in the PDS was what shaped many of my views on teaching. I had an excellent mentor. She's in Virginia now. She had me and then another intern the next year and then she moved to Virginia. She got married and had a little girl. She lives in Virginia. I remember my PDA too.

I hear them in the back of my head all the time. I think one of the biggest things that my PDA said to me whenever I was learning and doing different lessons and sometimes the kids wouldn't do what I had expected them to do, he always told me you need to ask yourself two questions when the lesson doesn't go the way you thought it was going to go. First of all, is this something developmentally appropriate for the kids? Is this something that you can reasonably expect a nine or ten-year-old to be able to do well? And the other thing he said, if that's a yes, then you need to ask yourself, did they understand what they are supposed to do? And that has just stuck with me. I'm not sure why, but I shared it with my student teacher this fall; and that sticks with me a lot of the time. There are things that my mentor and PDA did to encourage me and to make me feel confident. When I had my first student teacher, I was nervous. I actually e-mailed both

my mentor and PDA over the summer and I said I'm getting a student teacher. What do I do?

I loved having a student teacher. I had a really good student teacher. I know not everybody's that lucky, because I've heard some horror stories from other people about their student teachers. But I had a very hard-working student teacher who really had a kind of natural tendency for teaching, so she did a really, really good job. I thought it was just interesting because I found myself telling her a lot of the same things that I learned. But it was also interesting because I wonder how on earth she's ready to go and teach her own classroom? She was actually only here for about eight weeks, because she is getting her certification split. It's going to be elementary certification, but she's also getting N through third, the early childhood. So she did half of her student teaching with me and then went over to our kindergarten and did the other half over there. After eight weeks, and it was from the very beginning of the year, I'm thinking how I had 185 days, and the entire school year, and I still didn't quite feel ready. I felt like I was ready, but we all wondered how you can do it with only one person in the room. I was worried about teaching alone but it was actually much easier than I thought. When you finish the PDS, you've been in the classroom with your mentor all year. Her professor only came in maybe five times, and I was used to my PDA being in there twice a week scheduled and dropping in whenever else he wanted.

My mentor, PDA, and inquiry project most influenced who I am as a teacher today. I feel that the inquiry project trained me to take on the mindset of inquiry all the time, so I view inquiry as sort of a permanent lens for my teaching. I think that this is most apparent when I am reflecting on my teaching, whether I am reflecting on a lesson

that went really well, or trying to solve a problem that I am having. I always approach my reflection with questions, trying to figure out why things happened the way they did, and how they could be different next time. I also view inquiry as an activity that necessarily involves communicating with other teachers.

I am lucky to have a colleague who also has some experience with inquiry, and so when we talk about what is going on in our classrooms, we have similar frames of reference, and each of us can understand the other's thought process. I think my personal definition of what constitutes "inquiry" has broadened...when I was in the PDS, inquiry was a huge project that required endless hours of preparation, analysis, and writing, not to mention a formal presentation at the conference. Now I think of it more as a mindset--while I have not done a formal inquiry project since being in the PDS, I constantly have several mini-inquiries going on in my mind, and in conversations with my colleagues. These mini-inquiries may never result in a formal, written paper or presentation. But I know that having such a mindset makes me a better teacher every day. My students certainly benefit from having a teacher who is constantly questioning and searching to improve her practice.

### **IMPACT OF LEARNING INQUIRY**

The biggest role inquiry has played on my teaching is the mind set. Because when you do inquiry projects when you are just starting to teach in the PDS, it becomes a part of how you naturally think about teaching. So, inquiry just becomes the mind set that you carry through all of the time. I haven't had the time to actually do a formal inquiry project since then, but I think it just plays a role in the mind set every time I'm planning a lesson or thinking about how I could communicate better with my parents. I'm thinking about



those questions. I think its part of a healthy teacher because you just can't sit around and rest on your laurels. You might have things that you did last year and the year before and the year before that, but you need to keep revisiting it and reviewing it and see how you can improve it.

Inquiry is really just the mind set. When you are just learning how to teach I feel like you're pretty impressionable. You have some ideas about what teaching and learning is and your philosophy of teaching. But I feel like what you go through that student teaching year really forms and solidifies what you're going to be like as a teacher and so having to do that entire spring semester focus on inquiry and do an inquiry project and attend the conference just really shaped my mind set on teaching. Even if I don't have time to do inquiry projects, really collect data, write it up and present it, I still feel like it really does shape the ideas that I have and how I approach teaching every week when I do my lesson plans.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

I think that the easy part to having an inquiry stance is the level of collaboration that I have with my peers and the support from the administration. As long as I cover the standards, I'm allowed to try pretty much whatever I want. I've been encouraged and praised for bringing in extra resources and trying different things. I know at a lot of schools they might not make you feel that way. They might make you feel like, oh, what are you trying, you're doing something different. And like I said, there were a few veteran teachers around the hallway that kind of did.

I kind of didn't know about it at the time. My mentor here is next door. She's just fantastic and she's almost like another mom. But she really came into the mentoring with

the view that we're going to embrace what these girls have to bring to this school. Otherwise, we're going to become stagnant. And apparently during my first year there was another teacher in the hallway who got all up in arms, a textbook teacher, and went down to the principal screaming and yelling, "What do these girls think they're doing? They're not teaching every lesson from the textbook" and on and on and on, complaining to the principal. I never knew about it until later. Of course, the principal called my mentor and my mentor actually went down there and said, "Do you want to be stagnant?" They're teaching the standards. They're doing a damn good job. It doesn't matter if they're not using the textbook. There are other things besides the text book to use to do teaching. So, I feel that she kind of fought that battle for me, but since then the other teacher by the end of the first year actually walked in our classroom and copied a chart, which was a very big sign, but it was like, the truce. I didn't know about it at the time and I just continued on my merry way doing what I believed in and what I knew was right. If I had known I probably would have been pretty pissed but I don't think it would have changed what I was doing. I probably would have wanted to do it better, just to prove her wrong. Like I said, if I'm doing something it's because I've thought about it and because I believe in it not because it's just there. If I knew she was angry I probably would have just kept doing it and tried to ignore her.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR AND INQUIRY**

For my inquiry project I selected the topic of communication and how students' talk helps them learn and I think I focused on math and science. I could probably pull it out. But I focused on how interactions between the students helped them construct the ideas in math and science. I think I focused on norms, classroom norms, norms that are

explicit and norms that are also implicit about respecting what other people say and having to listen to other kids. I use a lot of that stuff now because I remember in the math discussions one thing I focused on was that when we're having a math discussion you have to listen to what the other kids are saying. I would force them to do that by telling them that I would ask anyone randomly to repeat what the kid before them just said. I may ask them if they could say what the student just said in their own words. It's not really putting the kids on the hot spot because they don't have to come up with a new idea, or if they didn't have an answer themselves they're not scared or embarrassed. All they have to do is listen to what the kid said before them and repeat it. But it forces them to be involved in the discussion. I remember that was part of what I studied in the inquiry project, and I still do that.

I remember having meetings after school and I remember that there were a lot of teachers from the school that came for that course, whether they had interns or not. I remember there were some teachers that didn't have interns that still wanted to do a project and came to that course, too. I just remember the environment being very supportive. Obviously when they were teaching us things about how to collect the data and do the research a lot of people were around and willing to collect data if you needed to and there were a lot of people who knew how to do it. I also remember the inquiry conference and being able to present and share what we learned and the lessons of what other people had learned in their projects as well. My mentor and PDA really helped to support me throughout my inquiry.

The PDS people really had a big influence. I hear my mentor and PDA in my mind all the time. When I'm planning math lessons, it's the math instructor popping up.

Is this an understanding, or this knowledge? Is this something the students are going to know or is it something the students are going to understand; and what's the difference? I hear the science instructor thinking hands on, minds on. It's a great activity for science; what's the thinking behind it? I think that their philosophies and the way they taught their philosophies and the fact that they resonated with my own philosophies really had a big influence on how I teach. I remember the technology a lot because we just had so much in the PDS.

## **JACOB**

### **TEACHING CONTEXT**

I have been teaching fourth grade for four years. I teach in a suburban school district in Manassas City, Virginia. About 18% of my students are of African American descent, 52% of my students are of Caucasian descent and 30% of my students are of Hispanic descent. Approximately 30% of my students are eligible for free or reduced lunch. As you can tell, my fourth grade class is made of a diverse group of learners. We have emotionally disturbed, we have learning disabled, and we have gifted and talented. I think we have about four or five that are ESL, students that speak a different language at home.

### **CURRICULUM**

The curriculum is SOL driven. It's Standards Of Learning in Virginia. We're required to meet the standards of learning in Virginia and take an end of the year test. In fourth grade we take math and reading. In third grade they take math, reading, science, social studies, and writing. And they'll do the same thing in fifth as well. So, our

objectives are to meet all of those objectives throughout the year. It basically makes up our entire curriculum.

We have grade level teams. I am a grade level leader for my fourth grade group. That just rotates every year. Basically what a grade level team does is that they basically plan field trips. They get materials to people who need them. They're in charge of the storing and taking care of all of the fourth grade materials we have with science, art manipulatives, and math manipulatives. The leader passes the materials out. The leader sees if anyone has problems and takes them to administration and just basically keeping everybody abreast of what's going on at the school.

I've been the grade level leader for two years in a row because of all our fourth grade teachers; I am the only one coming back from last year. I haven't really done any mentoring because actually I'm the youngest. I'm still the youngest here. I think it is more collaborative, I would describe it instead of mentoring because I'm still one of the youngest teachers in the school.

## **VIEW OF TEACHING**

When I think about how I view teaching, the first thing I do is make sure the kids are safe and all their basic needs are met. I think the second thing you do is you put their needs first. In this classroom we have a huge diversity of needs. We have kids reading from a first grade level to a ninth grade level – some even probably higher than that now. What I try to do is individualize or differentiate instruction as much as I can and try to meet the individual needs as well.

The best way to describe how I view teaching from my perspective is to say that they may not remember your name, they may not remember what you taught them, but

they will remember how they felt in your classroom. I think that's glowing. It is important, yes, we're here to teach, we're here to educate, we're to build foundation, and to build upon that foundation. But, it is also important to connect and have a strong rapport with students. I think if you saw this morning a lot of the kids that came to my room, I've either never had or I had before and they always come in and they visit almost every day. And that's what I'm talking about with rapport. It goes beyond classroom walls, beyond curriculum. That's something I pride myself on.

It is very important to present information in several different ways. Lets say you're just doing a lecture and half your class might get it and half your class doesn't. You do what you know. You write it on the board and you do some visuals. There are still some kids that still don't get it. So, you try to do as many ways as possible. You try to compare things. You try to draw on their prior knowledge. Students don't learn in one way. There's several different ways that students learn.

When it comes to following the SOLs, I could see myself following the script for the first time. Whatever they didn't get, then, I would try it a different way. I mean you could follow by a script if it's an effective script. I mean there's no reason to change it if they're getting it. But, if they're not getting it, then you change it.

Teaching is not a strict standard of objectives in which you do step one, step two, step three, step four. It doesn't work like that. Kids aren't that way. Yes, that might work in heterogeneous classrooms where all kids are reading above grade level; however, you seldom see those kinds of classes. Theory has its place and if it's not working in reality, you change it for either that individual student or if it's not working at all for any student, then you have to alter your beliefs. I do what works for my students rather than just what

the research says. You have to critique the research as well, what kind of kids are they doing it with? It depends on where the research is coming as well. Just because one group finds this doesn't necessarily mean that if it's replicated another group will find the same thing.

### **FACTORS PLAYED IN SHAPING TEACHING VIEW**

Every experience teaching has helped shape my views about teaching – teaching different kids with different abilities and kids coming from different backgrounds who have different needs. I think it is safe to say that all children have needs. And they are different per child. Some children need more attention. Some children need a hug. Some children need food. It depends on the child. And I think the longer you teach the more experiences you have and the better you are able to relate to those kids.

My views of teaching are very dynamic, I would say. I mean, the foundations that I have that I got from the PDS all were instrumental in first coming here, but I think as a teacher, to be an effective teacher, you have to be flexible. Not all your beliefs are going to help all children and you have to find out what works for each individual child.

Nothing helped me more than the actual year-long experience. Being immersed in the context of school for a year gave me a head start on my first year of teaching. I already felt that I had a year under my belt when I began my career. I was able to concentrate on improving weaknesses from my internship year and focus on developing my strengths. I knew what I wanted to do in my classroom because I saw it or did it in an actual classroom. There was less trial and error from that respect.

I think the whole PDS experience helped me in my teaching career. I reflect on my experiences and adjust to student needs from informal inquiry. I took what I liked

from my mentors (ideas, beliefs, etc.) and even though I disagreed with my PDA a lot, she helped me see my errors and strengths. I don't think I can separate all these experiences. They all helped me in one way or another.

### **IMPACT INQUIRY HAS ON TEACHING**

Inquiry plays an indirect role in my teaching. When I pose a question to myself, I try different things. I don't necessarily journal, I don't necessarily do it formally as if I were in the PDS or even going to an inquiry conference. One of my students, without mentioning names, came into the classroom and she didn't speak. She could speak both English and Spanish; however, she was basically a selective mute would be the best way to describe her. My inquiry questions are: How can I get her to speak in my classroom? How can I get her to talk to children? How can I get her to socialize, verbally socialize? and How can I get her to say "I don't know" rather than just sit there and say nothing?

Since the beginning of the year I have been working with this child. The first thing we did is we got a little notebook for her and we would ask her a question – How was your day? Do you like school? Do you like your family? Just basic questions and she would either draw or write back. By about the first week of school we had her go up in front of the classroom, what everybody did, and just talk and share a little bit about things and we found out that she talked a lot about her sisters. She's the oldest child and her role in the family is more of a guardian-babysitter type thing for her little sisters. Her little sisters I think are not even school age yet. They're like three and four. So often times to develop her English because she speaks Spanish at home, we talk to her a lot of times about her sisters. I ask her how they're doing and that's when she starts talking. She



verbalizes stuff. So, that would be an example of an inquiry of an individual child and how can we get her to speak.

So I'd say I do informal inquiries. We have, I don't know what they call it, it's like an improvement plan here at our school. We're supposed to try things in our classroom and we're supposed to evaluate our progress. I know I've done work with newsletters by seeing how that improved parent communication and I did surveys on that. So that was more of an informal inquiry based on a question. This year we did homework club after school two days a week. We took some of our weaker students and we wanted to see how their progress compared to if we didn't do it. We saw a huge gain. We do this as a school and you can do it as a grade level if you choose to but this was my improvement project – mine and my partners.

I'd say that learning about inquiry helped to shape me by just learning how to teach and how to learn how very good teachers do it. How you're talking about learning about something – it doesn't even have to be scientific – just learning on a subject and how you can broaden it just based on one question. It has helped me think about how to get the most out of the curriculum in which you're teaching. Kids can go and explore, they can open books, they can be entrenched in literature in that particular subject and bring stuff to classroom.

I feel like I would have an inquiry stance if schools were like they were five-ten years ago. I use inquiry to challenge students to go beyond the standards and evaluate my teaching and student learning. In the age of SOLs and “No Child Left Behind,” teachers are forced to teach to the test. Inquiry can be one of those vehicles to accomplish this task, but schools are becoming more “structured” and rely heavily upon textbooks and

school-based SOL assessments to accomplish the majority of the curriculum. It has limited my desire to have inquiry in my classroom (not because I don't value it, but because we have a limited time to make sure all students can answer 60 questions on a math test or a 40 question reading test) because I have to teach to the test. There is not much time for pure inquiry and if it can't be measured on a SOL test, it has little value to our school. It's disheartening.

### **FACTORS INFLUENCING INQUIRY STANCE**

Time, SOL obligations, and the fact that we have to teach to tests make it hard to continue inquiry. That's first and foremost. Inquiry, even though you can use it as a tool to get these objectives done, when you're teaching to a test and you have to teach the way they say things on a test and possible questions and key words, it kind of gets away from that authentic learning and that's just the nature of the beast.

I think inquiry's excellent when it comes to problems or situations in the classroom. This isn't working. Let's switch to something else. Let's try this. I think we all do it indirectly. Most teachers don't like the improvement plan we have to do. I think it's effective if you take the right attitude to it. I look at it like an inquiry rather than like this is something I have to do.

### **REMEMBERINGS FROM INTERNSHIP YEAR AND INQUIRY**

I remember my PDA and my mentors. I remember the PDS being hard. I remember it being excruciatingly hard. PDS helped me form a lot of my beliefs that I have today just like core beliefs, collaboration, how to communicate with teachers, how to communicate with parents, how to communicate with children, the best ways to do that. It helped me in many areas, probably definitely by my first year I relied heavily on

my experiences with the PDS. My inquiry from my intern year was how to intrinsically motivate students. My PDA and mentors supported me most through my inquiry. I know that our inquiries were based upon a question. There were several steps involved. I know we had to read a book. I took a year off in between graduating and my first teaching job but I have a lot of vivid memories of the PDS. I also used some of my journal entries to see where I was growing. I did that my first year but I don't have time now to do that.

## Chapter Five

### LOOKING ACROSS THE PARTICIPANTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs and practices of former interns prepared in a particular professional development school setting that attempts to promote an inquiry stance towards practice. Seven former interns that had at least three years of teaching experience in various teaching contexts were interviewed. Their surveys and interview transcriptions were analyzed and their narratives were shared in the previous chapter. In this chapter I will restate my definition of an inquiry stance. I will then describe how the participants in this study fit into my definition and provide examples from the data. As I discuss each component of what teachers with an inquiry stance toward teaching do, I will share how my definition has changed based on the findings and what I learned from the participants in this study. Then I will share my modified definition of an inquiry stance based on the findings of this study. I will discuss how the interns defined having an inquiry stance toward teaching and which components of the inquiry stance are most strongly represented among the participants in this study. I will conclude the chapter by sharing the assertions that I found in the data.

#### **Restatement of My Original Definition of an Inquiry Stance**

Teachers with an inquiry stance are reflective and constantly evaluate their own practice. They use research to look for answers to their questions and improve their practice. However, they don't just implement new strategies because they are out there. They are able to inquire into why they do or do not work in their classrooms and defend what is best for their students that year. Teachers with an inquiry stance are always

striving to improve their practice for themselves and for their students and use teacher inquiry as a means to do so.

Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:

1. Reflect upon their practice
2. Ask specific questions about their practice
3. Search for answers/solutions to those questions
4. Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs
5. Are able to articulate their findings and why they do the things they do
6. Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)
7. Remain open minded to new ideas
8. Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers

## **How Participants Fit into Definition**

### **Reflect Upon their Practice**

The data show that the former interns in this study do reflect upon their practice. Many of them come right out and use the word reflection. For example, Eve says, “I reflect on my teaching a lot.” Joanna claims that she’s always reflecting. “I’m constantly reflecting like we did in the PDS – I think I’m constantly doing it.” Lydia finds reflection to be the most important part of the inquiry cycle. “I often find the reflection piece to be the most helpful. It allows me to plan for the next step, the next lesson, the next question, etc.” Hannah feels that reflection is what keeps you from becoming stagnant in your teaching. “I think that it’s really important to keep reflecting on what you’re doing and keep changing and keep learning, not to get stuck in a groove where you keep doing the

same thing over and over each year without really thinking it over and without ever looking and asking if this is really working.”

Chloe talks about inquiry being the lens for her teaching and that it is most obvious when she reflects. “I think that this is most apparent when I am reflecting on my teaching, whether I am reflecting on a lesson that went really well, or trying to solve a problem that I am having.” Others, like Luke are not quite so specific. “I think that we (teachers) reflect all the time.” He does not come right out and say he reflects but I believe he was including himself when he made that statement. Jacob isn’t as specific either. However, he was thinking about his practice when he shared his current inquiry question about helping the child in his room that never spoke.

Many of the interns did mention that they might not be as detailed about their reflections as they were in the PDS. Joanna shares “I don’t think I’m writing it down and being as detailed and descriptive, as I was during the PDS, but certainly that was a great skill to learn because you’re doing it throughout the whole day.” Thus the participants in this study do reflect upon their practice even if it is not in the written format that they used when they were interns in the PDS.

### **Ask Specific Questions about their Practice**

The data also show that the interns ask questions about their practice. Lydia shares that having an inquiry stance toward teaching allows you to ask questions about your teaching; it makes asking questions something that is good to do, not something to be embarrassed of. “It helps you if you want to try something new because it allows you to be able to take a risk or to admit that something isn’t working and it’s not a bad thing. You don’t always have to pretend that everything is going smoothly and going well.

Opening yourself up to asking yourself those types of questions lets you see the positives and negatives to what you are doing.”

As a result of learning the inquiry process Eve knows that there will always be questions that you can ask. “The whole process made me view teaching as something that is never complete, you can always ask a question about something and that question can turn into a really big project that you learn a lot from.” Chloe feels that questioning her practice makes her a better teacher. “My students certainly benefit from having a teacher who is constantly questioning and searching to improve my practice.”

Luke and Jacob did not specifically say that they question their practice. However, Jacob gives examples of the questions he’s asking about the student he is trying to get to open up and speak in the classroom. His questions were: How can I get her to speak in my classroom? How can I get her to talk to children? How can I get her to socialize, verbally socialize? and How can I get her to say “I don’t know” rather than just sit there and say nothing?

Hannah says that she is always questioning her practice. “I am always asking myself questions, looking for patterns, and reflecting on the meaning.” She shares an example, “My question and my interest was to try to validate the children’s home experiences a little bit more and show them that I appreciated and recognized the value of them so that it wasn’t like this is the school environment and everything I do here is good and everything you do at home doesn’t belong here.” She was also beginning an inquiry on gender roles. She does not come right out and mention asking questions when she says, “But I need to go over my lesson plans and as I’m doing it to think about what I’m doing and how I want to change it for tomorrow or the next week.” However, you can tell

that her specific questions as she plans her lessons are: What am I doing? and How do I want to change it?

Joanna talks about questioning and reflecting together. “In my teaching I question and reflect on the things that I do and lessons that I teach. I am more aware of what my students need and how I can best teach it to them because I am questioning and reflecting constantly.” It is not clear if she separates the two or if she views them as the same thing. This is an area that can be hard to clearly separate because they are often done together. Lydia also mentions questioning and reflecting simultaneously.

“I think that since it was kind of a part of my training to become a teacher that it’s something built in that I’m constantly thinking about. More on an informal level. Just doing that self questioning and reflecting. Not any written journal or anything, but just while you are driving your car thinking and questioning why isn’t this working? What’s going wrong with this? How can I change this to make it better? That’s like a small level of inquiry that I do.” Lydia is always working to tailor lessons toward her students and having an inquiry stance and asking specific questions enables her to individualize her lessons. She explains this, “So even though we have a lot of things provided for us I still feel like I need to tailor it to my kids. My teaching is very much individualized. I get to know a group of kids, find out what works for them and what doesn’t work. It’s a day by day changing, something that might really work with them one week and then they quickly get tired of it and then I change and rethink how I’m doing it, week by week or even within a lesson.”

The data show that the interns ask, among others, the following questions: What am I doing? How do I want to change it (to improve it)? Why isn’t this working? What’s



going wrong with this? and How can I change this to make it better? These questions closely correlate with the questions Nolan and Hover (2004) say teachers with an inquiry stance ask themselves.

They continuously ask themselves five questions:

1. What am I doing?
2. Why am I doing it that way?
3. What impact is it having on learners?
4. How might I do things differently?
5. If I did things differently, what impact might it have on learners? (p. 144)

The one question that they do not seem to ask frequently is ‘Why am I doing it that way?’ They don’t appear to question their own assumptions and beliefs.

As I thought more about the first two components of my definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching, it became apparent that reflection and questioning do happen together when teachers have an inquiry stance because in order to have an inquiry stance toward teaching you have to take your reflection a step further and do something with your reflections. Learning inquiry provided the interns with the means to do this and I think this is why they do often mention questioning and reflecting together. It’s a natural process that through their reflections they are able to determine their specific questions. Joanna puts this into her own words.

“I definitely think that my preparation in learning how to do inquiry impacts my view of teaching. I think it kind of taught me another avenue, I kind of see them similar to reflection and what you do after you reflect and how you can take your reflections and your thoughts to the next step and so reflection is more of an

easier thing; I think it's the inquiry that really brings it about. So, that project for me helped me really realize that you can take this a step further."

Reflection alone is not inquiry; however, you cannot come up with specific questions unless you are reflective about what you are doing. Liston and Zeichner (1990) explain the importance of teachers being able to do more than reflect: "Lately, the sense within teacher education seems to be that as long as teachers 'reflect' on their action and purposes, then everything is all right. When this is the case, calls for further reflection become groundless, that is, such proclamations lack any substantial basis for discerning what will count as good reasons for educational action" (p. 236). Subsequently I think that the first two components of my definition of what teachers with an inquiry stance do should be combined. Therefore, in my new definition of an inquiry stance, the first component will be that teachers with an inquiry stance ask specific questions about their practice based upon their reflections.

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When comparing the remaining components of my definition of things teachers would do if they have an inquiry stance and the data from the participants, it was slightly harder to find evidence. The former interns in this study clearly stated that they reflect and ask questions about their practice. The remaining components of my definition are embedded in their practice but they do not consistently articulate them without prompting and they may not be as consciously aware that these components are part of having an inquiry stance toward teaching.

## Search for Answers/Solutions to Questions

Joanna shared that because she has moved around so much to different states, she often used inquiry as a way to learn about the different curricula she was supposed to follow. She gives two examples of times she searched for answers about how to teach a particular concept. Joanna wanted to learn how to best teach writing to her students and so she did her own research, found a particular author that wrote about teaching writing, and asked the curriculum and resource teachers to allow some of the fourth grade teachers to attend a workshop that the author was leading. “So, I did some research on my own and also did some work with other teachers in fourth grade and we actually were able to go and meet the author of this book.” Joanna also felt she needed more training on cooperative learning. She checked with her principal about the possibility of getting the training. “So, last year we were presented with this and a lot of us went to our principal and said we need more training in this because it’s really awesome and so this summer we spent three days in training.”

Hannah also searched to find a better way to teach an animal unit.

“For example, I had to teach a dinosaur unit, this was first grade, actually it was a unit on animals, and I knew that they had rewritten the dinosaur unit in the school district I did my internship in to be an inquiry based dinosaur unit where you could discover the mystery dinosaur and I took the animal unit that we had to study, basically we just were like this is what mammals are like and then we studied all the mammals, this is what amphibians are like and then we studied all the amphibians and it was really boring and didn’t have a lot of motivation: so I read the dinosaur unit and then wrote my own version of the mammal unit to be

like that so that there was a big question, “What is the mystery animal?” and then all of our learning and discovery went into a journal where we were trying to answer clues and figure out the identity of this mystery animal based on did it have attributes that would make us think it was a mammal or a reptile.”

Eve uses research through means of her professional reading to search for the best ways to implement reading and writing strategies. She shares that when she feels she’s read all she can in that area she can always switch to learning more about teaching math. She also uses her blog as a place to search for answers, “..besides getting great ideas and professional knowledge from readers of the blog...” Luke utilizes the teachers on his team to help him discover the best way to teach the units in his curriculum. “We’re constantly revising things as simple as work sheets or lesson plans as a team, because just because it’s in the unit that way, doesn’t mean that’s the best that it could be and when they wrote it they may never have tried it with kids anyway.”

Chloe shares that even if your past lessons have been successful you need to continue searching for ways to improve them. “I think it’s part of a healthy teacher because you just can’t sit around and rest on your laurels. You might have things that you did last year and the year before and the year before that, but you need to keep revisiting it and reviewing it and see how you can improve it.”

Jacob feels it is essential to keep searching for different ways to teach things so that more children can understand his lessons.

“It is very important to present information in several different ways. Lets say you’re just doing a lecture and half your class might get it and half your class doesn’t. You do what you know. You write it on the board and you do some

visuals. There are still some kids that still don't get it. So, you try to do as many ways as possible. You try to compare things. You try to draw on their prior knowledge. Students don't learn in one way."

Lydia shares that she is always searching for new resources to inspire and shape her teaching. "I'm one of those people who is always thirsty for new resources. I'm always searching on Amazon.com for a great new resource and trying something out. I have a couple of favorites that I use a lot too. So, other renowned educators also inspire me and shape my teaching."

The examples in this section show that the participants in this study do search for ways to answer their questions and improve their teaching. They are not afraid to turn to research, other teachers, or administrators for help in their search for the best teaching practices to meet the needs of their current groups of students. Because of this finding I will change the component 'Search for answers/solutions to those questions' to 'Search for answers to their questions and innovative ways to improve their teaching using a variety of sources such as research, other teachers, specialists, administrators, etc.'

### **Collect Data Systematically**

Collecting data systematically was not part of my original definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching, but there is evidence that the former interns collect data as they search for answers to their questions and that they learned this skill in the PDS. Luke says that, "learning inquiry did have a pretty big impact because it teaches you....to go about and systematically gather data and perhaps make some changes based on what you find is working or not working. It allows you to see what you thought or maybe you didn't realize was happening."

Lydia talks about how she wanted to gather data on her own for her first inquiry project as a classroom teacher, not an intern. Now she has no problem finding people to help her collect data through note taking and observation.

“So when I did my inquiry for the very first time as a teacher, I think it was my second year of teaching, I still felt very strongly that I wanted to try to do it all on my own without any outside note takers or observers, I was really just trying to do it on my own to prove that somebody could, even though I was in a district with high levels of support. Since then I’ve worked on inquiry projects with other colleagues and interns and I had outside observers and so in this district it’s really easy to do inquiry.”

Eve and her team set out to collect data for their inquiry into different ways to teach reading and writing.

“We wanted to collect data and we wanted to show that there are some things missing from Harcourt. We wanted to show that we’re missing site words and a certain kind of writing approach and just some other things that our basic reading program is really, really missing.”

Hannah conducted a formal inquiry into gender roles for a graduate course. She was planning to collect data to see how using literature may or may not influence children and their thinking about “girl” things and “boy” things.

“But this semester the course we’re taking is actually a research course, so that the one that I’m going to do this semester is actually going to have a pre-interview with some children and then an action and then a later assessment. So this inquiry will be more formal. It’s going to be on the gender roles, how they develop

gender roles and whether doing some critical literacy stuff with certain books that address gender role issues, like Oliver Button is a Sissy, or that kind of thing, whether having some class discussions and reading some books like that will have any effect on what they feel is appropriate for different genders. It's just something that they talk about every day, like, "That's not for girls," or "Boys can't do that." My instinct is always to say, "Yes it is," but then that's not very valid for me to just tell them so I want to explore if there is any way for me to help them learn that; because there are a lot of messages going against that in their daily life with what their families are saying or what they're seeing on TV or wherever they're getting these messages."

Jacob used surveys to collect data to see if newsletters improved parent communication. He also purposely collected data to see if the after school homework club was beneficial for students.

I know I've done work with newsletters by seeing how that improved parent communication and I did surveys on that. So that was more of an informal inquiry based on a question. This year we did homework club after school two days a week. We took some of our weaker students and we wanted to see how their progress compared to if we didn't do it. We saw a huge gain. We do this as a school and you can do it as a grade level if you choose to but this was my improvement project – mine and my partner's.

The data from this study shows that the interns systematically go about collecting data throughout the inquiry process in order to help find solutions and answers to their questions. Therefore a new component, 'systematically collect data throughout the

inquiry process,' needs to be added to the revised definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching.

### **Trying and Adapting Solutions**

Do the participants in this study try out their solutions after finding them? I would say that they do. Joanna felt more prepared to teach writing and she talked about using the different cooperative learning strategies with her students and Hannah actually taught her revised animal unit. She shares that she rarely does the same thing twice so she must adapt the lessons she has already done to improve them for the next time. Jacob shares how if something isn't working then he will try something else. "I think inquiry's excellent when it comes to problems or situations in the classroom. This isn't working. Let's switch to something else. Let's try this." Eve tries things she finds from reading. "I would consider my professional reading and then trying it and reading and then trying it to be informal inquiries."

Luke mentions that each year is different so you have to adapt your lessons to how your students learn. "The same thing with different kids each year, certain things might work better, certain styles, certain types of activities. Maybe one year you do more group work, another year you might do more individual inquiry because I'm really into that. Some kids might be more proficient with technology in general and classes sometimes tend to take a different direction."

Lydia shares that she is always adapting things to best meet the needs of her students. "It's a day by day changing, something that might really work with them one week and then they quickly get tired of it and then I change and rethink how I'm doing it, week by week or even within a lesson."



Not only do the interns try out solutions, they take on the responsibility to find a way to reach their students. An example of this is when Jacob mentioned that he might try something and if it doesn't work he'll try something else. The interns don't just stop trying if the first thing they try doesn't work nor do they continue doing something they know isn't working. As Joanna says, it's their job to find something that will work.

“If they don't get it or they don't understand it, I think that that's my job. That's my strong belief that I can get them to do pretty much what they need in order to learn the curriculum. I just have to find as many different strategies as I can to do that. So, that's probably my main underlying building block of what I think about teaching. It's just trying to find the strategies to meet challenges of kids and their different needs.”

These former interns also do not randomly try anything they find. They think it through and implement it in a way that will best meet the needs of their students. Luke shares that he gets ideas from other teachers and then molds them into what works for him. “...Just trying to think and get good ideas and mold them into what works for me, what works for my particular students in a given year...” Chloe provides another example of this.

“My bottom line is that if I'm doing anything in the classroom it's because I've thought about it. I'm not just doing anything just because it's there, just because that's the lesson that the district gave me. I've thought about it. I've thought about how to implement it and I'm constantly thinking about how I could make it better.”

These examples show how the participants in this study are effective teachers because of their inquiry stance toward teaching. Posner (1996) supports this by saying “teachers (especially effective ones) balance intuitive and reflective thought, using any resources they can find and adapting materials to suit their own purposes and methods” (p. 25). As a result of these findings, it was obvious that the component ‘Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs’ needed to be expanded. My revised component is now ‘Own the responsibility to find out how to best meet the needs of their students and thereby continuously and thoughtfully try solutions to their questions and adapt teaching strategies in order to meet the changing needs of their students.’

### **Ability to Articulate their Findings**

As I searched for data that would fit under this component I realized that it too needed elaboration. It wasn’t difficult to find examples of why they do the things they do. However, the first part that states “are able to articulate their findings” limits the potential of this component. When I just say they can articulate their findings it makes it seem like I want the results section of a completed formal inquiry project. In principle, a teacher could have an inquiry stance toward teaching even if they have never conducted a formal inquiry project. What is important is that teachers know and enact their beliefs about teaching and can verbalize their knowledge to others. “We sense that teacher education ought to aim directly at developing teachers who are able to identify and articulate their purposes, who can choose appropriate means, who know and understand the content to be taught, who understand the cultural and cognitive orientations for their students, and who can be counted on for giving good reasons for their actions.” (Liston and Zeichner (1990)

p. 236) Therefore the component will be changed to ‘Are able to articulate their philosophy of teaching and the rationale behind their approach to teaching.’

The participants in this study were all articulate in sharing their beliefs and views about teaching as seen in their narratives. They can also talk about why they do the things that they do, or the rationale behind their approach to teaching. Chloe states that she doesn’t do anything in the room without thinking about it and revising it first. If she were questioned as to why she was teaching a particular lesson or a particular concept in a certain way she would know how to answer them because of the fact that she has thought everything through. I believe all of the participants in this study could do that.

Joanna understands her learners and explained the end result of how she helped a learner struggling with a math concept. She tried several different adaptations before she found something that worked for this student. “Then we decided to create something more hands on; it was more about a learner that needed a manipulative and a tactile thing in order to be able to accomplish the task.” Eve found that what she has been reading is working and that is why she implements what she reads about in her classroom. “So, I guess really mostly it’s been the reading and then when I go to try it in my classroom it’s really working so then it’s kind of a cycle I just keep going with it.” Lydia is articulate about what her students need to know.

“I guess what I’m getting at is that so many just teach a unit about rocks and minerals. I used to think that the students needed all these little content blurbs. I thought that it was really important that they could tell you all these facts about it. Now my belief is more that it’s the big picture. What kind of skills did they learn throughout that unit? Did they learn how to be an observer? It’s the big concepts.

How do they learn to be a researcher? Do they learn how to test out a problem?

I'm doing social studies – they don't need to know every state in the United States, but they need to know the big picture, the bigger concepts. I want them to walk away and be prepared to be a thinker and not just a person who thinks in just little bitty facts here and there - it helps to see the overall connections among their lives.”

These examples show that the former interns in this study understand their learners and that there is thought behind their teaching actions in their classrooms. They are able to articulate their rationale for using a manipulative for a student, for why they implement different reading strategies into their classrooms, for why they are not overly concerned about little content blurbs, etc. This is exactly what Liston and Zeichner (1990) believe should be the result of teacher education. The PDS preparation these interns experienced helped them develop these skills.

### **Share their Work with Others (Informally and/or Formally)**

The interns do share their work with others. Lydia shares that inquiry makes your work public. “It's very public – I'm working on this question, I'm researching how this child develops as a writer, or whatever your question is – it's important that you share that with other people.” Joanna enjoyed the fact that other teachers did use some of her ideas. “So, it was fun to see them actually take on some of my ideas. As veteran teachers they were doing some of the things that I was coming up with and they were thinking, hmm, maybe my philosophy should be switched a little bit, so that was neat as well.”

Chloe shared her knowledge by participating on several curriculum committees. “Since I've gotten here I sat on a couple of curriculum committees. I've helped write the

K to five science curriculum.” She began her teaching career in a district that was just starting to implement some of the teaching strategies she learned in the PDS. She shares her work with the teachers that come to her. “Now the district is beginning to follow what I’ve been doing so it is kind of nice to be on the forefront in that. Some teachers do come to me because I’ve already done this. There is always a mix. A lot of teachers come to me.” She has also shared her work more formally.

“The three of us actually helped in-service the other teachers in development of the spelling program. We piloted it the first year and now that everybody’s implemented it, we presented an in-service program. We’re here if teachers want to come and see us. We’ve also opened up our classrooms to anyone who wants to come and see a guided reading lesson – sort of a peer coaching kind of thing.”

The former interns in this study certainly do seem willing to share but it is not always as easy for them as it should be. Hannah shares about an experience she had where the teachers didn’t want to try anything new and if she did something different the other teachers didn’t like it.

“...we would accidentally at lunch or something be talking about things and if I knew that I was doing something that was a little different I just wouldn’t mention it. And if it was something that was pretty obvious like a class play I soon learned I needed to tell everybody ahead of time and I would sort of belittle it like oh it’s just this little thing and it’s not really a big deal, because everybody would feel guilty, or something. It was strange. So I would try to make it seem like it was nothing and it really didn’t matter so I didn’t make enemies.”

However, this didn't stop her from ever trying to share again. She learned how to share with teachers that seemed, in her opinion, to be rather close-minded.

“With the one team I was on I started off kind of being that way but then I read them and then I realized, oh, they're kind of interested. I'll just suggest a little bit of what I tried and then they would want to take a little bit more. And so, with that team, I could try some new things and share some ideas. But my first year there I didn't understand how to play that game at all.”

The former interns seem to feel confident enough that they are willing to open their doors and share their ideas with others. This willingness to be on committees and to share their knowledge with other is an indication of teacher leadership. This component, 'Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)' is still fitting but it can also be improved. The word 'work' is not adequate. So this component will be changed to 'Share their knowledge and ideas with others (informally and/or formally).'

### **Remain Open Minded to New Ideas**

The former interns in this study are still open minded to new ideas. Hannah shares that she is always trying to learn more. “So I'm always trying to find opportunities to talk to people and learn more about what people do.” Eve also feels that she can continually work on her teaching. “I view teaching as a work in progress – an art that will never be perfected, but I can continually work on and add to. I truly enjoy trying new things in my classroom and then tweaking them in hopes of better results. I enjoy the fact that I am in a profession that is not static – in lots of ways. The group you have is never the same, the circumstances of the year are never the same, the community influences change, outside research changes, policies change.”

The fact that they are asking questions and searching for fresh ideas and adapting their lessons shows how they are open minded to trying new ideas. We've learned that they are not teaching the exact same lessons in the exact same way from year to year or day to day. For these reasons, I think it is redundant to have this as a component and will eliminate it.

### **Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers**

The participants in this study had been teaching for three to seven years at the time of their interviews. It is apparent that they are continuing to grow as teachers because they are doing the above components. Lydia, the former intern that has been teaching the longest, still says that, "It's a day by day changing, something that might really work with them one week and then they quickly get tired of it and then I change and rethink how I'm doing it, week by week or even within a lesson."

Hannah is in her sixth year of teaching and she is still searching to improve her teaching. "From year to year and day to day, I am constantly re-evaluating, reflecting, and researching for more information (with colleagues and books) to improve my practice." She talks about how changing schools is helping her to continue growing as a teacher. "I really like the arts and science emphasis – it's making me grow a lot as a teacher and do things that I hadn't tried before, hadn't thought of trying, and people are very creative and independent here so there is no pressure for everybody to do the same thing at the same time."

Eve speaks of her belief that teachers are lifelong learners. "I believe that teachers are lifelong learners. I think that if teachers want their kids to be lifelong learners they have to also be every year trying to learn more and more about how kids learn." She

shares how she'll be able to continue learning. "There's always going to be new research and I think even if I come to a point where I feel like I've read all the major works out there, there's still never going to be a time when I'm done trying it in my classroom so the more you try it, it kind of cycles and then you learn more and then you learn, and you know what I mean, it branches and there is always math – I can always get into math. I haven't done as much training in math."

I agree with Eve here that lifelong learning is vital to teachers that have an inquiry stance toward teaching. Research also supports this notion. Schmuck, 1997, states that "Inquiry is also something that is enduring, "Reflection, inquiry, and problem solving are ongoing, never-ending procedures" (p. 20). Coles & Knowles (2000) also view the teaching as a lifelong process:

Becoming a teacher or other kind of educator is a lifelong process of continuing growth rooted in the "personal." Who we are and come to be as teachers and teacher educators is a reflection of a complex ongoing process of interaction and interpretation of elements, conditions, opportunities, and events that take place throughout our lives in all realms of our existence – the intellectual, physical, psychological, spiritual, political, and social. (p.15)

Thus I am changing this component from 'Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers' to 'Are lifelong learners'.

### **Revision of My Definition of an Inquiry Stance**

After analyzing the data and looking at my previous definition of an inquiry stance, it became necessary to revise the components of what a teacher with an inquiry stance looks like.



Table 5

## Inquiry Stance: Old and New

OLD	NEW
<p>Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reflect upon their practice</li> <li>2. Ask specific questions about their practice</li> <li>3. Search for answers/solutions to those questions</li> <li>4. Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs</li> <li>5. Are able to articulate their findings and why they do the things they do</li> <li>6. Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)</li> <li>7. Remain open minded to new ideas</li> <li>8. Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers</li> </ol>	<p>Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ask specific questions about their practice based upon their reflections.</li> <li>2. Search for answers to their questions and innovative ways to improve their teaching using a variety of sources such as research, other teachers, specialists, administrators, etc.</li> <li>3. Systematically collect data throughout the inquiry process.</li> <li>4. Own the responsibility to find out how to best meet the needs of their students and thereby continuously and thoughtfully try solutions to their questions and adapt teaching strategies in order to meet the changing needs of their students.</li> <li>5. Are able to articulate their philosophy of teaching and the rationale behind their approach to teaching.</li> <li>6. Share their knowledge and ideas with others (informally and/or formally).</li> <li>7. Are lifelong learners</li> </ol>

Teachers with an inquiry stance are reflective and constantly evaluate their own practice. They use research to look for answers to their questions and improve their

practice. However, they don't just implement new strategies because they are out there. They are able to inquire into why they do or do not work in their classrooms and defend what is best for their students that year. Teachers with an inquiry stance are always striving to improve their practice for themselves and for their students and use teacher inquiry as a means to do so.

#### Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:

1. Ask specific questions about their practice based upon their reflections.
2. Search for answers to their questions and innovative ways to improve their teaching using a variety of sources such as research, other teachers, specialists, administrators, etc.
3. Systematically collect data throughout the inquiry process.
4. Own the responsibility to find out how to best meet the needs of their students and thereby continuously and thoughtfully try solutions to their questions and adapt teaching strategies in order to meet the changing needs of their students.
5. Are able to articulate their philosophy of teaching and the rationale behind their approach to teaching.
6. Share their knowledge and ideas with others (informally and/or formally).
7. Are lifelong learners``

#### **How do they define their inquiry stance and how is it seen through their teaching?**

The data show that the former interns in this study claim that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching. When looking closely at the each component in my definition of what teachers with an inquiry stance do, you can see that there is evidence that former interns do all six components. This answers the research question, 'Do interns have an

inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching?’ It was easiest to find evidence that they asked specific questions about their practice based upon their reflections because they were able to easily verbalize that. In fact, many of them backed up their belief that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching by stating that they are constantly reflecting and asking questions about their practice. The remaining components of my definition were more embedded in their practice and they did not consistently articulate them. They may not be as consciously aware of the other components of having an inquiry stance toward teaching.

When specifically asked if they thought they had an inquiry stance toward teaching, only one was not sure if he did. Here are their responses.

Lydia: “I would indeed say that I have an inquiry stance toward teaching. Yes indeed. Inquiry drives everything I do as an educator. It is a way of looking at and analyzing while planning, carrying out a lesson and changing the direction on the fly, and reflecting post lesson. I often find the reflection piece to be the most helpful. It allows me to plan for the next step, the next lesson, the next question, etc.”

Eve: “I view teaching as a work in progress – an art that will never be perfected, but I can continually work on and add to. I truly enjoy trying new things in my classroom and then tweaking them in hopes of better results..... For all these reasons, I feel that I have an inquiry stance toward teaching.”

Joanna: “I think that I would say I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching. In my teaching I question and reflect on the things that I do and lessons that I teach.”

Hannah: “I think I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching.... I am always asking myself questions, looking for patterns, and reflecting on the meaning.”

Chloe: “Inquiry is a mindset.... I still feel like it really does shape the ideas that I have and how I approach teaching every week when I do my lesson plans.”

Luke: “Overall, I think that I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching although I wouldn’t say I am obsessed by it. I really like to have kids asking questions and finding answers to things they’re truly interested in. It helps that so much of our science, social studies, and even math curriculums are inquiry based and very conceptual.”

Jacob: “I feel like I would have an inquiry stance if schools were like they were five-ten years ago. I use inquiry to challenge students to go beyond the standards and evaluate my teaching and student learning. In the age of SOLs and ‘No Child Left Behind,’ teachers are forced to teach to the test. Inquiry can be on of those vehicles to accomplish this task, but schools are becoming more “structured” and rely heavily upon textbooks and school-based SOL assessments to accomplish the majority of the curriculum.”

You can see above how they define having an inquiry stance toward teaching in their own words. Each intern defined having an inquiry stance toward teaching differently. In fact, when inquiry was first brought up some of the participants in this study thought about how they teach their children rather than their stance toward teaching. This data lead directly to my first assertion.

**Assertion One: Though there were commonalities across participants, there is great variation in the degree to which they enacted inquiry in their practice.**

The participants in this study have varying degrees of an inquiry stance toward teaching. In order to probe into this deeper, I looked at each of the participants' responses to the question of whether or not they felt they had an inquiry stance toward teaching as well as what evidence I could find to how they actually enacted inquiry in their teaching practices. They all felt that they conducted informal inquiry frequently in their teaching so I had to decide if that would serve as sufficient evidence of practicing an inquiry stance toward teaching. This turned out to not have a distinct 'yes' or 'no' answer because just as their reasons for saying that they have an inquiry stance differed, so did their view of what informal inquiry is. Some viewed informal inquiries simply as reflecting and questioning their practice, while others viewed it more as actually going through the inquiry process they learned as interns but just not writing a formal paper on it.

Conducting informal inquiry does show that these former interns are constantly thinking about their practice and this is certainly a good indicator that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching. However, reflection can be hard to see and therefore anyone could say they reflect upon their teaching all the time. Dana and Silva (2003) acknowledge this instance, "The daily reflection teachers engage in is not observable by others unless it is given some form (perhaps through talk or journaling)" (p.7). By looking into how the interns enacted inquiry I was able to see some of the more visible signs of the inquiry stances that these former interns have toward teaching. It also addresses the research question, 'Do they continue to engage in teacher inquiry projects?'

As I looked into how an inquiry stance toward teaching is portrayed in the participants' teaching practices, it is important to remember that inquiry can be used as a means to find answers to all sorts of questions. Hubbard & Power (1999) explain that there are many ways that teachers can conduct inquiry (or research) as they put their reflection into action. "Teacher-researchers use their inquiries to study everything from the best way to teach reading and the most useful methods for organizing group activities, to the different way girls and boys respond to a science curriculum" (p. 2).

Of the seven participants in this study, I believe that Lydia has one of the strongest inquiry stances toward teaching. Lydia views inquiry as reflecting, analyzing, actually carrying it out, and reflecting again. She shares that she had conducted formal and informal inquiries. "I've also used inquiry in the formal level; you know taking the course, doing research, following through with a paper and so forth. I guess I have done definitely four, four or five formal inquiries. I have also supported the interns that I have had and their inquiries as well help me, it's naturally changing the things I'm doing or questioning." The fact that Lydia has conducted the most formal inquiries is only one reason I believe she has the strongest inquiry stance toward teaching of the participants studied because it is possible to have a strong inquiry stance toward teaching without conducting formal inquiries.

Lydia really seemed to understand what an inquiry stance toward teaching was. "An inquiry approach to teaching and learning requires time for thinking something through, trying it out or experimenting/investigating, reflecting and discussing, and perhaps making modifications AND THEN it goes full circle all over again. It's a constant cycle that inquirers go through in their daily thoughts and work." She did not

confuse it with a teaching method for her students although she does teach through inquiry as well. She has even spoken at conferences about having an inquiry stance toward teaching.

Not only was Lydia clearly able to articulate her view of an inquiry stance toward teaching, she was also able to share how inquiry is a part of her teaching and how important it is to her teaching practice. "Inquiry also continually influences my views on teaching. I think that since it was kind of a part of my training to become a teacher that it's something built in that I'm constantly thinking about." She is always trying to change, modify and try new things by asking herself questions like: Why isn't this working? What's going wrong with this? and How can I change this to make it better? She says that learning inquiry has had a huge impact on her teaching and that inquiry drives everything she does as an educator. Those are strong beliefs about having an inquiry stance toward teaching. It is worth mentioning that Lydia's teaching context is in the same district in which she completed her PDS internship, she has been teaching the longest, and she has also completed the greatest number of formal inquiry projects. These factors almost certainly have influenced the development of her inquiry stance toward teaching.

I believe that Eve also has a strong inquiry stance toward teaching. She views having an inquiry stance as being a lifelong learner that tries new things and makes them work for her classroom. Being a lifelong learner is the last component of having an inquiry stance toward teaching but when those components are viewed as a cycle, it would be necessary for Eve to have the other components in her teaching as well. You truly can see evidence of Eve's inquiry stance toward teaching within her blog reflections

and by the amount of professional reading she does on her own and with colleagues. Not only does she continually research different teaching practices, she actually tries to implement many of the practices she reads about. “I would consider my professional reading and then trying it and reading and then trying it to be informal inquiries.”

Evidence that Eve has an inquiry stance toward teaching was clearly visible as she spoke about her beliefs about teaching and her teaching practice. However, she did not seem to be aware of the fact that she does have an inquiry stance toward teaching. That was the biggest difference between Eve and Lydia. They both have a strong inquiry stance toward teaching but Eve was not sure what an inquiry stance toward teaching was. When first asked about it she said, “I’d say that, to be quite honest, I associate inquiry a lot more with science, especially after PDS. We don’t really do as much science and social studies in first grade as we should. We spend so much of our day on reading that I haven’t been very good at doing inquiry in my science lessons.”

I found that Joanna had a solid inquiry stance toward teaching. Joanna believes that she has an inquiry stance toward teaching because she reflects upon and questions her practice. Joanna has moved to several different school districts throughout her teaching career thus far. She needed to learn how to implement different curriculums and used inquiry as a means to do so. Joanna has taught in several different states so many of her inquiries have served the purpose of figuring out the best ways to teach the different schools’ curriculums. “You could say that some of my inquiries have come out of what the school is asking us to do and it’s how I go about preparing to do it. This has been true for me and especially with being at so many different schools, there are so many different things, schools do things so differently, I mean, New York was very different.” An



example of a time Joanna used inquiry to help her meet the expectations in her school district was when she inquired into the best way to teach writing to her students.

Like Lydia, Joanna believes that her preparation in learning inquiry impacts her teaching. “I use inquiry more on myself and of teaching methods and teaching strategies – always trying to get better with those kinds of things as I think for my students it’s more challenging to do the inquiry based lessons. Just because our school uses text books and has a state-tested oriented kind of curriculum. But, we do try and incorporate that as frequently as we can. It is not as much as I would like to. So, you could say I see inquiry as my role as what I do within my own teaching and what I have my students do in their learning.” This statement shows that Joanna understood that having an inquiry stance toward teaching is different from using it as a teaching method for her students.

Hannah also had a definite inquiry stance toward teaching. Hannah’s understanding of an inquiry stance toward teaching is similar to Joanna’s. She also believes that she has an inquiry stance toward teaching because she reflects upon and questions her practice. Other than Lydia, Hannah has completed the most formal inquiries as part of her graduate school training. “I’ve completed other inquiries myself and with children since I’ve left the PDS. I’m in a grad program right now, so I’m working on one right now and I did one last semester, too.” At the time of the study, Hannah was beginning an inquiry on gender roles.

The fact that Hannah continued to inquire into her teaching was not the only evidence of Hannah’s inquiry stance toward teaching. She was able to clearly state how having an inquiry stance toward teaching influenced her practice. She seems to believe

that it is her responsibility to have an inquiry stance toward teaching. Hannah describes the impact learning inquiry has had on her teaching below.

“The impact learning inquiry really has had on my teaching is how I problem solve in my teaching. I have the responsibility to be aware of what’s going on and not just come here, go over my lesson plans and make new ones for the next day. But I need to go over my lesson plans and as I’m doing it to think about what I’m doing and how I want to change it for tomorrow or the next week.

Like Lydia and Joanna, Hannah also separated having an inquiry stance toward teaching and using inquiry as a teaching method. “For myself, I’m constantly changing and learning. For the children, it’s harder because it looks different when they’re really young in kindergarten, when I taught second grade I did more the way it looks, the way that you typically think of the way inquiry looks.”

Chloe has some aspects of having an inquiry stance toward teaching but she is not strong in all areas. She believes that having an inquiry stance toward teaching is the same thing as having an inquiry-oriented mindset toward teaching. She claims that is the main role inquiry has in her teaching. “The biggest role inquiry has played on my teaching is the mind set.” She says that, “You might have things that you did last year and the year before and the year before that, but you need to keep revisiting it and reviewing it and see how you can improve it.” That statement shows that Chloe does reflect on her teaching and is constantly trying to improve it. She said that she has not conducted formal inquiry projects since she was an intern in the PDS because she hasn’t had the time to.

I think Chloe is definitely strong in sharing her knowledge and ideas with others as she has opened her doors to other classroom teachers to show how she teaches guided

reading and piloted a new spelling program and trained other teachers in her district in this program. This strength of sharing her knowledge is where I found weaknesses in her inquiry stance toward teaching. From her interview transcription you can tell that she is a strong PDS supporter. She brought many “PDS ideas” with her to her school district and was very willing to share them with others. What I didn’t find is evidence of her searching for new and innovative ways to reach her students. It seemed to me that she accepted many of the strategies she learned in the PDS as the best and only way to teach children. This shows that she does not question her own assumptions and beliefs. For example, she never shared an example of trying to reach a struggling student or of trying to find the best way to teach a particular unit. This is not to say for sure that she had not done this just that I did not find evidence in my data to say that she does.

I think that Jacob does have an inquiry stance toward teaching but that he does not always enact this view of teaching. Jacob seemed to confuse having an inquiry stance toward teaching with using inquiry as a teaching method. He thought he was limited in his ability to use inquiry as a teaching strategy and therefore wasn’t sure that he has an inquiry stance toward teaching despite the fact that many of the components of having an inquiry stance toward teaching are visible within his transcript the more he spoke about his teaching practice.

When directly asked the question he shared that he felt that he does use inquiry as a teaching strategy but he did not claim to have an inquiry stance toward teaching because of the structure of his school and the great push to teach the standards.

“Inquiry plays an indirect role in my teaching. When I pose a question to myself, I try different things.....One of my students, without mentioning names, came

into the classroom and she didn't speak. She could speak both English and Spanish; however, she was basically a selective mute – that would be the best way to describe her. My inquiry questions are: How can I get her to speak in my classroom? How can I get her to talk to children? How can I get her to socialize, verbally socialize? and How can I get her to say “I don't know” rather than just sit there and say nothing?”

This shows that Jacob did in this instance question his practice and use inquiry as a means to answer his questions. Jacob's ability to identify the questions he needs to answer allows him to systematically solve his problem. “The inquiry/action research model of professional development helps educators become more reflective practitioners, more systematic problem solvers, and more thoughtful decision makers (Sparks & Simmons, 1989)” (Guskey, 2000, p. 26). As you can see, this does show an inquiry stance toward teaching even if Jacob is not confident that his actions portray an inquiry stance toward teaching. However, due to the fact that Jacob did not seem confident that he had an inquiry stance toward teaching and the fact that most of the examples he gave of having an inquiry stance toward teaching came from inquiry projects he conducted as part of his school's improvement plan, I do not feel that Jacob has a strong inquiry stance toward teaching that is clearly visible to all. For example, Jacob's inquiry stance appeared mainly when obvious, hard-to-ignore problems popped up. This differs from Lydia, Eve, Hannah, and Joanna. They were asking questions based on reflections even when things were going well.

Evidence of inquiry stance toward teaching was harder to find and more superficial for Luke. Luke's involvement in inquiry was a result of graduate classes and

committee work in his school. “I’ve done some formal inquiry for a middle level educational philosophy class I took. I did some inquiry into middle level learners and motivation, and I guess some informal inquiry into homework and struggling students now for a committee that I’m on with the school.”

Like Jacob, Luke seemed to think that having an inquiry stance toward teaching means that you use inquiry as a teaching strategy. He felt that he must have an inquiry stance toward teaching because the curriculum he uses is inquiry-based. He said:

“Overall, I think that I do have an inquiry stance toward teaching although I wouldn’t say I am obsessed by it. I really like to have kids asking questions and finding answers to things they’re truly interested in. It helps that so much of our science, social studies, and even math curriculums are inquiry based and very conceptual.”

I did not find explicit evidence in the data of specific questions Luke asked about his practice or of instances that he searched for new ways to teach a particular topic or reach a struggling student. The fact that Luke doesn’t feel “obsessed” by having an inquiry stance toward teaching made me think that it not as much a part of his practice whereas Lydia claims that inquiry drives everything she does as an educator. For these reasons, I cannot determine that Luke has a strong inquiry stance toward teaching.

Each participant’s inquiry stance toward teaching manifested in different ways. They all question and reflect upon their practice yet what they do with their reflections and questions may differ based on how strong their inquiry stances toward teaching are, their teaching context, and years of teaching experience. For example, Hannah shares how she uses her reflections. “I have the responsibility to be aware of what’s going on

and not just come here, go over my lesson plans and make new ones for the next day. But I need to go over my lesson plans and as I'm doing it to think about what I'm doing and how I want to change it for tomorrow or the next week." There are similar examples in Lydia, Joanna, and Chloe's transcripts. They are proactive with their reflections. Lydia, Hannah, and Joanna all had examples where they claim to think about, or reflect before they teach a lesson, while they teach a lesson, and after they're done teaching a lesson.

Luke and Jacob seemed to be more reactive with their reflections. By this I mean that they had no problem with implementing something however it is given to them and then if it didn't work they would reflect about why and how they could change it. Hannah, Lydia, and Joanna would think about how they would implement whatever curriculum they were given, implement it (and possibly make changes during the lesson), and they reflect on what worked and why, what didn't work and why, and what they wanted to change for the next time they taught the lesson.

Another way to view the differences between the inquiry stances of the participants in this study is that some of the former interns enacted their inquiry stances even when things were going well in their classrooms. Whereas Jacob and Luke seemed to be able to use inquiry as a way to problem solve in their classrooms but did not seem to enact an inquiry stance toward teaching on a daily basis. External attributes such as hard-to-ignore problems or school improvement plans caused them to enact an inquiry stance toward teaching. All the participants in this study have the knowledge and skills to enact inquiry, but what differentiates the strength of their inquiry stances is what conditions cause or motivate them to put those skills and knowledge into practice.

Table 6

## Motivation to Use Inquiry Knowledge and Skills

Enacted inquiry stance toward teaching even when everything was going well	Enacted inquiry stance toward teaching when problems occurred	Enacted inquiry stance toward teaching mainly when mandated
Lydia	Chloe	Jacob
Eve		Luke
Hannah		
Joanna		

**Assertion Two: Even though each participant had been teaching for three or more years, the participants in this study believed that their PDS experience played a vital role in shaping their views of teaching and their development of an inquiry stance toward teaching.**

Despite the fact that all of these former interns have been teaching for three or more years and that they are all teaching in different contexts, there is a strong influence of their PDS preparation. When they spoke of their experiences in the PDS, they seemed to remember them as if it were just last year even though they had been teaching in their own classrooms for three to seven years. All of the former interns, in various degrees, believe that they have adopted an inquiry stance toward teaching and they feel that this is primarily because of their PDS preparation. Lydia, one of the first interns of the PDS program believes that inquiry is a core part of who she is as a teacher. She explains that inquiry is not something she learned about and then forgot, “Experiencing and conducting inquiry as an intern has carried into all of my first seven years of teaching. I continue to inquire on many levels, which I hope enriches my teaching, modifies my

classroom environment for the better, and helps me grow as a professional.” Lydia’s statement is exactly the result that this PDS hopes for and why it promotes teacher inquiry as a means for lifelong learning. “The role of inquiry is viewed as critical where the goal of teacher education is a lifelong ability to learn *from* teaching, rather than a more contained image of learning *for* teaching that is expected to be complete within a short span of time” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond with Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005, p. 405).

Lydia also claims that her training in inquiry has enabled her to practice it in such a manner that inquiry is second nature for her. “I think that since it was kind of a part of my training to become a teacher that it’s something built in that I’m constantly thinking about.” She carries this further by stating, “I think it happens without thought, as if it’s a habit, once inquiry has become a true part of what a person does and believes in.”

Joanna portrayed the same feeling. “In my teaching I question and reflect on the things that I do and lessons that I teach. I am more aware of what my students need and how I can best teach it to them because I am questioning and reflecting constantly. These are valuable skills that I learned in the PDS.” Joanna also shared, “I definitely think that my preparation in learning how to do inquiry impacts my view of teaching...I kind of see them similar to reflection and what you do after you reflect and how you can take your reflections and your thoughts to the next step...So, that project for me helped me really realize that you can take this a step further.”

Chloe views inquiry as a mindset and her training in inquiry helped her develop this view toward teaching.



“I feel that the inquiry project trained me to take on the mindset of inquiry all the time, so I view inquiry as sort of a permanent lens for my teaching. I think that this is most apparent when I am reflecting on my teaching, whether I am reflecting on a lesson that went really well, or trying to solve a problem that I am having. I always approach my reflection with questions, trying to figure out why things happened the way they did, and how they could be different next time.”

Eve speaks about how learning the inquiry process as an intern became more than just a one-time project because it influences her teaching in more ways than just the results of her inquiry project alone did. “I just think that a lot of the things that were in the inquiry process have kind of bled over in a different way, but they really have, like listening closely to what children are saying and reflecting on it and coming to new conclusions, that kind of has bled over.”

The above quotes from the former interns address the research question, ‘What aspects of the PDS preparation program impacted former interns’ inquiry stances?’ The interns feel that they were trained in inquiry through their inquiry projects and reflections. Because inquiry has been a part of these interns’ training from the very beginning it is understandable that they feel inquiry is second nature to them and that they do it all the time even when they are not consciously trying to. They often verbalize this as conducting informal inquiry. Luke’s statement helps express this point. “I think it’s just a part of me, so I don’t realize that I’m doing it; it’s more informal.”

I believe that the interns feel that they are constantly conducting informal inquiry and that they think this gives them the right to claim that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching. Chloe’s quote helps illustrate this belief. “While I have not done a

formal inquiry project since being in the PDS, I constantly have several mini-inquiries going on in my mind, and in conversations with my colleagues. These mini-inquiries may never result in a formal, written paper or presentation.” She goes on to say that “Even if I don’t have time to do inquiry projects, really collect data, write it up and present it...” She is still always using inquiry as she plans her lessons. Lydia also supports this, “Just doing that self questioning and reflecting. Not any written journal or anything, but just while you are driving your car thinking and questioning why isn’t this working? What’s going wrong with this? How can I change this to make it better? That’s like a small level of inquiry that I do. More on an informal level.”

Many teachers, regardless of how they were prepared, may also question themselves and reflect upon their teaching. Hopefully they do. However, not all teachers do. Some teachers just teach from whatever materials they are given and may not spend a lot of time questioning their practice and its effect on their students. This ties back into the research used earlier, “... is a lifelong ability to learn *from* teaching, rather than a more contained image of learning *for* teaching that is expected to be complete within a short span of time” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, with Grossman, Rust, & Shulman, 2005, p. 405). Many teachers focus on learning how to teach rather than learning from their teaching.

Eve provides us with an example of learning from her teaching. She recently created a blog online that she started as she began to implement reader’s workshop into her classroom. She said that one of the reasons she began the blog was “because of dissonance-- the blog was a great way to resolve confusions and barriers in my year. Simply writing them helped me clear up some confusions and then of course, hearing

from other teachers helps even more.” Eve did not just find a book about implementing reader’s workshop and implement it exactly as the book shows. That would be an example of learning for teaching. Eve carried it further and used the blog for a place to reflect upon her experiences implementing reader’s workshop. In doing so, she was learning from her teaching.

As you can see the former interns feel that even if they are not constantly writing written reflections and conducting formal inquiry projects as they did in their internship year, they are still conducting inquiry. Jacob confirms this view, “I don’t necessarily journal, I don’t necessarily do it formally as if I were in the PDS or even going to an inquiry conference.”

It appears that the training the former interns did have in formally writing reflection journals and conducting inquiry projects was quite memorable and some almost seemed to feel guilty that they were now “just” reflecting and inquiring into their practice in an informal manner. However, the formality of their training in inquiry (writing up reflections and the inquiry project) is what has enabled them to now use inquiry independently and that was the desired outcome of this PDS. “The goal for preservice preparation, then, is to provide teachers with the core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that give them traction on their later development” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 3).

**Assertion Three: These former interns are influenced by their colleagues and they in turn influence their colleagues. The former interns that are more intentional about inquiry and who take the risk to share it publicly influence a much larger audience.**

We have already seen how influential the PDS experience was for the former interns in their development into educators with an inquiry stance toward teaching. The former interns were certainly influenced by their teaching preparation in the year-long PDS program. We know that growth in teaching does not stop after graduation from a teaching program. We also know that effective teachers work together and PDSs strive to instill this in its work with all educators, including preservice teachers. “PDSs promise to develop more effective teachers and to reverse three aspects of socialization to teaching that have defined schools’ approaches to teach learning in the past: “Figure it out yourself”; “do it all yourself”; and “keep it to yourself” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p 8).

These former interns began their teaching careers in various teaching contexts. Some of them were in very similar teaching environments to their PDS experience while others were in very different teaching environments. For example, one intern taught in a class in which approximately 65% of the class was of Hispanic descent and second language learners and about 80% of the students were eligible for free or reduced lunch. However, these former interns do not mention this as they talk about their beliefs about teaching and what has influenced their growth as teachers. They express how their colleagues in their new schools influenced their development as teachers.

Eve shares about what it is like to have supportive colleagues when you are a new teacher. “It’s just nice because when I got here people would always be so open minded if I had an idea. It wasn’t like, you’re new, you know what I mean, and so that always has

kind of encouraged me to keep going with it.” Schools often have mentoring programs for new teachers and Eve’s experience with her mentor helps show how important it is that new teachers are placed with good mentors. “My mentor teacher my first year definitely helped shape my views about teaching. She’s been really instrumental in that she definitely is always right there with me reading the books and she’s always so excited to try new things.” Eve’s mentor teacher is not the only teacher encouraging her growth as a teacher. Her team helps provide an environment that promotes teachers working and inquiring together. “Right now the team is reading Reading with Meaning by Debbie Miller. We’re reading it together and we come together in groups and we talk about it and we’ve implemented reader’s workshop and writer’s workshop from this.”

Schools that promote teachers to work together instead of behind closed doors encourage reflection to take place. When teachers get together they often talk about their teaching. Lydia’s quote shows this. “Talking to my colleagues influences my teaching.... Of course every time you get together you talk about what you’re teaching and what you’re doing and how things are going because we can’t ever stop talking about teaching.” Working and talking with other teachers really helps new teachers to continue growing and learning new ways to do things.

These former interns strive for the chance to work with and learn from other teachers. “An especially important aspect of adaptive expertise involves the ability to learn from others” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford with Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner, 2005, p. 365). The interns show that they can learn from others and that they enjoy doing so. For example, Lydia shares that “Another thing was just through the modeling of my colleagues – one of my favorite things to do is to watch

other people teach. I have been fascinated just by going into other peoples' classrooms and seeing them interact with children and taking little bits away from everywhere that I go or everyone I talk to." She is still in the PDS setting so she is definitely able to continue learning from others. "My continued work with the PDS also enhances and enlarges this network of professional colleagues that I have and depend on for support, friendship, professional development, and advice." The PDS provided the former interns with the experience of working on teams and that was very important because they are now all teaching as part of a team. "Helping teachers learn to work in teams where they learn from one another is therefore extremely important" (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford with Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald & Zeichner, 2005, p. 365).

Luke was also able to learn from other teachers when he first started teaching and he still does. "...working closely with a lot of teachers who had a lot to offer, getting a lot of ideas, that's kind of made me into the teacher I am today." When teachers are part of a supportive team they don't just have a mentor their first year of teaching and then that's it. They are placed in an environment that leads to reflection.

Luke shares how being part of a team gives him the space and time to sit back and reflect. "I think that we (teachers) reflect all the time. I just don't think it's necessarily formal, but I think by having middle school teams, it allows you a place to be reflective, because in those meetings sometimes we'll talk about what worked and what we're going to change for next year."

Chloe's context enabled her to be part of the curriculum committees and feel confident to share her ideas and knowledge about teaching.

“But, our principal was really good at encouraging us and my mentor teacher was also very good at encouraging me. The way they viewed it was that these girls are coming right out of college and they have all this new knowledge. How could we grow from this? How could we take what they know and sort of compare it with our experience and really get something better out of it? That’s the kind of climate that I was in.”

Most of these interns were positively influenced by their colleagues but this is not always the case. Hannah talks about how in her former teaching environments she was not as free to teach how she wanted as she is now in her current teaching context.

“..with certain teams that I taught with there, when we came together and talked about things...we would accidentally at lunch or something be talking about things and if I knew that I was doing something that was a little different I just wouldn’t mention it. And if it was something that was pretty obvious like a class play I soon learned I need to tell everybody ahead of time and I would sort of belittle it like oh it’s just this little thing and it’s not really a big deal, because everybody would feel guilty, or something. It was strange. So I would try to make it seem like it was nothing and it really didn’t matter so I didn’t make enemies.”

When teachers are in an environment where risk-taking or doing something different from everyone else is discouraged it can hinder teacher development. Hannah felt like she needed to hide what she did so that her colleagues wouldn’t dislike her. In her current environment she is much happier because she feels free to teach how she wants. “Then I came here. I was just quiet for a little bit until I read everybody. Then I

was like, oh, this is like normal land again. I can just be myself and I came out of my shell. It was like I was hiding for four years. There are a lot of people here to talk with.”

It is interesting that Hannah calls her current teaching context “normal land again” because in terms of the student population, it is much different from the PDS student population. In fact, at the time of the interview, it was her first year teaching a class with a majority of students that did not speak English as their primary language and many of the students didn’t understand English at all in the beginning of the year. For Hannah, it wasn’t about the type of students she was teaching; it was more about the community of educators in the school. Hannah feels much more comfortable teaching in an environment where her colleagues are not judgmental.

“People expect that you will go in your own direction and aren’t insulted in any way if you do. I dislike teaching where everybody gets sort of insulted if you decide that you want to have a little class play or something and they get anxious like it’s a sort of competition or something. But here everybody just goes on their own and says, “Hey, I have this idea, and if you take it, fine and if you don’t fine.” And everybody just shares. It’s a good context.”

Just as the interns are influenced by their teaching contexts and colleagues, there is also evidence that they also have influence on their teaching contexts and colleagues. For example, we just learned that Hannah did not always feel comfortable trying new things in her previous teaching environments. However, she did adapt and then she actually was methodological in how she shared her ideas with others.

“With the one team I was on I started off kind of being that way but then I read them and then I realized, oh, they’re kind of interested. I’ll just suggest a



little bit of what I tried and then they would want to take a little bit more. And so, with that team, I could try some new things and share some ideas. But my first year there I didn't understand how to play that game at all. I just went in expecting that everybody would be doing their own thing like it was in the PDS, and I just went in with, I'll just do it this way and make sure I'm hitting everything that I need to hit and they were really upset with me. I realized, wow, I just made these enemies and I totally don't understand why. Then I realized how to play it and I was more political about things when I taught the second two times and so then I could decide Ok this person I can see that they're going to be interested in just this amount of information. If it's something that's going to save them time so that they can get home earlier they might be interested. So like if I had made up an activity, you know, like a contractions activity or something, and I could say, "Would you like to try it?" They would be like, "Yes," because they don't have to make a contractions activity then. So I would just sort of figure out what people were interested in and figured out that game. I never really had any problems with the administration. They always seemed to be fine with us doing whatever we wanted. It was just the teachers who had been teaching forever the same way that they just wanted to keep doing that and anything that seemed to challenge that was frightening to them and they didn't want to stir the water."

The other interns have also influenced their colleagues in various ways. For example, Lydia and Eve have actually influenced an audience that is much larger than their immediate colleagues. Eve has influenced her colleagues in a very broad sense. By creating the blog she has the potential to reach any teacher that has access to the internet.

Lydia was able to influence the new teachers that she mentored as well as the many other educators that attended the conferences that she spoke at. Chloe also influenced her district by sharing her knowledge of different teaching strategies and her colleagues by her willingness to open up her classroom to anyone that would like to observe her.

**Assertion Four: These former interns are adaptive.**

It is evident that these former interns are not afraid of change. Their preparation in the PDS developed their ability to constantly reflect about their teaching and research new ways of doing things. These skills combined with their desire to find what works for their students each year shows that they are constantly adapting their teaching to meet the needs of their students. The research says that, “..beginning teachers need to have a command of critical ideas and skills and, equally important, the capacity to reflect on, evaluate, and learn from their teaching so that it continually improves.” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 3) The data show that these former interns have the skills necessary to continually improve their practice. We can find repeated instances in the data where the former interns say in various ways that they reflect, change, and learn and then repeat the cycle over again.

Hannah believes that it is important to keep reflecting, changing, and learning. “I think that it’s really important to keep reflecting on what you’re doing and keep changing and keep learning, not to get stuck in a groove where you keep doing the same thing over and over each year without really thinking it over and without ever looking and asking if this is really working.” Luke also believes that each year is different because you have a new group of students. “The same thing with different kids each year, certain things might work better, certain styles, certain types of activities. Maybe one year you do more

group work, another year you might do more individual inquiry because I'm really into that. Some kids might be more proficient with technology in general and classes sometimes tend to take a different direction."

Lydia takes this a step further by sharing that it's not just year to year but also week to week and even lesson to lesson. "It's a day by day changing, something that might really work with them one week and then they quickly get tired of it and then I change and rethink how I'm doing it, week by week or even within a lesson."

Hannah also believes in constantly modifying what she is doing. ".... because I rarely do the same thing twice. From year to year and day to day, I am constantly re-evaluating, reflecting, and researching for more information (with colleagues and books) to improve my practice." She views this as a way to problem solve in her classroom and feels that she learned that from the PDS. "I guess from the PDS there are the things that I do naturally now. I look at something and think "I don't really like that" and then figure out a way to change it instead of just complaining about it. I think that is something that I learned there - how to problem solve in your classroom."

Joanna's belief that it is her job to find a way to help all students learn gave her the motivation to keep adjusting how she taught a lesson on counting money.

"For example, we have finished working with something as simple as money. We have some students in here that have a difficult time still in the fourth grade counting money, counting coins, being able to build up. Dry and erase didn't work, paper and pencil didn't work, working in pairs and having another student help them didn't work, working in small groups didn't work – we pretty much had spent a week exhausting the possibilities of typical strategies. Then we

decided to create something more hands on; it was more about a learner that needed a manipulative and a tactile thing in order to be able to accomplish the task.”

The above example shows that Joanna is able and willing to find a way to teach one child a concept that she did not understand after it was taught to the class in a more traditional manner. This provides evidence of adaptive expertise. “In teaching, these dimensions might reflect a teacher’s ability to efficiently and effectively use a specific classroom technique – such as reciprocal teaching conducted in small groups for reading- on the one hand, and her ability to develop a set of new strategies for a recently enrolled new English learner for whom the existing routines are not enabling success. An important feature of adaptive experts lies in their abilities to balance these two dimensions” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford with Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald & Zeichner, 2005, p. 360).

Luke talks about how it isn’t easy to constantly change and improve what you do but that it keeps things interesting when you do.

“I have never wanted to be a filing cabinet teacher where I just pull things out that I did last year. At the same time, I always thought that it would get a little easier than it has now and it really hasn’t since things have changed so much every single year. I think that’s a good sign. It’s a sign of a living breathing district, a living classroom. I think that’s why we keep up with what I consider best or at least better practices because we found spelling that seemed to work better so we changed.”

Chloe works with her colleagues to improve her lessons each year. She shares that it does get easier the longer you teach but that you still rethink how you will teach a lesson.

“Everybody brings out their binder. We flip through it. This activity was good. This activity stunk. I found a new one. Here’s this. So we do spend time refining and revising and trying to make what we’ve done better, but it’s not nearly the time commitment of that first time you set out to teach something. So, now that I’ve been here for four or five years, it’s a lot of the stuff that you’ve been doing that you’re constantly thinking about how to try to make it better.”

Chloe, along with her team members, spends time modifying her lessons. They do not just teach the same thing year to year regardless of its outcome. She adapts to continuously make her lessons better. “In these instances, it is important to help people understand that “letting go” of previously learned ideas and routines or incorporating new information into their practice – choosing what to abandon and what to keep or modify – is a big part of what it means to be a lifelong learner and an adaptive expert” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford, with Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald, & Zeichner, 2005, p. 363).

Sometimes you might run out of your own ideas about how to improve your practice or reach a child that is having difficulty in a certain subject area. The former interns know that they can always turn to the research. They may or may not begin with the research but they do research. Eve has spent a lot of time reading research in teaching language arts, an area of interest to her. She knows that there are still always other areas that she can grow and develop in throughout her teaching career.

“There’s always going to be new research and I think even if I come to a point where I feel like I’ve read all the major works out there, there’s still never going to be a time when I’m done trying it in my classroom so the more you try it, it kind of cycles and then you learn more and then you learn, and you know what I mean, it branches and there is always math – I can always get into math. I haven’t done as much training in math.”

The former interns also know that they need to do more than just read the research. They know how to use the research. As we read earlier, Eve reads the research, tries it out in her class, and adapts it to meet her students’ needs. Jacob evaluates the research as well. “I do what works for my students rather than just what the research says. You have to critique the research as well, what kind of kids are they doing it with? It depends on where the research is coming from as well. Just because one group finds this doesn’t necessarily mean that if it’s replicated another group will find the same thing.”

All the interns know that you need to persistently reflect upon your teaching and constantly change to meet the needs of your students. Although this is not always easy to do, the interns prefer it this way. As Luke said, it shows that you are in a “living classroom.” Despite the constant adjustments to their teaching, the interns remain true to their beliefs about teaching. Eve effectively verbalizes this.

“I enjoy the fact that I am in a profession that is not static – in lots of ways. The group you have is never the same, the circumstances of the year are never the same, the community influences change, outside research changes, policies change. Even though I love this aspect of change and challenge, I am cognizant of the fact that my very basic, most core philosophies are not changing. The way

they manifest themselves in the classroom may look different to me now, but in a large way, those philosophies are still intact from the day I graduated from Oak Wood University.”

**Assertion Five: These former interns feel empowered as teacher leaders.**

The former PDS interns feel that their PDS experience gave them a head start in their first year of teaching. This gave them a feeling of confidence as they began their teaching careers. This assurance that they had in their teaching abilities and views of teaching did not disappear when they entered new teaching situations in various teaching contexts. This sense of empowerment has allowed these interns to take on leadership roles even as beginning teachers. It varies in what steps these former interns have taken to become a leader in their profession. However, even the willingness to be a grade level leader as Jacob is for his fourth grade group or to be a PTSO (parent-teacher- student organization) representative as Luke is shows that they are not so overwhelmed in their first years of teaching that they could not volunteer to extend their responsibilities beyond their individual classrooms.

Other interns have taken even bigger steps toward becoming a teacher leader. One former intern, Eve, feels that her personal research that she has done to create meaningful lessons for students has given her the knowledge to be a teacher leader. “I have learned to plan for lessons with an awareness of what is meaningful for my students. I reflect on my teaching a lot. I read many books. I am in a constant state of professional growth. Thankfully, I know what I believe, and that confidence has made me a leader in my school.” Being a teacher researcher also made Hannah feel more validated in her

profession. “I feel that learning inquiry – to be a teacher researcher – has made me more of a “professional” in my profession.”

Chloe does not come right out and say that she is a confident teacher leader but that is evident as she speaks about her experience helping to rewrite curriculum at her school.

“Since I’ve gotten here I sat on a couple of curriculum committees. I’ve helped write the K to five science curriculum. I wrote the fourth grade curriculum for that. For math I sat on the committee and instead of just writing one grade level, there was a teacher from each grade and I was an additional person, and I was the person who would oversee the connections between each grade level and also I wrote the philosophy of math education for our district for K to five. Not many second year teachers get that opportunity.”

Not only did Chloe participate in curriculum committees, she also worked with three other teachers to develop a spelling program. She helped in-service other teachers in this program and has even opened her classroom doors to anyone that would like to see what guided reading is. A teacher that lacked confidence would not invite other teachers into her classroom.

“The three of us actually helped in-service the other teachers in development of the spelling program. We piloted it the first year and now that everybody’s implemented it, we presented an in-service program. We’re here if teachers want to come and see us. We’ve also opened up our classrooms to anyone who wants to come and see a guided reading lesson – sort of a peer coaching kind of thing.”



Joanna found that her year in the PDS gave her the confidence to share her beliefs with other teachers, including more experienced teachers.

“They made me realize that that year in the PDS had given me the confidence to be able to stand up to them and say, “Hey, I know you’ve been teaching for twenty years, but how about this idea?” Or, “I really don’t like this basal story next week. Do you think I could do something else with literature?” I think from the moment they met me they knew that I was a pretty confident person because I could back up what my beliefs were because of the PDS. And then, they were like, this girl really knows what she’s doing. So, it was fun to see them actually take on some of my ideas. As veteran teachers they were doing some of the things that I was coming up with and they were thinking, hmm, maybe my philosophy should be switched a little bit, so that was neat as well.”

Lydia, the former intern with the most teaching experience in this study, tells about her experience attending professional conferences and how having an inquiry stance toward teaching gives teachers a voice in their profession.

“I’ve spoken at conferences all over about having an inquiry stance and how that turns you into a teacher leader. I think that inquiry definitely made me feel stronger and more confident as even a young teacher. It helps you know that it’s ok to ask questions about your practice and to know that it’s ok to look deeper at your practice. It keeps you from teaching in a place where you close the door and you keep everything from everyone else around you. It’s very public – I’m working on this question, I’m researching how this child develops as a writer, or whatever your question is – it’s important that you share that with other people.

You get other ideas and feedback from them. You feel the power of feedback from other people. It gives you a voice. The way we set up and do inquiry in a way that celebrates teachers asking questions, gives teachers more of a voice in a profession that for a long time didn't give teachers a voice.”

The interns all seem comfortable asking questions about their practice as Lydia so eloquently stated above. This shows that they aren't afraid to question what they are doing and change for the better. This shows evidence that the PDS has prepared them to be adaptive in their teaching. “For an adaptive expert, discovering the need to change is perceived not as failure but, instead, as a success and an inevitable, continuous aspect of effective teaching (see, for example, Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1997; Wineburg, 1998)” (Hammerness, Darling-Hammond, Bransford with Berliner, Cochran-Smith, McDonald & Zeichner, 2005, p. 363). I believe that these interns all have the characteristics of a teacher that Fosnot describes in Norlander-Case, et al. (1999) as an empowered teacher. “An empowered teacher is a reflective decision maker who finds joy in learning and investigating the teaching/learning process – one who views learning as construction and teaching as a facilitating process to enhance and enrich development” (p. 30).

The assertions that emerged from the data in this study were:

**Assertion One: Though there were commonalities across participants, there is great variation in the degree to which they enacted inquiry in their practice.**

**Assertion Two: Even though each participant had been teaching for three or more years, the participants in this study believed that their PDS experience played a vital**

**role in shaping their views of teaching and their development of an inquiry stance toward teaching.**

**Assertion Three: These former interns are influenced by their colleagues and they in turn influence their colleagues. The former interns that are more intentional about inquiry and who take the risk to share it publicly influence a much larger audience.**

**Assertion Four: These former interns are adaptive.**

**Assertion Five: These former interns feel empowered as teacher leaders.**

The data revealed that all of the former interns except one in this study believe that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching. However, the actions of the interns show that they have various degrees of an inquiry stance toward teaching. The participants in this study enact inquiry through formal inquiry projects, informal inquiry projects, school improvement plans, etc. Their stance toward teaching provides the foundation to their practice – a foundation that the PDS helped to build by providing the participants in this study with a background in teacher inquiry.

We also learned that the former interns in this study have the capability to be teacher leaders and feel empowered by their ability to use inquiry as a means to problem-solve and continuously improve their practice in order to best meet the needs of their students. This sense of empowerment appears to continue if it is encouraged and cultivated by their colleagues. If their colleagues were supportive, it seemed easier for the former interns in this study to continue to grow into effective teachers that are not afraid of change and will continue to be lifelong learners that adapt to the needs of their students.

## Chapter Six

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Introduction

Developing teachers with an inquiry stance toward teaching is an important goal for educators of preservice teachers. Developing adaptive expertise in teaching is closely connected to developing an inquiry stance. Teachers with an inquiry stance toward teaching are lifelong learners. The tools of inquiry (framing questions, collecting and analyzing evidence systematically, consulting the broader learning community and literature, using evidence-based conclusions to guide one's practice, and sharing knowledge with others) are essential to adaptive use of expertise.

Adaptive experts are constantly learning and adapting their teaching to best meet the needs of their students and therefore are also lifelong learners. "Adaptive experts are able to balance efficiency and innovation. Helping prospective teachers achieve this balance can be very beneficial: it can guide the 'lifelong learning' needed to help all their students achieve" (Bransford, Derry, Berliner & Hammerness with Beckett, 2005, p. 76).

Teacher preparation programs need to help preservice teachers develop an inquiry stance toward teaching because as they develop those skills they are learning the strategies necessary to be adaptive teachers. Having an inquiry stance toward teaching provides teachers with a way to constantly question and improve their teaching practices. They learn how to keep what works and change what doesn't work. They also learn that what works one year or with one student may not work the next year or with a different student. Having an inquiry stance toward teaching gives teachers the expertise they need to be adaptive teachers. "A major way to prepare teachers for innovation is to help them

develop inquiry skills that support ways to look at student learning and adapt accordingly” (Bransford, Derry, Berliner & Hammerness with Beckett, 2005, p. 77).

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

The participants in this study were all classroom teachers who had learned to teach in the context of an elementary professional development school partnership. Each had participated in a year-long internship experience. The seven participants were purposefully selected from a larger pool of former interns who had responded to a survey that attempted to uncover the degree to which former interns espoused an inquiry stance towards teaching. The participants were purposefully drawn because they were teaching in different contexts and appeared, from their survey responses, to have differing degrees of an inquiry orientation.

The survey results that were used to select the purposive sample did yield some interesting results. Scores ranged between one and four with one being weak and four being strong. Lydia, Hannah, and Eve each received a score of four. Chloe and Joanna received scores of three. Jacob received a score of two and Luke received a score of one. It appears that their survey scores closely correlated to the inquiry stances they revealed throughout their interviews and observations and this will be discussed further later in the chapter.

Each question of this study will be discussed and I will share how the data provided answers to these questions. To review, the main question that guided this study was, **‘What is the long-term impact of learning to teach in a professional development school that fosters teacher inquiry?’** To begin to answer this research

question, I needed to define an inquiry stance toward teaching. I first developed the following definition of an inquiry-oriented stance.

Teachers with an inquiry stance:

1. Reflect upon their practice
2. Ask specific questions about their practice
3. Search for answers/solutions to those questions
4. Try the solutions out and adapt them to best meet their needs
5. Are able to articulate their findings and why they do the things they do
6. Share their work with others (informally and/or formally)
7. Remain open minded to new ideas
8. Continue to utilize these concepts throughout their careers

This definition was a composite definition drawn from sources in the literature.

Because there has been relatively little study of what an inquiry-oriented stance towards teaching looks like in use, the study was designed to allow for a modified definition that might result from actually seeing what teachers do on a daily basis. Based on the findings of this study, I later revised this definition. My new definition is:

Teachers with an Inquiry Stance:

1. Ask specific questions about their practice based upon their reflections.
2. Search for answers to their questions and innovative ways to improve their teaching using a variety of sources such as research, other teachers, specialists, administrators, etc.
3. Systematically collect data throughout the inquiry process.

4. Own the responsibility to find out how to best meet the needs of their students and thereby continuously and thoughtfully try solutions to their questions and adapt teaching strategies in order to meet the changing needs of their students.
5. Are able to articulate their philosophy of teaching and the rationale behind their approach to teaching.
6. Share their knowledge and ideas with others (informally and/or formally).
7. Are lifelong learners

The secondary questions that helped answer the main question of this study were:

**Do former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance?**

**How do they define their inquiry stance and how is it seen through their teaching?**

**Do they continue to engage in teacher inquiry projects?**

**What aspects of the PDS preparation program impacted former interns' inquiry stances? And**

**What conditions/factors in their current work setting impact whether former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance and engage in teacher inquiry?**

The first secondary question, **'Do former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance?'** helped to determine whether or not these particular interns that were prepared in this teacher education program actually do have an inquiry stance toward teaching. This question was answered by comparing the definition of inquiry I created to how the former interns described their teaching practice. When they were specifically asked if they have an inquiry stance toward teaching all but one said that they did. Therefore, the former interns overall believe that they have an inquiry stance toward teaching. However, that

alone was not enough to convince me or anyone else that these interns have an inquiry stance toward teaching.

The former interns in this study defined having an inquiry stance differently and it was reflected in their teaching in different ways. They all questioned and reflected upon their practice yet what they did with their reflections and questions differed. For example, there was evidence in the data that Lydia, Eve, Hannah, and Joanna reflected before, during, and after teaching lessons while Luke and Jake appeared to do most of their reflecting after teaching their lessons. The data also revealed that these former interns have varying degrees of an inquiry stance toward teaching. For example, Lydia had a very strong inquiry stance toward teaching and said that inquiry drives all her decisions as an educator. Yet Luke said he was not obsessed by inquiry. He thought he had an inquiry stance toward teaching just because he felt he taught his students through inquiry.

The initial data collected in this study (the surveys) indicated that Lydia, Hannah, and Eve would probably have a strong inquiry stance toward teaching. They all received a score of four on their surveys. They received a score of four because their answers were comparable to the answers of teachers with a known inquiry stance toward teaching. In order to score a four on the survey they needed to have similar responses to the vignettes as teachers with a known inquiry stance toward teaching and mention key words when they wrote about their beliefs about teaching. The survey results for Chloe and Joanna indicated that they would also probably have an inquiry stance toward teaching. They received scores of three on their surveys because they did not write key words, such as inquiry, in the beliefs about teaching section of the survey.



The survey results for Luke and Jacob did not show strong signs of an inquiry stance toward teaching. They received scores of one or two because one or more of their responses either differed from the responses of teachers with a known inquiry stance and/or because their answers were not very thorough. As further evidence was gathered it was found that all of the participants do have evidence of an inquiry stance toward teaching. However, as the initial surveys showed, Lydia and Eve do seem to have the strongest inquiry stances toward teaching. The inquiry stances of Hannah and Joanna are also quite strong, Chloe came out in the middle, and the inquiry stances of Luke and Jacob are the weakest.

The PDS program overall prepared these former interns really well to reflect upon and ask questions about their practice, to search for answers to their questions, to adapt their teaching to find the best strategies, and to articulate their philosophy of teaching. Due to the fact that these interns graduated from the PDS program in different years and still all consistently used words like reflection, said they asked specific questions, etc., it can be generalized that the program does a good job providing interns with a strong background in these dimensions of having an inquiry stance toward teaching.

This can be stated because the data show that all the participants in this study spoke to each of these areas. For instance, they all discussed the degree to which they reflect and ask questions about their practice. When looking at all the data you can see that sometimes the former interns asked specific questions that pointed to a specific student. Examples of the former interns asking these types of questions are when Jacob tried to help the child that refused to speak and Joanna worked to find a strategy for the child that had trouble learning to count money. Even when the participants in this study

did not have a specific wondering about a particular student, they still asked themselves questions. Examples of questions they asked themselves all the time are: How can I improve this? What can I do differently? What can I change about the lesson material or how I presented it? and What went wrong and why did it go wrong? These questions may or may not lead to formal inquiry projects but they do cause one to reflect on his or her own practice as he or she searches for the best way to teach his or her students.

I think this particular PDS program can work to better help interns understand what it means to systematically collect data and understand what an inquiry stance toward teaching is. The data show that the participants in this study kept trying different strategies until they found something that works for their students. Some of the participants were good at systemically collecting data that would help them answer their questions. Eve's quest on how to best teach reading is an example of this. When she taught reading using the basal the kids that were at the bottom in the beginning of the year were still at the bottom at the end of the year. She wasn't satisfied that she was doing all she could to reach all of her students so she found that implementing reader's workshop changed this. Looking at students' scores is a form of collecting data. I did not find examples of this in my data for each of the participants and that is why I think it might benefit future former interns to have a better understanding of how and when to collect data, what types of data they could collect, and what to do with the data they do collect.

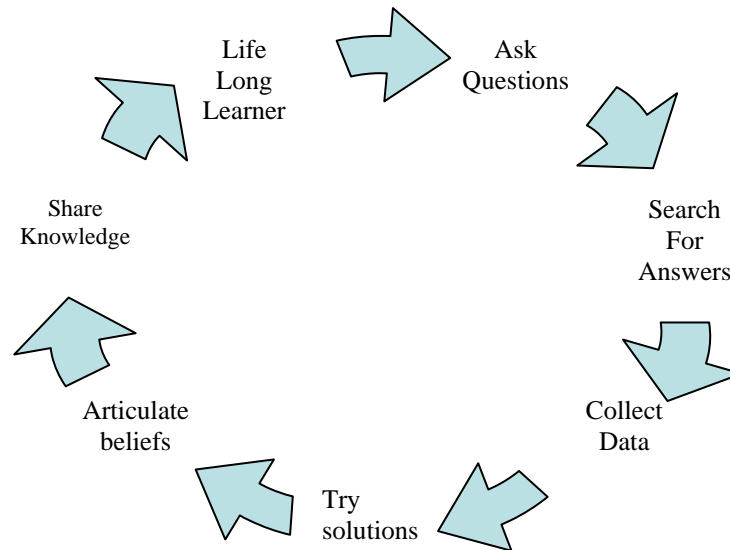
I think the program can help interns learn that they are developing an inquiry stance toward teaching and/or that they are becoming adaptive experts. Often the participants in this study would first associate inquiry with teaching methods, particularly

in science. Eve has one of the strongest inquiry stances toward teaching and yet when she was first speaking about her inquiry stance toward teaching she was afraid she didn't have one. She thought this because she didn't spend as much time teaching science in an inquiry-based method because the curriculum for her first grade concentrated mainly on reading and math. Jacob was also afraid he didn't have an inquiry stance toward teaching because he felt that his curriculum did not include using inquiry as a teaching method because it was so standards based.

On the other hand, Luke felt he did have an inquiry stance toward teaching just because his curriculum was inquiry-based. It would be constructive if the PDS program helped its future teachers to understand and articulate the differences between using inquiry as a teaching method and having an inquiry stance toward teaching. Both are important but they are not the same. As they were talking about their inquiry stances toward teaching it reminded me of a student coming up with the correct answer in math but not being able to explain how he or she got the answer.

What also became clear is that the attributes of an inquiry stance are not just steps that you always do in order and when you get to the last step you're finished. Lydia described having an inquiry stance toward teaching as going through a never-ending cycle. "An inquiry approach to teaching and learning requires time for thinking something through, trying it out or experimenting/investigating, reflecting and discussing, and perhaps making modifications AND THEN it goes full circle all over again. It's a constant cycle that inquirers go through in their daily thoughts and work."

Figure 1  
Inquiry Cycle



The next secondary question was, **‘How do they define their inquiry stance and how is it seen through their teaching?’** We learned that the former interns in this study all defined having an inquiry stance in a different way and that it was also seen in their teaching in different ways, however, they did all have common traits. For example, all the participants in this study mentioned that they reflect upon their practice. That trait and other common traits were combined into the updated definition of an inquiry stance toward teaching.

One claim that was found while searching through the data is that the interns are adaptive. This allowed their inquiry stances to develop and be seen in their teaching. We learned that these former interns are not afraid of change. Their preparation in the PDS developed their ability to constantly reflect about their teaching and research new ways of doing things. These skills combined with their desire to find what works for their students

each year shows that they are constantly adapting their teaching to meet the needs of their students.

The third secondary question, **‘Do they continue to engage in teacher inquiry projects?’** was not as difficult to find concrete evidence for. Not all of the former interns continued to conduct formal inquiry projects like they did during their internship year. Those that did conduct more formal inquiry projects often did so as the result of taking graduate school classes or because their school required some sort of improvement project.

All the participants in this study did, however, conduct informal inquiries. These former interns took their reflections a step further by asking questions and searching for answers. They conducted inquiries into how to best teach the curriculum they were given, how to reach particular students, and how to implement reader’s workshop. All of these questions can lead to teacher inquiries. “Teacher-researchers use their inquiries to study everything from the best way to teach reading and the most useful methods for organizing group activities, to the different way girls and boys respond to a science curriculum” (Hubbard & Power, 1999, p. 2). Many of these inquiries were conducted in much the same way that a formal inquiry project would be conducted, however, the former interns considered them informal inquiries because they did not write up a paper about them or present them at a conference or to a class as they did when they were in the PDS or taking a graduate teacher research class.

The following question, **‘What aspects of the PDS preparation program impacted former interns’ inquiry stances?’** is key to helping educators of preservice teachers understand how an inquiry stance is cultivated. The data show us that the former

interns in this study remember reflecting constantly and conducting their inquiry projects. They remember reflection as such an important part of the PDS that they appeared to feel guilty that they do not always write down their reflections any more. It seems that because these former interns were required to reflect during their internship that they now do so naturally.

They were surrounded in a teaching community in which reflection and asking questions about teaching is encouraged and expected. This gave the interns the perception that asking questions is good, not something to be embarrassed about. In fact, in the PDS they were a part of; not having a question would be something to be embarrassed about.

These former interns were not only encouraged to ask questions about their practice but they were also taught how to search for the answers through the inquiry process. They learned how to use research and collect data systematically. Learning these skills gave the participants in this study a model to use when they encountered more questions as they began their first years of teaching. “The goal for preservice preparation, then, is to provide teachers with the core ideas and broad understanding of teaching and learning that give them traction on their later development.” (Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005, p. 3) Learning how to reflect and conduct teaching inquiry does exactly that.

For example, Joanna used inquiry to help her as she moved to teach in different states. She experienced several “first years” of teaching due to the fact that she moved around as she began her teaching career. Inquiry provided her with a way to figure out how to best teach the different curriculums she was given. Eve used inquiry to inquire into the best ways to teach reading. She did thorough research by reading numerous

professional books about reading. She also worked with her colleagues and even started a blog online to share her reflections and to expand the number of teachers that she can share with and learn from.

Instead of feeling overwhelmed by fear about not knowing everything about teaching as many new teachers do, they were equipped with the skills to go out and confidently find those answers. They were usually surrounded by experienced teachers that continued to question their practice and this helped the former interns to know that there will always be something that they can learn about and improve in their teaching. As stated previously, this is the goal for any preservice preparation program. Preservice teachers need to be provided with skills that they can take with them into any teaching context and use to help them become the best teachers they can be for the schools they teach in and for the students that they work with.

The former interns in this study were trained how to formally conduct inquiry through their experiences in the PDS. They learned how to reflect and ask questions about their practices. They discovered how to find answers to their questions by conducting research and collecting data. These former interns were taught that you adapt what you learn from your research and data collection to best meet the needs of your students. The former interns in this study presented their findings at an inquiry conference. This helped them to learn how to articulate their findings, share their work, and to learn from others.

The final question, **‘What conditions/factors in their current work setting impact whether former interns have an inquiry-oriented stance and engage in teacher inquiry?’** provides us with information about what happens after they leave the

PDS environment. The data showed that the colleagues the former interns worked with impacted their stance toward teaching more than the other aspects of their current teaching context such as district wealth, student make-up, etc.

As stated previously, the teaching contexts of the participants in this study varied from similar to their internship experience to very different from the teaching context of their internship. Even so, these former interns did not mention this as they spoke about their beliefs about teaching and what has influenced their growth as teachers. They told how their colleagues in their new schools influenced their development as teachers. Many of the interns were positively influenced by their colleagues. Their colleagues often encouraged the participants in this study to continue reflecting and learning by participating in these activities with them. We learned that although most of these interns were positively influenced by their colleagues, this was not always the case.

One former intern shared that in her former teaching environments she was not as free to teach how she wanted. The teachers surrounding her did not want her to do anything new or different. She had a hard time fitting in and feeling liked by the other teachers. When she moved to a different school all this changed for her. She felt like she could really be herself again. For this former intern, it wasn't about the type of students she was teaching; it was more about the community of educators in the school. This shows that colleagues in a school have a greater impact on the freedom a former intern feels to engage in teacher inquiry than the teaching context does.

Lydia conducted the most formal inquiry projects after her internship and she also remained in the same teaching context as her PDS internship. I think that's important to point out because she was able to best communicate why she believes she has an inquiry



stance toward teaching and what she believes an inquiry stance toward teaching is. I wonder how her teaching context has influenced her growth as a teacher with an inquiry stance toward teaching. Did conducting all the formal inquiries “cement” the inquiry process and make it natural for her? Would she have completed those inquiries in a different teaching context? If she didn’t, would that have influenced her inquiry stance toward teaching or is she one of those few teachers that have a “natural” inquiry stance toward teaching?

Luke also remained in a very similar context as his internship experience, yet his inquiry stance was not very strong. However, it appears that Luke’s teaching context may be providing him with the support he may need to further develop an inquiry stance toward teaching. The teaching team that Luke is a part of seems to work together to reflect and inquire into better teaching practices.

I think that is also the case for Jacob. He completed inquiry projects as part of his school’s improvement plan. “We have..... it’s like an improvement plan here at our school. We’re supposed to try things in our classroom and we’re supposed to evaluate our progress. I know I’ve done work with newsletters by seeing how that improved parent communication and I did surveys on that.” Jacob also worked with his colleagues.

“This year we did homework club after school two days a week. We took some of our weaker students and we wanted to see how their progress compared to if we didn’t do it. We saw a huge gain. We do this as a school and you can do it as a grade level if you choose to, but this was my improvement project – mine and my partner’s.”

To summarize, we did learn that the factors such as the colleagues the former interns worked with did have some influence on how visible their inquiry stance toward teaching was. However, I think further study is needed as to what exact conditions or factors in the work setting positively impact a teacher's inquiry stance toward teaching.

The findings of the secondary questions lead to the conclusion of the main question of the study, **'What is the long-term impact of learning to teach in a professional development school that fosters teacher inquiry?'** This main question can be answered succinctly through the assertions that were developed through the data analysis process. The assertions were:

**Assertion One: Though there were commonalities across participants, there is great variation in the degree to which they enacted inquiry in their practice.**

**Assertion Two: Even though each participant had been teaching for three or more years, the participants in this study believed that their PDS experience played a vital role in shaping their views of teaching and their development of an inquiry stance toward teaching.**

**Assertion Three: These former interns are influenced by their colleagues and they in turn influence their colleagues. The former interns that are more intentional about inquiry and who take the risk to share it publicly influence a much larger audience.**

**Assertion Four: These former interns are adaptive.**

**Assertion Five: These former interns feel empowered as teacher leaders.**

The long-term impact of learning to teach in a teacher education program that fosters teacher inquiry is that these teachers believe they are capable of entering different teaching contexts in which different curriculums are used and still provide their students

with meaningful learning by finding ways to best teach the students they have. They can do this because they are not afraid to ask questions and to admit they do not have all the answers because they can find the answers. The inquiry process gives them this ability. It also gives them a voice – the voice to ask a question, to search for the answer(s), and to share their work with others.

Lydia provides us with a concrete example of this.

“The way we set up and do inquiry in a way that celebrates teachers asking questions, gives teachers more of a voice in a profession that for a long time didn’t give teachers a voice. It was just a system imposed on us. I think even through our inquiry that we’re making changes and that it’s an avenue for actually having a voice – for speaking and sharing and celebrating the work of teachers and viewing them as researchers, too. It helps show that we’re not just people who are given a text book and just do what we’re told. If we can change the way things are we can have an impact.”

Another long-term impact of learning to teach in a PDS that fosters teacher inquiry is that these interns were confident even as beginning teachers. The former PDS interns feel that their PDS experience gave them a head start in their first year of teaching. The assurance that they had in their teaching abilities and views of teaching did not disappear when they entered new teaching situations in various teaching contexts. The former interns in this study do not question their ability to teach. Irvin, 2005, helps explain why this may be, “Classroom issues were viewed as questions versus problems” (p. 225). Having an inquiry stance toward teaching provided the former interns with a

way to solve the problems they might run into as new teachers. They did not feel ashamed to ask questions and knew how to search for their answers.

This sense of empowerment allowed these interns to take on leadership roles even as beginning teachers. Irvin (2005) relates this feeling of confidence and empowerment to high teacher efficacy.

Inquiry has provided a means for them to study their effectiveness and provides strategies for improving practice. So instead of self-doubt, their questions surrounding their work tend to focus on things like the students' strength and capabilities, the curriculum or teaching methodology and materials. They do not tend to raise questions about whether or not they can meet student needs; rather the questions are about how to do so. (p. 227)

## **Implications**

### Implications for this PDS

From this study we learned that participants in this study did have inquiry stances toward teaching. The data showed that these former interns felt that the year-long PDS experience they had most influenced their views about teaching. It is clear that this particular PDS should continue having their interns conduct inquiry projects. The interns remember the inquiry project as a time of hard work but also seemed to realize that because they went through a formal process of conducting an inquiry project that they now know how to conduct teacher inquiry and do so formally and/or informally. For this reason, I think that conducting and writing up a formal inquiry project should remain a part of this PDS program.

I feel this PDS should also continue requiring the interns to reflect in journals. The data showed that every intern mentioned that they remembered having to reflect all the time during their intern experience. They all said that they continue to reflect now even if they don't write it down anymore. Just as conducting formal inquiries enabled interns to continue inquiring into their practice, it appears that requiring reflections created a "reflective habit" in the former interns of this study. I think that written reflections are important to keep and that sometimes that could include some sort of blog as Eve suggested. I wonder what the journals of these interns looked like in the beginning of their internship year as compared to the end. Did they struggle with writing reflections? Did their mentor or PDA respond in a way that increased their ability to be reflective?

The evidence was strong that all the interns reflect upon their teaching but this program may want to work to better help interns understand what to do with their reflections. Not every reflection will turn into a major inquiry project, but how do they get from reflections to asking questions to inquiring further into their questions? The interns might benefit from a deeper background in data collection (or gathering evidence) and what it means to systematically collect data.

The data did not appear to show the interns questioning their own beliefs and assumptions about teaching. I wonder why and what this means in terms of the strength of their inquiry stances toward teaching. Is it because, as part of their PDS internship experience, they already spent a lot of time reflecting upon and forming their beliefs about teaching? Eve speaks to this when she talks about teaching being a work in progress.

“Even though I love this aspect of change and challenge, I am cognizant of the fact that my very basic, most core philosophies are not changing. The way they manifest themselves in the classroom may look different to me now, but in a large way, those philosophies are still intact from the day I graduated Oak Wood. For all these reasons, I feel that I have an inquiry stance toward teaching.”

According to Brookfield, 1995, “A critically reflective teacher is in a much better place to communicate to colleagues and students – as well as herself – the rationale behind her practice. She works from a position of informed commitment. She knows why she does what she does, why she thinks what she thinks” (p. 23). Does the fact that these former interns can clearly articulate what they believe about teaching and learning (as demonstrated in their narratives) help them to be better inquirers into their teaching?

This question of changes in fundamental beliefs and assumptions highlights the connections among reflection and inquiry and adaptive expertise. All of these former interns engaged in some form of reflection about their practice. In some cases, the reflection was systematic and public; in other cases it was much more informal and sporadic. The former interns also engaged in inquiry about their practices. For some, as noted in Chapter 5, inquiry only came into play when there were clear external indications that there were puzzles to be solved or problems to be addressed that were difficult to ignore. For other interns, inquiry into their practice was a constant even when everything appeared to be going well. The fact that these individuals were willing to inquire even when things were going well would lead to the conclusion that they were open to possible changes in beliefs and assumptions. If they are not, it is difficult to explain why they would inquire when everything seems to be going smoothly. On the

other hand, the claim might be made that those former interns who only engaged in inquiry when provoked by external conditions may be less willing to question basic beliefs and assumptions. It might be useful for this PDS program to identify structures and processes that would engage interns in more frequent questioning of their own beliefs and assumptions about teaching.

This particular PDS may want to consider the fact that some of the interns in this study seemed to confuse having an inquiry stance toward teaching with using inquiry as a teaching method. Both having an inquiry stance toward teaching and teaching through inquiry are important skills to have, however, this PDS may want to make sure their interns know the difference between the two. Perhaps this PDS program may also want to consider how to share what an inquiry stance toward teaching is, what it looks like, and why it's important with their perspective teachers. As the interns are learning from their mentor teachers, their PDAs may want to point out traits of an inquiry stance that their mentors are showing to the interns. For example, they may want to consciously point out when a mentor is questioning his/her practice, how they go about finding answers, etc. This may help the interns to see that having an inquiry stance toward teaching is not just about conducting one inquiry project or about using inquiry as a teaching method with their students. This could also help interns have a better understanding of what it means to be a lifelong learner.

As I was conducting the study, I found that some of the participants had the same mentors and some participants had the same PDAs. I wonder how that influenced the development of these former interns' inquiry stances toward teaching. Was it just a coincidence? For the interns with a strong inquiry stance toward teaching, does that mean

that the mentor(s) or PDA(s) also have strong inquiry stance toward teaching or at least have the ability to help new teachers gain those traits? What could, if anything, be said about the mentor(s) and PDA(s) of the participants that did not seem to have strong inquiry stances? Could a PDA help an intern develop an inquiry stance toward teaching if even the mentor teacher did not seem to have one? What implications would that have for the relationships created in this PDS if these questions were studied?

#### Implications for PDS work and Teacher Education

Teacher education programs that do not require interns to reflect upon their teaching and conduct a formal inquiry project may want to consider adding these elements into their teaching programs. Year-long teaching experiences may not be possible in all settings but other PDSs and teacher education programs should consider how they can provide a year-long experience or at least a longer internship/student teaching experience than the traditional semester long experience. This provides prospective teachers with an extended opportunity to observe, reflect, and ask questions.

#### Implications for schools

Earlier we learned that “PDSs promise to develop more effective teachers and to reverse three aspects of socialization to teaching that have defined schools’ approaches to teach learning in the past: “Figure it out yourself”; “do it all yourself”; and “keep it to yourself” (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 8). This particular PDS works very hard to reverse these aspects by encouraging their preservice interns to work together, ask questions, and share their work with others. We learned that although the participants in this study were, for the most part, able to continue developing as teachers in this way, this is not always the case. One former intern shared how it was very hard for her to have the



freedom to teach the way she is comfortable teaching due to the environment she was placed in. The teachers she worked with were uncomfortable with the fact that she might want to try anything new or do anything differently from them. Another former intern was very concerned about the test scores because his school strongly stresses this. He felt that his teaching (and inquiry stance toward teaching) was sometimes influenced by this because he feels that some of the teaching he does is a bit “prescribed.”

This shows us that no matter how well we prepare these teachers, we have to put some responsibility on the schools they work in to continue the environment where teachers have a voice and good teaching is taking place. It has to be more than just acceptable that teachers ask questions about their practice. It has to be encouraged and their questions need to be valued.

School districts need to develop an induction program that would support new teachers as they begin their careers. Most schools provide their new teachers with mentors. They should carefully consider how these mentors are chosen. They may want to have new teachers keep a reflection journal with their mentor teacher. School districts may also want to have their new teachers conduct an inquiry project as Jacob’s school had their teachers work on a school improvement plan that they chose. School districts will want to create an open environment in which teachers feel safe to ask their questions and make their teaching public. Questions should be encouraged and support should be provided to help the new teachers answer their questions.

### **Future Research**

Seven former interns participated in this study and they were purposively selected based on the fact that they said they would participate, their teaching context, and their

years of teaching experience. It would be worthwhile to continue to collect data on more former interns of this PDS to see if the results would be similar to the results of this study. It would also be interesting to visit these same interns ten years from now to see how they have continued to develop as teachers and as teacher inquirers. Is their inquiry stance toward teaching so strong now because they are still relatively new teachers and still have lots of questions about teaching? Will they continue to ask questions or will they come to a point in their careers when they are satisfied with what they know and how they teach their students? A researcher may want to consider studying former interns for an extended period of time to really see how they do or do not carry out an inquiry stance toward teaching in their daily practice. One of the limitations of this study is that the data is based on what the former interns say they do. It would be interesting for a researcher to spend an extended period of time with each of them to see what their inquiry stance really looks like in practice.

As mentioned earlier, as I conducted the interviews I noticed that some of the interns either had the same PDA or the same mentor. It would be interesting to further study the impact a preservice teacher's mentor and/or supervisor has on an intern's development as a teacher and a teacher inquirer. How experienced do mentors and/or supervisors need to be to help a preservice teacher develop an inquiry stance toward teaching? What types of experiences could mentors and/or supervisors have that would help them better work with preservice teachers? Did the mentors and supervisors that worked with these particular former interns do anything particular that could be "captured" and shared with other mentors and supervisors?

PDSs are still relatively new. Not all preservice teachers can have a yearlong internship experience. Some more traditional student teaching experiences may not provide preservice teachers with the time necessary to conduct an inquiry project if they are only in their placement classrooms for a few weeks before they move to a new placement. Further research could be done to determine how we can take what we've learned about teacher development in relation to cultivating an inquiry stance toward teaching and apply it to various student teaching contexts.

We learned in this study that teaching context, particularly teacher colleagues, did impact the development of the inquiry stances of the participants in this study. My final wondering is what type of school environments can be created to best encourage an inquiry stance in teachers and how can it be created?

## **Conclusion**

This study shows how the PDS motivated and/or inspired former interns to take the risk and study their own learning and teaching through inquiry. Asking questions about their practice is one of the best ways for teachers to continuously learn more about teaching and student learning. "Questions and challenges remain as to the most efficient way to train future teachers to be reflective gatherers and users of student performance data" (Sanders, Sterner, Michaelis, Mowry & Buff, 2004, p. 108).

This study also helps build the PDS literature about teacher inquiry and research. Data about how a number of former interns are experiencing their beginning years of teaching, particularly in relation to their inquiry stance, was collected in order to add to the research of prospective teachers and professional development schools. "With hundreds of prospective teachers now learning to teach in the situated context of a PDS,

little is known about the relationship between teacher preparation in this context and how PDS graduates experience their first year of teaching” (Gerono-Snow, Silva, & Dana, 2001, p. 35).

We can now say that the PDS program does seem to prepare teachers to have and maintain an inquiry stance throughout their teaching careers. We now know that an inquiry stance may not look exactly the same for everyone but it does not mean that it is not there. We know that different factors in a teacher’s work setting can influence the extent to which his or her inquiry stance is visible. By examining the long-term impact of PDS preparation, we now have a better understanding of what an inquiry-oriented stance is and how to prepare preservice teachers with an inquiry-oriented stance toward teaching.

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## APPENDIX A SURVEY

Mary Beth Amond, principal investigator  
Survey Format for Former PDS Interns

### Section 1: Implied Consent

**Please read the following implied consent form before completing the survey.**

**Implied Informed Consent Form for Social Science Research**  
The Pennsylvania State University

**Title of Project:** The Impact of Learning to teach in a PDS

**Principal Investigator:** Mary Beth Amond, Graduate Student  
163 Chambers Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 235-7861; [mx172@psu.edu](mailto:mx172@psu.edu)

**Advisor:** Dr. James Nolan  
204G Rackley Building  
University Park, PA 16802  
(814) 865-2243; [n78@psu.edu](mailto:n78@psu.edu)

**Purpose of the Study:** The purpose of this research study is to study the impact of learning to teach in a Professional Development School (PDS).

**Procedures to be followed:** You will be asked to complete this survey. If you are willing to participate in an interview you can provide your contact information at the end of the survey. If you are selected to participate in an interview you will be contacted by me through email to set up a time for the interview. The interview will take approximately 60 minutes. It is possible that I may have clarification questions after the interview is conducted and may contact you for 1-2 follow-up interviews that would be brief and could be conducted via email or telephone.

**Discomforts and Risks:** There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life. If a question makes you uncomfortable for any reason you can decline from answering the question. You may also end your participation in the study at any time.

**Benefits:** You might learn more about yourself by participating in this study.

The research will help us learn more about new teacher preparation in a Professional Development School (PDS). This study can help us find out about the benefits or disadvantages of being prepared as a new teacher in a PDS.

**Duration:** The survey should take approximately 20-30 minutes. If you volunteer and are selected for an interview, the interview will last for approximately 60 minutes. If any follow-up interviews are needed they will take no more than 30 minutes of your time.

**Statement of Confidentiality:** Your responses to the survey will be recorded anonymously regardless if you decide to volunteer to be interviewed or not. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology used. No guarantees can be made regarding the interception of data sent via the Internet by any third parties. The Office for Research Protections and the Social Science Institutional Review Board may review records related to this project. In the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared. I will know the identity of the interview participants but in the event of any publication or presentation resulting from the research, no personally identifiable information will be shared and pseudonyms will be used.

**Right to Ask Questions:** You can ask questions about this research study. Contact Mary Beth Amond at 814-235-7861 with questions. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, contact The Pennsylvania State University's Office for Research Protections at (814) 865-1775.

**Voluntary Participation:** Your decision to be in this research is voluntary. You can stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

Clicking 'I agree' means that you have read the information in this form and consent to take part in the research.

You can print this form and keep it for your records or future reference.

This informed consent form was reviewed and approved by the Social Science Institutional Review Board (IRB#22065) at The Pennsylvania State University on XX/XX/XXXX. It will expire on XX/XX/XXXX. (J Mathieu).

**Thank you for reading the implied consent form. Please click on 'I agree' or 'I disagree' now.**

<b>I agree</b>	<b>I disagree</b>
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**(If they clicked on I agree they were taken to the first page of the survey. If they clicked on I disagree they were taken to a page that thanked them for their time.)**

**Section 2:** Directions for part 1

Please answer the following questions to provide some background information.

	<b>Response</b>
1. What year did you complete the PDS program?	
2. What grade levels have you taught?	
3. What grade are you currently teaching in?	

	<b>Response</b>
4. What type of a school district are you teaching in? (eg. Urban, rural, suburban)	
5. State you are teaching in? (PA, OH, etc.)	
6. County Location of district	

	<b>Response</b>
7. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are African American	
8. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are Asian Pacific Islander	
9. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are Caucasian	
10. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are Hispanic	
11. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are Native American	
12. Estimate the percentage of student in your current classroom that are Other, please specify	
13. Estimate the number of students in your current class that are eligible for free and reduced lunch.	

14. On a scale of one to five with one being very different and 5 being very similar, rate the degree of similarity between the context in which you are now teaching and the PDS context

1	2	3	4	5
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15. Briefly describe the major similarities between the two contexts.

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16. On a scale of one to five with one being very different and 5 being very similar, rate the degree of similarity between your current core beliefs about teaching and teachers and your beliefs about teaching and teachers when you left the PDS.

1	2	3	4	5
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17. Briefly state the beliefs that have stayed the same.

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18. Briefly state the beliefs that have changed

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PREV	NEXT
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## Section 3. Part 2 – Vignettes

**Please read the following vignettes. Think about the teachers in each vignette and how you do (or don't) relate to them. Check whether you are a lot like the teacher, somewhat like the teacher, or very different from the teacher. Then explain your response.**

19. Molly was excited to begin a new science unit with her second grade class. However, once she read over the lessons included in the unit provided by the district she was disappointed. The lesson guides did not match her ideas about how she was hoping to teach science. After talking with a few other teachers, Molly decided that it was best if she taught the unit the way it was written. That way she would be sure that she covered everything she was supposed to even if it wasn't the way she would have approached the unit.

\_\_\_\_\_ Molly is a lot like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Molly is a somewhat like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Molly is very different from me.

20. Briefly explain your response.

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21. Natalie always thought a great deal about the students in her second grade classroom. This year she had one particular student that really seemed to occupy her mind. His name was Dudley. Before the school year began, Natalie was warned by teachers that had taught in the district longer about Dudley. She was told that Dudley would not be a very bright student and that his sister had been the same way so she shouldn't expect much from him. Once the school year began, Natalie found that Dudley did seem to be a little behind the rest of her students, particularly in reading and writing. However, she was determined to hold him to high expectations and wondered how she could reach him. After getting to know Dudley better, she found he had a lot of knowledge about automobiles and helped his grandfather often in a car garage. Natalie wondered if Dudley's love of automobiles could help interest Dudley in reading and writing. Natalie began to tailor Dudley's instruction to meet his needs and interests. For example, she

found books about automobiles for Dudley to read and encouraged Dudley to write about his experiences helping his grandfather. Natalie kept a log of her adjustments to Dudley's lessons and their impact – successful or not. By the end of the year Natalie was still worried about Dudley's progress in both areas. He was still not where he should be. She thought it would be helpful to share her findings with Dudley's teacher for the next year. She hoped to share what she had tried and what was and wasn't working for Dudley.

\_\_\_\_\_ Natalie is a lot like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Natalie is somewhat like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Natalie is very different from me.

22. Briefly explain your response.

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23. Wendy believed in using stations to teach reading and writing to her students. She has researched different ways to teach reading and writing and experimented with different methods. As a result she developed different reading and writing stations to meet the developmental needs of her students. One parent didn't like the sound of "stations" and stopped by to see Wendy after school. The parent complained about the students moving around so much and sometimes working at an independent listening station. She felt with all the moving around the children didn't have much time to learn. Wendy listened to the parent's complaint, thanked her for sharing her feelings, and simply told the parent that she still felt using stations worked best for her and her classroom. The parent left not looking entirely convinced but appeared happier that she had shared her thoughts.

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendy is a lot like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendy is somewhat like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Wendy is very different from me.

24. Briefly explain your response.

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25. Julie is currently in her fourth year of teaching. She has worked very hard to learn the curriculum and develop her lesson plans over the past few years. Julie feels that she has become the teacher she had hoped to be. This year Julie really feels her classroom is running smoothly and her lessons are going well. Teaching has become automatic for Julie and she doesn't have to spend too much time thinking about her teaching. Now she has much more time to focus on things other than school.

\_\_\_\_\_ Julie is a lot like me (or at least the way I hope to be).

\_\_\_\_\_ Julie is somewhat like me.

\_\_\_\_\_ Julie is very different from me.

26. Briefly explain your response.

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27. If you are willing to discuss this survey in more detail and participate in 1-3 interviews, please fill out the table below.

Name	
Grade currently teaching in	
Email address	
Mailing address	
Telephone number	
Best way to contact you? (email, phone, etc.)	

PREV	NEXT
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#### Section 4. Thank You

Thanks for your help, Mary Beth

PREV	DONE
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## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me about the context in which you are teaching?  
How does it compare to SCASD?  
If necessary - (For prompting – grade level, work in teams?, curriculum, etc?)
2. Tell me about the way you view/approach teaching?  
Give me some examples or incidents or tell me a story that illustrates the view or approach to teaching that you described above.
3. Why do you view teaching that way or what factors or experiences have played an important role in shaping how you view teaching?
4. If they have not mentioned it yet, then ask:  
What role does inquiry play in your approach to teaching?  
Can you give me some examples, stories, or incidents that illustrate the role that inquiry plays?  
Have you completed any inquiries, formal or informal, since you left the PDS?
5. What do you remember about your PDS experience?  
If they do not mention it,  
What do you remember about your inquiry and the inquiry course?  
How were you most supported through your inquiry?  
What impact, if any, did that preparation in inquiry have on the way you view teaching?  
What makes it easy or difficult for you to engage in inquiry in your present context?
6. Is there anything you would like to add that I have not asked about?

## Vita

Mary Beth Amond

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### **EDUCATION:**

- 2002 – 2008 Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania  
Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Curriculum and Instruction  
with a concentration in Curriculum and Supervision
- 2000 – 2002 Gannon University, Erie, Pennsylvania  
M. Ed Degree in Curriculum & Instruction
- 1995 – 1999 Pennsylvania State University, State College, Pennsylvania  
Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education with a  
Minor in Human Development and Family Studies

### **OCCUPATIONAL EXPERIENCE:**

- 2007 – 2008 Millcreek Township School District, Erie, PA – Gifted Education  
Teacher – Kindergarten through Fifth Grades
- 2006 – 2007 Millcreek Township School District, Teacher – Second Grade
- 2002 – 2006 Research Assistant and Professional Development Associate (PDA)  
in Penn State's Elementary Professional Development School  
(A PDA is similar to a student teacher supervisor)
- 2001 – 2002 Corry Area School District, Corry, PA – First Grade Teacher
- 1999 – 2001 Corry Area School District – Full Day Kindergarten Teacher

### **COLLEGE COURSES TAUGHT:**

- 2003 – 2005 Supervised elementary PDS interns (student teachers) in  
Clinical Application of Instruction in Elementary Education  
(CI 495A & CI 495B)
- 2003 – 2006 Supervised elementary PDS interns (student teachers) in Practicum  
of Student Teaching – Elementary and Kindergarten Education  
(CI 495 D) and Professional Development Practicum (CI 495 F)
- 2003 – 2005 Co-taught Creating and Sustaining Classroom Learning  
Environments Course (CS 405/EDLDR 405)
- 2003 – 2006 Co-taught Teacher as Inquirer Course (CI 501/EDLDR 501)
- 2004 Teacher Research Course, Penn State Behrend, for teachers  
at the Corry Area School District, (CI 498)

### **CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AT:**

- Professional Development Schools National Conference in 2006  
Holmes Partnership Conferences in 2006, 2005, 2004, & 2003  
PA Association of Colleges & Teacher Educators Conferences in 2004, 2003 & 2002