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# To Love and Hate Every Moment of the First Year of Teaching: a Case Study of Beginning Teachers in Three Schools

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To Love and Hate Every Moment of the First Year of Teaching: A Case Study of  
Beginning Teachers in Three Schools

A Dissertation Presented

by

Laurie Hodgdon

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

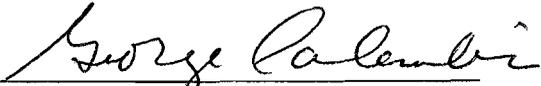
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for the Degree of Doctor of Education  
Specializing in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

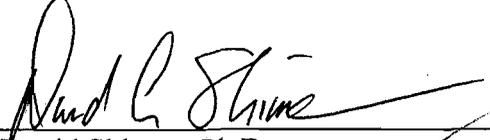
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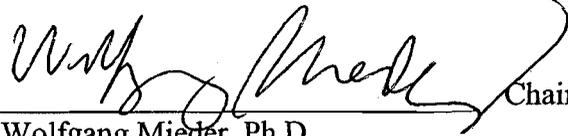
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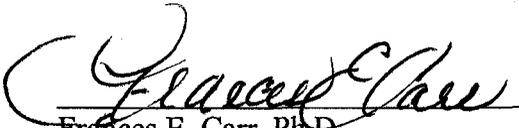
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## ABSTRACT

**Norah, an urban voice:** *[Teaching is not what I expected!] Not at all! I guess I really expected it to be a lot more enjoyable than it has been. I know it has been rough because it is the first year. And it is always going to be rough in your first year. But I never expected it to be like this. I never thought I'd feel so down and so incompetent. It has been very difficult and I think a lot of it didn't have to happen. A lot of my grief and a lot of my uncertainties about myself as a person, about myself as a teacher, and about the teaching profession—I just don't think they were necessary...I have always been a go-getter and throughout the I [have] always continued to do my best. But there have been times this year when I felt so small that I couldn't even scrape myself off the floor.*

False expectations, shattered dreams, and serious attacks on one's competence and self-worth—these are the all too common experiences of beginning teachers. Teaching is a demanding and at times debilitating job that requires extraordinary expertise in human relations, tremendous organizational abilities, profound patience, and the wherewithal to make hundreds of situation-specific decisions over the course of a school day. And, as Norah so vividly illustrates by her comments, the first year of teaching is often an especially trying and even traumatic time for those new to the profession.

The difference between a beginning teacher and an experienced one is that the beginner asks, "How am I doing?" and the experienced teacher asks, "How are the children doing?" In *Educating Esme: Diary of a Teacher's First Year*, Esme Raji Codell reports that her own mentor shared that wisdom with her. Probably most teachers would find that the comparison rings true: The survival priority is no joke for those aspiring to join the ranks.

What beginners and career teachers have most in common, however, is care for children. To be an effective *and* a caring teacher, a new teacher must ask many more questions than "How are the kids and I doing?" during the first years. Among them: How do I get their attention; lead a class discussion; keep, but expand, their interests; discipline fairly; organize a classroom; make curriculum and assessments meaningful; value diversity; build character; use technology; and continue learning as a teacher? The list goes on. It will not do for those who want to be master teachers to put off asking questions that do not begin with the *how* word; from the very beginning, they must attempt to discover whom, what, and why they teach.

Besides offering advice and sympathy (a stapler and an aspirin, as one teacher put it), what can the profession of teaching do to support its newest colleagues? That it is becoming increasingly necessary for the profession to do more for beginners than it has in the past is clear. A baby boomlet combined with a retirement boom will result in a need for 2 million new teachers in the next 10 years. The cost of preparing and recruiting teachers grows higher in light of the statistic that tells us that 50 percent of newcomers will quit within their first five years in the classroom. The public is expressing its concerns, too--concern with unprepared teachers, concern with out-of-field teachers, concern that the best teachers are spread too thin.

Teaching is one of the few careers in which the least-experienced members face the greatest challenges and the most responsibilities. The problems that beginners experience are intrinsic to the teaching profession and to the conditions of the school environment (Brock & Grady, 2001; Gordon, 1999).

Beginning teachers are making decisions and judgments about themselves in their first-year of teaching. What will these decisions and judgments be if they are not given the opportunities to reflect, both personally and professionally about themselves around the following three concepts: 1) competence, 2) performance, and 3) effectiveness (Debolt, 1992). This research looks at the three beginning teachers as they make their way through the first year of teaching. The voices of the beginning teachers studied will provide eloquent and authentic testimony to the importance and vital nature of teaching and the impact of relationships begun, sustained and renewed along the way.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to thank my committee members who were more than generous with their expertise and precious time. A special thanks to Dr. Katharine Shepherd, my advisor for her countless hours of reflecting, reading, encouraging, and most of all patience throughout the entire process. Thank you Dr. Wolfgang Mieder, Dr. David Shiman and Dr. George Salembier for their support and devotion to my committee and the process.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my colleagues and friends at UVM and the Milton Town School District for their support and encouragement.

Finally, I would like to thank the beginning teachers who assisted me with this research. Their excitement and willingness to participate made the research and the completion of this dissertation a learning and growing experience for me.

## DEDICATION

To

My parents,

Allen and Bonnie Hodgdon,

Who made all of this possible,

For their endless encouragement, patience, and

Individual contributions to the field of education.

And also to

D. Malcolm and Ethel Hamilton and Clifton and Violet Hodgdon,

My beloved grandparents,

For their strong beliefs in education and for the integral role they played in the development of my voice.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Fully responsible for the instruction of his students from his first working day, the beginning teacher performs the same tasks as the twenty-five-year veteran. Tasks are not added sequentially to allow for gradual increase in skill and knowledge; the beginner learns while performing the full complement of teaching duties.

D. C. Lortie (1975)

### Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study

In the United States today there is a major teacher shortage, exacerbated by the attrition of large numbers of teachers – approximately 50 percent – leaving the classroom each year (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998). Many of those teachers leave for retirement, but almost as many leave for other reasons, which include dissatisfaction with teaching (Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Whitener, & Weber, 1996; Boe, Bobbitt, Cook, Barkanic, & Maislin, 1998; Ingersoll, 2002). With the growing enrollment of students, caused by increased birth rates and immigration from other countries, coupled with a large wave of retirements and turnover of younger teachers, the demand for new entrants to teaching was estimated at two million to two and one half million between 1998 and 2008. These estimates come from Darling-Hammond (1999), the director of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, who also reported that the most serious levels of teacher shortages are in inner cities and in the rapidly growing South and West. Darling-Hammond said that student enrollment was expected to increase by more than 10 percent over the next few years in many states in the West and South and new teachers will be in great demand. By 2013, 3.5 million new teachers will need to be

hired to support increased enrollment in public schools and to replace retiring teachers (Hull, 2004).

The teacher preparation programs in the US have not kept up with the demand for new teachers and, consequently, there are large numbers of under-prepared and uncertified teachers hired each year. Darling-Hammond explained that 31 percent of New York City's and New England's new teachers in 1994 were unlicensed and another 15 percent had substandard licenses (e.g., emergency licenses, temporary certificates). This contrasted drastically with states like Wisconsin and Minnesota, where all of their new teachers had met certification requirements in 1994. States like New York that issue emergency licenses have tended to renew those emergency licenses for several years while the candidates have made little progress towards gaining certification to teach.

According to Gomez and Grobe (1990), because of the shortage of certified teachers, many states and districts have begun hiring teachers through short-term programs where beginning teachers have only a few weeks of preparation before entering a classroom of students. Not only does this hurt the students but also it tends to be only a short-term solution. Gomez and Grobe said that 60 percent of people hired through these programs leave the profession by their third year as compared to 10 to 15 percent traditionally trained teachers whose attrition rates are 10-15%.

The need for certified teachers in the classrooms has raised the question: What factors go into beginning teachers' decisions to stay or leave the teaching profession? This central question guided the dissertation study that I have completed. I conducted a qualitative study which focused mainly on: (1) the perceptions and expectations of first year teachers; (2) their relations with their students; (3) their relations with other teachers;

and (4) their relations with administrators.

I chose these foci because prior studies suggested that new teachers' difficulties are associated with unrealistic expectations, feelings of isolation, discipline problems with their students, and lack of support by administration and other teachers. As the literature review in the next chapter shows, prior research suggests that beginning teachers tend to enter the field with high expectations for what they are going to accomplish socially, for instance, to keep students engaged, to be student-centered (Marso & Pigge, 1987). These high expectations of beginning teachers may cause emotional exhaustion according to Schwab, Jackson, and Schuler (1986).

With respect to the relations of first-year teachers with their students, the research (e.g., Odell, 1986) has pointed to major challenges that teachers experience, which include what has been known sometimes as “discipline“ and other times as “classroom management.” Surprisingly, many first-year teachers in these studies said they were prepared for discipline with different techniques and ideas, but by the third month of school, they had no clue at what to do next. In the area of relationships with other teachers, studies found isolation and lack of support as major problems for new teachers. In many ways, they were on their own to set learning objectives, to present units and lessons, and to handle problems that might arise (e.g., Bullough, 1989; Marlow, Inman, & Betancourt-Smith, 1997, Carroll & Fulton, 2004). As for relations with administrators, studies (e.g., Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997) indicated that new teachers needed support from administrators also. Often, it seemed, they did not get it.

#### Purpose of the Study

In a set of case studies, I examined one year in the teaching lives of three first-year

teachers: in rural, suburban, and urban high schools who might or might not stay in the profession. I was able to explore the experiences that each beginning teacher had during their first initial year of teaching and the decisions that they made regarding their positions as teachers. My data came from in-depth interviews, continuous descriptive observations, and analysis of documents and other artifacts.

I was interested in using the case study form of qualitative research so that I could investigate the complexity of individual experiences. According to Hamel with Dufour and Fortin (1993), case study provides the opportunity to establish close ties with the field through a detailed, descriptive story of the actors. By observing each case one on one, I was able to observe how each teacher focused on his/her particular situation in the classroom and school environment – how he/she fitted in the social network of the school.

The use of case study also provided me the opportunity to examine each individual's particular situation and compare and contrast the three individuals' lives. As Stake (1978) explains, "particularization does deserve praise" because it allows the researcher to understand the "full and thorough knowledge of the particular" case which can aid in the recognition of similarities and differences that "exist in and out of context" (p. 6).

Merriam (1998) defines case study as the focus of a "particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon" (p. 29). The case study reveals important attributes about the phenomenon and what it might represent. According to Merriam, case studies have special features: "*Particularistic* – focusing on a particular subject, *descriptive* – rich, 'thick' description of the phenomenon being studied, and *heuristic* – the illumination of the understanding of the subject being studied by the reader" (p. 29). Merriam also explains that case study is used to understand one unique particular subject, but with the

use of several case studies that are compared, generalizations can be considered in the final analysis. She also said that in some cases it may be easier to understand and answer a question on an individual basis than to try to generalize on a much larger scale.

I also conducted cross-case comparisons (Feagin, Orurn, & Sjoberg, 1991; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 1994), looking for recurring themes and patterns across the three first-year teachers as well as for contrasts. According to Yin, it is important to do both the comparisons when one has multiple cases – to see the case study as individual and also to see how the different cases can actually parallel or contrast with one another. Yin also explains that the use of predetermined questions and specific procedures of coding and analysis enhances the generalizability of findings.

#### Significance of the Study

As a teacher, student-teacher supervisor, administrator and mentor, I have seen the struggles that most beginning teachers encounter. Many are insecure and unaware of how to deal with the complex situations they face. First-year teachers must be prepared to enter the classroom with the self-confidence needed to succeed and stay in the teaching profession.

The case studies that I have completed will help educators understand individual first-year teachers' accomplishments and struggles as they complete their first year in the classroom, and it will contribute to the literature on teachers' lives and experiences. Through my study of three first-year teachers, I understood the struggles and triumphs of being a beginning teacher and communicated what I learned to others. From my study, people will not be able to make the kinds of generalities that come from large-scale studies. Instead generalities can be made on a smaller scale with the use of the

comparisons and detailed descriptions of each case. As Stake (1995) explains, case study seems a poor basis for generalization, but certain generalizations can be drawn. Stake states:

Generalizations about a case or a few cases in a particular situation might not be thought of as generalizations and may need some label such as *petite generalizations*, but there are generalizations that regularly occur all along the way in case study. (p. 7)

Stake (1978) also explains that “truth” – “to speak not of underlying attributes, objective observables, and universal forces, but of perceptions and understanding that come from immersion in and holistic regard for the phenomena” (p. 6) – is important in case study. With that, I also attempted to catch the complexity of single cases and of patterns that might be revealed through cross-case comparisons.

Finally, the insights I gained into the reactions of first-year teachers might help in transforming teacher education programs so that they can more adequately prepare beginning teachers more adequately for the profession. There have been changes made in the teacher education programs throughout the years, but still many beginning teachers are leaving the profession. With continuing studies, more data can be collected that may help in changing or adding course work that might better prepare beginning teachers for their first school and first classrooms.

According to Stake (1978), it is difficult, if not impossible, to reduce a qualitative study to an isolated variable or to a particular hypothesis. Because of this, a specific hypothesis was not suggested but instead a set of questions was prepared to begin the study. As the study progressed, additional questions emerged during the process of the

study.

### Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, I focused initially on four major aspects of the first-year teachers' teaching experience: their perceptions and expectations; their relations with their students; their relations with other teachers; and their relations with administrators. In prior studies of beginning teachers, which are reviewed in the next chapter, these seem to be the major factors that contributed to attrition, and thus I used them as an initial frame for organizing my study. I touched on them in my interviews, noted them in my observations, and saw what I could learn about them in the documents that I collected.

The following five questions guided the study:

1. What are the expectations and perceptions of the three beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?
2. How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?
3. How do beginning teachers relate to other teachers in their schools?
4. What kinds of relations do they have with the administrators?
5. What goes into beginning teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature in this chapter covers four main areas: the expectations of new teachers, the relations first-year teachers have with their students, the relations that first-year teachers have with other teachers, and the relations that first-year teachers have with administrators. As the literature shows, new teachers tend to articulate their expectations and perceptions in terms of relations with others, and those relationships tend to be major considerations in their decisions to stay with teaching or leave the profession.

### Met and Unmet Expectations of New Teachers

In this section of the literature review, I focus on the social realities of teaching. In 1975 Lortie published a classic study titled *Schoolteacher: A Sociological Study*. This important study about first-year teachers has been cited over and over again by other researchers. In his sociological study of 94 teachers in the Boston Metropolitan Area, Lortie found what he called “Five Attractors to Teaching”: (1) the *interpersonal* theme – a desire to work with people; (2) the *service* theme – performance of a special mission in our society; (3) the *continuation* theme – work in an environment that they enjoyed in their youth; (4) the *material benefits* theme – attractions such as money, prestige, and security; (5) the theme of *time compatibility* the work schedules of teachers. For this study, which began in the early 1960’s and continued through the beginning of the 1970’s, Lortie (1975) completed an historical review, reviewed national surveys, and conducted numerous interviews. The places where he interviewed teachers became known as “Five Towns” because of the design he used for sampling a five-cell sample – with each cell having equal numbers of teachers. The samples were equally divided in elementary and senior high school teachers who were from upper-income communities,

junior high school teachers from the middle range, and some elementary and high school teachers from the lower-income settings. Once Lortie divided the teachers into groups, with the advice of several consultants, he chose 13 schools which ranged across the income strata with teachers who worked in six elementary schools, five junior high schools, and two senior high schools.

From his interviews, Lortie (1975) learned that many people go into the field of education because they want to work with other people – they want to *serve* others and to *work with* others. The idea that teaching is a valued service is important to teachers. Lortie pointed out that if teaching is to be defined as reputable and honored as a service, then the cultural context – the community – must also uphold that service as a special ideal. Lortie said it is “service (the aura of its mission) that sets [teaching] apart from many other ways to earn a living” (p. 32). Other researchers have continued to find this theme of service. For instance, Joseph and Green (1986) also found that the desire to work with and serve others is a basic motive for people’s decisions to go into teaching. In their survey of more than 200 students at Northeastern Illinois University, they noted that more than 90 percent of the students expressed a desire to be of service to others.

Although research has shown that teachers go into teaching for altruistic reasons, studies also have shown teacher dissatisfaction is due to the social world which they enter. In fact, the very thing that has attracted people to teaching – relations with others – can become most stressful for them. Fuller and Sown (1975) found in their work, published the same year as Lortie’s, that social “reality” is not what teachers expect. Fuller and Sown note that teaching can be “simply incredibly, unexpectedly, demanding” (p. 48).

In a study of 211 beginning teachers, with four subgroups (elementary, secondary, specialized, and special education teachers), Marso and Pigge (1987) wanted to find out if first-year teachers experienced any difference between their prior-to - employment expectations compared to their on-the-job reality. With the use of a survey instrument, they had all of the 1982-84 teacher education graduates of Bowling Green State University who had completed their first or second year of full-time teaching, rate 24 working conditions. According to responses from 211 of these graduates, these conditions were the factors that had been linked in other studies to *reality shock* – the feeling that teaching is not all that they expected. Reality shock seemed to be evident for the elementary as well as secondary teachers when it came to work load, lack of equipment for teaching, help from inservice, class scheduling problems, and behavior of students. Elementary teachers reported the least amount of reality shock, while the secondary teachers in the urban school settings had the most problems with it. Marso and Pigge noted that even though the teachers received extensive, mandated 300 clock hours of preservice clinical and field experience, they still encountered reality shock.

In a more recent study, Goddard and Foster (2001) also found that beginning teachers tend to go through a kind of “shock” during their first year. After the nine neophyte teachers in their study began their initial year as teachers, they became concerned about such matters as classroom management and student discipline. The “gloss” seem to wear off for them, as they perceived the complexity of their new social worlds – meeting the needs of all their students, dealing with parents, meeting the expectations of administrators. They became concerned as to how they should handle everything they were supposed to deal with – lesson plans, management procedures,

relationships with students, parents, other teachers, administrators, and staff. Some became disillusioned and blamed their pre-service programs for not preparing them for the “real world” of the classroom and school environment. After they made it through the year, they began reevaluating and reflecting on their year and how they might have done things differently – “alternative routes across the Rubicon” – and they began to think about their futures as teachers.

What sorts of relations do beginning teachers have with the students they seek to help? What sorts of relations do they have with other teachers? What type of relations do they have with their principals and other administrators? The following three sections of this literature review focus on these three areas.

#### *Teachers’ Relations with Students*

Relations with students can come in many forms, and for first-year teachers those relations with students can be difficult. For this part of the review, I begin with quantitative studies, which were based on surveys for the most part, and then I review qualitative studies.

#### *Quantitative Studies*

Veenman (1984), often cited in studies on beginning teachers, accomplished the enormous task of reviewing 83 international studies on the relations between beginning teachers and their students. Of these studies reviewed by Veenman – all of which were based on teachers in first or second year of teaching – there were 55 from the United States, seven from West Germany, six from the United Kingdom, five from the Netherlands, four from Australia, two from Canada, two from Austria, one from Switzerland, and one from Finland. Almost all of the studies were completed by

questionnaires, most of which were based on a scale method of rating with points to the degree of which a problem was encountered (i.e., the biggest problem to the least). However, a few of the studies used the interview method of collecting data. Veenman explained that since in a number of cases the interview results had not been published, his review was mainly based on questionnaire studies.

Veenman (1984) found that relations with students were the most seriously perceived problem for beginning teachers and those relations were often defined in terms of “discipline.” According to Veenman, the reasons for the problems with discipline could not be determined from the data – whether they were due to the difference in educational systems or the social structure and contexts of the schools. Other aspects of relations with students included motivating students, dealing with their individual differences, and assessing their work.

In her study that used a means other than surveys, Odell (1986) found data that supported the prior studies that used questionnaires. In her study, 86 first-year and new elementary teachers worked collaboratively with their assigned clinical support teachers, who recorded the nature of assistance they provided. At the end of the year, Odell categorized and tabulated these data according to the frequency of different types of assistance. Odell pointed out in her study that, even though the new teachers needed help with “management” of students, the administrators and clinical support did not feel the need to provide this type of support. She also said that first-year teachers had a difficult time articulating their problems in dealing with their students, since that would seem to imply a lack of personal competence.

Other researchers continued to study the relations first-year teachers had with their

students. I have already mentioned the study by Marso and Pigge (1987), who discussed *reality shock*. These researchers found that relations with students, particularly with respect to discipline, caused difficulties at all levels of instruction. This researcher also found that behavior of students was a problem agreed upon by teachers of various grade levels and in all settings studied (rural, suburban, urban).

Another study concerning relations with students was conducted by Brock and Grady (1998), who studied not only the responses of beginning teachers but also the perceptions of principals towards their beginning teachers. The focus was on the role expectations of the first-year teachers. In analyzing surveys from 49 teachers and 56 principals, the researchers found that principals as well as the first-year teachers felt that “discipline” was the number-one-ranked problem for the beginning teachers. One teacher commented, “I was left on my own to develop a style of teaching and classroom management” (p. 180).

In a quantitative study of 304 beginning teachers in Hiroshima, Japan, San (1999) found, with the use of a questionnaire designed to measure the perceptions of the preparations that the beginning teachers received during their pre-service programs, that new elementary school teachers are more concerned with the development of skills of classroom management than are secondary teachers. This researcher found that beginning teachers learn through time and experience about students, their homes, and the communities which they live.

#### *Qualitative Studies*

Qualitative studies provided additional insights into the nature of teachers’ relations with students. For many first-year teachers, the problem with student relations

was of utmost importance. An early case study, involving multiple cases, was conducted to capture, map out, and describe the life-spaces of first-year teachers – the experience of living a particular life during a particular year (Applegate, Flora, Johnston, Lasley, Mager, & Ryan, 1977). In this case study of 18 teachers, including six elementary, six middle, and six high school teachers, the researchers found that first-year teachers expressed that, given their college training and natural abilities, they should not have had any problems in their relations with students. With the use of interviews, classroom observations, and telephone conversations, Applegate et al. explored various dimensions of first-year teachers' perception of teaching, one of which was relations with students. Several of the teachers reported a concern with students' attitudes that they had not expected, particularly in regard to the students' lack of respect for authority. The first-year teachers especially felt that they should not have had so many problems with their students due to behavior, and some of them were unhappy with their inability to “control” their classes. One teacher said that she “never thought that she would find herself wishing she had some other type of job” (p. 15).

In 1980, Ryan, Newman, Mager, Applegate, Lasley, Flora, and Johnston wrote a book, *Biting the Apple: Accounts of First-Year Teachers*, based on the Applegate et al. (1977) study of the lives of first-year teachers. This study reviewed the teaching experiences of 12 of the 18 first-year teachers, elementary and secondary, from Applegate et al.'s study. The data collected were based on two primary sources: classroom observations and interviews that focused on the first-year teachers' own perspectives on what was going on in their professional lives. For many of the first-year teachers in this study, just getting through the entire year was a struggle. The school year

had seemed to start smoothly, but by the middle of the academic year (December), the question of what to do next arose. Many of the teachers were tired and frustrated and felt that they took it out on the students. For one teacher, the sense of frustration came much earlier – as early as the first two weeks of instruction. She felt she had no influence on her students and the authority and power that she thought she had seemed to slide from her grasp. One of the first-year teachers said, “But control – I feel like I’ve completely lost control. I’ve lost my classes” (p. 66). Another teacher felt that the problems he had with his students – their not listening and not bringing supplies for the lab – were due to the frustration they had with him. They seemed not to like him and one student said, “We’re not learning anything here” (p. 190). Because of what the student said, the teacher worried that the students were not learning and this made the teacher become frustrated with himself.

Robert V. Bullough, Jr. completed a series of studies along with other researchers concerning the perceptions and realities of beginning teachers. The first, published in 1989, of a single teacher, was a particularly rich portrait of a teacher’s struggles. Kerrie, a first-year teacher in the case study, *First-Year Teachers: A Case Study*, realized early in the year that she did not have a “game plan.” Ironically, Bullough had chosen Kerrie from a cohort group of 22 university students at the University of Utah in part because of her apparent capacity to work well with students. He also noted her enthusiasm, her sense of humor, and her ability to communicate clearly and to vary instructional methods. Bullough interviewed Kerrie before school began in order to gain information about her expectations and concerns related to her role as a teacher. About a week after she began teaching, he began observing her in her

classroom. After each observation, Bullough interviewed her about the observation of the day, asking her questions about the various things he observed during the day and questions that arose from his analysis of the interview transcripts. By mid-year, he also interviewed four students from Kerrie's classroom and the principal from the school. Bullough continued observations and interviews throughout Kerrie's second year of teaching to determine if certain patterns from the first year of teaching continued.

In his study, Bullough (1989) found that Kerrie had a difficult time with classroom management. She had expressed concern, saying that she knew very little about her students and that this exacerbated the problem with management. She worried about "a boy who should have been in a resource room" (a separate program within the school designed for students with severe learning problems). She was most concerned that this student was not getting the attention that he needed for his learning disability and that he could not do the work he needed to do in her class. Kerrie said, "I don't know what to do" (p. 26).

Most interestingly, Kerrie was disturbed by the silence of some students – the silence that was almost worse than outbursts because she did not know what to do about a student who was uninterested. According to Bullough (1989), Kerrie was going through a form of *culture shock* – not understanding the student world she had entered. Because of this problem, Kerrie began to "give into" her students and lowered her standards, which only increased her frustrations. She had difficulty keeping students on task and dealing with unpredictable and contrary behavior. Kerrie said, "I have desperate moments.... Like this is not going to work, what will I do?" (p. 27). Eventually, Kerrie came up with a "game plan." First, she set up classroom rules. Then she routinized her classroom

activities in a purposeful and orderly manner. Finally, she identified appropriate activities and content to increase student attentiveness. Bullough explained that Kerrie's management plan – how she planned her lessons and behavior management program – did not suddenly appear. It took long hard work that emerged over the time period of the study.

Next, Bullough, Knowles, and Crow (1989) completed a teacher self-concept and student culture study that lasted a year and included seven first-year teachers as participants. The teachers had twice-monthly seminars, interviews every three weeks, and classroom observations that resulted in extensive field notes. Three of the beginning teachers – Lyle, a junior high school science teacher; Bonnie, a junior high school English teacher; and Helena, a senior high school English, debate, and Spanish teacher – were part of the final paper. They shared their teaching experiences and reflections about how those experiences affected their first-year of teaching. Each beginning teacher's experience was unique, as was the manner in which his or her individual situation was handled. For Lyle, teaching was never his first choice as a career and the problems he had with relation to discipline problems made his situation difficult. He said that he had a fear of losing control. He dwelled on classroom management and discipline rather than focusing on the quality of his planning. Bonnie felt that if her lessons were interesting she would not have problems with classroom management. She also felt, as a mother of five, that she would treat her students as her own children. Bonnie was a “teacher-nurturer” or a “teacher-parent” and that was how she began the school year. As the year drew on, she realized that it was difficult being the “teacher-parent” because these students were not her own children. She adjusted as the year

progressed and worked through her problems by concentrating on the lessons and not as much on the personal lives of the students. Finally, Helena, the subject-matter expert who came from a long line of teachers, had sworn at one time that she would never become a teacher. She felt that she had little time to plan. She taught three subjects – sophomore English, debate, and Spanish – and had a variety of expertise in the three areas. Her strength was in Spanish, she had a solid academic background in English, but she had little understanding of the subject of debate. She tried, as did Bonnie, to focus her lessons on her students’ interests and felt that, if she could teach something that her students liked, then they would behave in the classroom. She found that when she had not planned adequately ahead of time, she had more difficulties with her students than when she was prepared.

Bullough and Knowles (1991) completed a case study of another first-year teacher, Barbara. Barbara was chosen from a group of seven, newly hired first-year teachers who had volunteered to participate in a year-long semi-monthly seminar in which they discussed their individual teaching experiences. From the larger group Bullough and Knowles chose Barbara to complete their case study because she had, in their observations, the strongest and clearest concept of “self” as a teacher. As Bullough (1989) felt about Kerrie, Bullough and Knowles felt that Barbara had the best chance of becoming a “superior first-year public school teacher.” Data were collected with the use of a journal and curriculum “log” – to examine the thinking that the first-year teacher had about content matter change, as well as periodic classroom observations and individual interviews. Barbara, a high school English teacher, thought much like Bonnie in Bullough et al.’s (1989) study that teaching was just an extension of parenting. She

worried about connecting with her students on a personal level, and discipline was also a concern. She found that planning was time consuming but an exhilarating experience. Barbara, like Bonnie, was concerned with the ideal of “nurturing” as a “teacher-parent.” She found that the sacrifice of her family and her own health was becoming a problem. As the year went by, she decided that the sacrifice was too great and she could no longer jeopardize her family and her health in order to succeed as teacher.

A study by Bullough and Baughman (1997), a continuation of Bullough’s study (1989) of Kerrie, revealed some surprises. After eight years of teaching, Kerrie finally called it “quits.” Bullough had continued to interview Kerrie every few months and decided to renew their study three years after the original study began, resuming the observations and videotaping of Kerrie’s classes. After analyzing weekly observations, more than a year’s worth of interviews and two dozen videotaped classes, Bullough still felt that Kerrie was doing a good job teaching the students the subject matter, but Kerrie felt differently. She continued to think, since the first study, that her classroom management skills were not what they should be and she left teaching after 10 years. She did not abandon her need to serve; rather she rerouted her need of service to another line of work – counseling adults who had serious weight and health problems. According to Bullough, Kerrie felt “older,” “less tolerant,” and “increasingly frustrated” with her job in teaching. Kerrie said, “I found my ability to cope with daily occurrences in an accepting, loving manner was dwindling rapidly. I was losing not only my composure but my inner peace” (p. 177).

For many first-year teachers like Kerrie, the first few months are critical in establishing relations with students. In *Voices of Beginning Teachers*, Dollase (1992)

reported a case study of four first-year teachers and their mentors. One of these first-year teachers said that classroom management during her second month of teaching was virtually “impossible.” The method of data collection for this case study was observations, interviews, and questionnaires of the four first-year teachers and their mentors. Also interviewed were the experienced teachers, department chairs, and school principals who worked with the four teachers during their initial year of teaching. There were follow-up interviews held with each first-year teacher during the spring and summer of 1990 of their second year of teaching. Based on the findings, when it came to classroom management strategies, these new teachers were lost by October and seemed helpless and overwhelmed before December. They did not realize they needed to adjust their management strategies periodically, especially during peak periods of the year – holidays and breaks during the year. According to Dollase, the students had discerned whether or not their teachers would follow through on their classroom discipline policies. First-year teachers who did not have alternatives to their classroom management problems seemed to be lost by mid-year.

Another study that I reviewed concerning relations with students was a recent case study that was conducted by Bondy and McKenzie (1999). These researchers provided a very complex portrayal of the relations that a first-year teacher named Jim had with his students. In this eight-month-long case study, the researchers used tape-recorded interviews of Jim and interviews with 15 students from his classes. Five of Jim’s colleagues at his school were also interviewed, along with the principal at his school. While completing the study, Bondy and McKenzie collected written artifacts, which included lesson plans and unit plans, and teacher-prepared materials. Jim also kept

his own logs during the first few months of his teaching assignment and he turned them over to Bondy and McKenzie for data collection. The interviews, which were conducted like conversations, lasted about an hour each for Jim and about 15 to 30 minutes with the other participants.

Bondy and McKenzie (1999) found that Jim, like the first-year teachers in the other studies, had a classroom management problem with his students. He complained that discipline took most of his time and he struggled daily with trying to understand how he could cope with the teaching situation that he had chosen. Jim wanted to be able to relate to his students but felt that the students were disrupting his mission, which was teaching them. He described his struggle: "I am constantly, constantly having to discipline the entire class.... It's a constant battle to maintain order, and it's exhausting." Jim added: "The energy I use in management takes away from the energy I have for the curriculum" (p. 139). He was also frustrated with their lack of respect – not just to him but to each other as well as their disruptiveness and lack of interest. What makes this study particularly interesting is that much of his curriculum was directed to his students' social relations with others. Jim spent much time and energy planning experiences and attempting to teach his students – through such means of community service, scouts, and social skills development – new ways of communicating, working together, and solving problems.

Jim never expected to have the problems he had faced for his first year of teaching: student discipline problems and lack of interest from the students. Bondy and McKenzie (1999) found through their study of Jim that even a bright, energetic young man could experience periods of doubt and even regrets of going into the teaching profession.

Nothing had prepared Jim and the students for the challenges that were presented to them that school year.

For some first-year teachers, teaching is a “two-way street” between the teachers and their students. Dolley (1998) completed a study of a first year teacher, Scott. After analyzing the data collected – field notes, transcripts from four audio tapes, and unstructured interviews – certain recurring themes and key concepts emerged. Scott had an image of what a “good teacher” should be: creative, flexible, enthusiastic, and intuitive to teaching. He saw teaching as a “two-way street” and did not want to be a “master-authority” by directing and controlling his students’ acquisition of knowledge. For him teaching was a challenge that should be met head on by the teacher and the students, and he also felt that teaching did not require much effort or knowledge of teaching strategies. Scott did seem concerned about disconnection from his students and lack of interest on the part of his students, and he felt some frustration in his approach to teaching.

There was another study that focused on the traits of a “good teacher.” Norton (1997), after interviewing 42 first-year elementary teachers, found that beginning teachers feel that for a novice teacher to be effective, that teacher must be “caring, committed, creative, reflective in thinking, and have a strong internal locus of control” (p. 7). According to the first-year teachers interviewed, beginning teachers who did not have those traits would have a difficult time surviving in the classroom and working with administrators, other teachers, students, or parents.

Finally, Goddard and Foster (2001), mentioned earlier in their qualitative study of beginning teachers, found the persistence of some of the same problems identified in

prior studies, including difficult relationships with students. The nine neophyte teachers in their study found themselves struggling with the same problems beginning teachers had almost 20 years earlier. They found that these beginning teachers experienced ambiguity about dealing with classroom management and student discipline. They had their perceptions of classroom management, but once they stepped into the classroom they became confused about how to handle the students.

### *Teachers' Relations with Other Teachers*

Many researchers found that first-year teachers' relations with other teachers were extremely important. There were several studies that explored the many facets of the relationships of these two groups of teachers, including self-efficacy beliefs, mentor support, and support from other teachers. The studies reviewed here are divided in the same manner as those in the previous section: quantitative studies followed by qualitative studies.

#### *Quantitative Studies*

It seems that younger inexperienced teachers need high levels of collaboration with their peers in order to feel good about themselves in their new career. In a study dealing with teachers' self-efficacy beliefs, Chester and Beaudin (1996) asked 173 newly hired and novice teachers (in Connecticut public schools) to complete a multiple-item survey about school practices and cultures. When these responses were analyzed, the researchers concluded that, if new teachers had received support from experienced teachers in their school, their self-efficacy beliefs were enhanced. In contrast, if little attention was given to novice teachers, self-efficacy beliefs declined.

Other studies support this need that beginning teachers have support from their

colleagues. Marlow et al. (1997) found in their study of over 600 teachers that support from colleagues, particularly people who fill a mentor role, was important for beginning teachers. Marlow et al. took a sample of beginning teachers who were randomly selected from the mid-southern and southeastern US, including Louisiana, and contrasted them with more experienced teachers with 5 to 10 years of experience. They had given the teachers the Marlow-Hierlmeier Teacher Profile, a 31-item survey instrument, which deals with information about characteristics that related to teacher career stability. This report was part of an ongoing study of teachers in various areas of the US. When the study commenced, the inexperienced teachers had levels of confidence about teaching that were similar to those reported by their more experienced colleagues. At the conclusion of the study, though, groups differed in terms of their confidence about teaching. However, this difference between groups was less if the new teachers had had mentoring from colleagues. It seemed that beginning teachers need colleagues to mentor them by working cooperatively, sharing teaching strategies, and helping them solve their problems. When the beginning teachers in the study were helped in this manner, they felt less isolated and they developed a greater sense of self-esteem and self efficacy.

Other studies report some researchers found that support from mentors and other teachers could alleviate stress in beginning teachers. Punch and Tuetteman (1996) conducted a study on the psychological distress that was associated with misbehavior of students and excessive societal expectations and found that teachers' stress could be alleviated by praise and recognition from fellow colleagues. Punch and Tuetteman used a questionnaire to assess stress levels of over 500 Western Australian secondary education teachers, with more than 50 percent of the sample being first-year teachers. According to

the findings, when teachers reporting a high level of distress had support from their colleagues, their levels of distress decreased. Those first-year teachers who had many opportunities to exchange ideas with their colleagues and socialize with their colleagues tended to have less stress in their work environment. One of them explained: “The teachers at the school have much school spirit. There is plenty of opportunity to exchange useful ideas, to meet socially, and unwind with other teachers” (p. 56).

In many states, mentoring programs are provided to help beginning teachers cope with the many stresses of teaching: lesson planning, classroom management, and instructional feedback. In a study by Huffman and Leak (1986), 108 first-year teachers endorsed the role of mentor as being important for their induction program. At a forum on a new beginning teacher program, Huffman and Leak provided a questionnaire asking the teachers to identify the most beneficial functions of a mentor. The beginning teachers indicated that they were helped most by mentors who were able to provide assistance and support by addressing their needs for encouragement and collegiality and by giving specific helpful suggestions. Many first-year teachers simply wanted someone to be there for them. Several beginning teachers said that they just wanted someone “being available” or “having someone to go to with questions big and small”; they wanted the “help of a teacher who was genuinely interested” (p. 23). Some first-year teachers considered the relationships with their mentors as “having a buddy” or “someone to turn to for help” (p. 23). The study pointed out that mentors who provided help with the many facets of teaching – providing practical assistance, explaining procedures and expectations – aided in the success of first-year teachers. Another important function for mentors was that of providing feedback and evaluation for the first-year teachers. Some

first-year teachers explained that their mentors were “friendly critics” and that they considered their assessment as “beneficial feedback” (p. 23).

In order to foster a collaborative relationship among teachers, many districts following state mandates have implemented mentoring programs. A mentoring program, as explained by Little (1990) in her review, can be a confusing and volatile issue. With the use of policy studies and program evaluations, she evaluated the mentor phenomenon. For some states, the selection of a mentor has been based on formal applications, peer and supervisor recommendations, interviews, observations, and portfolios. For others, the mentors have been selected based on their accomplishments with students and their relationships with fellow teachers and administrators. Little found that in several states, like California and Connecticut, the use of mentors was being mandated without much work on the procedures for choosing mentors. For many mentors, there was rarely any training or requirements of experience in mentor-like roles, such as serving as a student-teacher supervisor. Some studies suggested that the role of mentor can itself be stressful because mentors are put in the position of “leaders” and are then resented by other teachers working in the same schools. According to Little, the aim of formal mentor programs was to reward and inspire experienced teachers, while tapping into their wisdom and expertise, to be of service to first-year teachers.

A number of qualitative researchers studied the expectations that first-year teachers have with their mentors. In a year-long ethnographic study of 10 beginning teachers, Gratch (1996) interviewed each beginning teacher who had been assigned a mentor teacher from the same grade-level range (K-2, 3-5, 6-8).. At different times during the ongoing, interactive, and emergent process of collecting data, Gratch had the beginning

teachers read their interpretations and give feedback about the interpretations given. According to the findings, each beginning teacher experienced a process of socialization into teaching that included several challenges and concerns: operational concerns, instructional concerns, and social/personal concerns. Gratch suggested that beginning teachers can work through challenges if there is a strong support system by their mentors.

Two years later, Gratch (1998), while focusing on the socialization associated with the role of mentor relationships, reported the struggles of one of the first-year teachers, Gina, who was in the 1996 study. Gratch found that the tension that Gina experienced during her first year of teaching was due to the lack of emotional support, thoughtful feedback, and discussion that she had expected to receive from her mentor. Gina considered her mentor as a resource and she expected her mentor to help her learn how to reason with the various situations of teaching. At the beginning of the school year, she received help with teaching from her mentor, but as the year went by, her mentor became busy with her own class and gave Gina less feedback and guidance. Gina explained that she wanted more scheduled meetings with her mentor. She said that a mentor working with a beginning teacher “should recognize that she should make time for the mentor relationship so the new teacher knows when they’re getting together and doesn’t have to go running down the hall whenever she’s got a question” (p. 224). Also, Gratch found conflicting opinions on how much help a mentor should give to her mentee. Later during the year of 1996, Gratch had a small group of preservice education students and teacher educators read and discuss her findings in the case study of Gina. She asked both groups to explain their feelings about Gina’s reactions about her mentor. The preservice teachers felt that Gina expected too much help from her mentor, whereas the

teacher educators thought that the mentor had not given Gina enough attention and feedback.

Another case study that was devoted to the relationships of beginning teachers to their mentors was completed by French (1997). She wanted to learn how first-year teachers perceived their mentoring relationships or lack of mentoring relationships. She found that mentoring was an elusive concept from the mentee's perspective of the 17 first-year teachers in the study. At the beginning of the year, each first-year teacher thought that he or she knew what a mentor should do, such as taking the lead in establishing the relationship. Even though most of the first-year teachers had a positive mentor-protégé relationship, there were some difficulties between a few of the mentors and their mentees. These included insecurity, fear of rejection, and too low or too high expectations of what the mentors would do for them. Finally, many of the first-year teachers in the study also expressed the fear of asking for help, and this was noted as a huge problem in relationships between mentors and mentees.

Mentoring has become an important part of the process of guiding new teachers through their first year of teaching. In a qualitative study of 46 experienced teachers – 23 trained mentors and 23 non-trained mentors – Evertson and Smithey (2000) found that trained mentors, even though they were only trained for four days, had more influence on their mentees than did the non-trained mentors. After the data were analyzed – from videotapes of mentor-protégé conferences, weekly summaries of mentor-protégé meetings, and monthly goal-setting summaries—they found that even though there was no real difference between the two groups in their perceptions of protégé needs, the trained mentors were able to do better in meeting the needs of the new teachers. The

prepared mentors were able to apply their conference skills, learned at their workshops, to help aid in their protégés' needs. When the trained mentors said that they were going to observe and team teach with their protégés, they did as they had said. The trained mentors also gave more specific advice to their protégés than did the untrained mentors. The protégés of the trained mentors experienced interactions with their mentors that were more relaxed and more pleasant but also more task-oriented.

Mentioned earlier, Dolley's (1998) study of Scott, who saw teaching as a "two-way street," brought out important points about a first-year teacher and his mentor. Scott's mentor, Mr. Simmons, felt that his job was to give ideas and not provide lessons and specific instructions on how to teach. It seemed, however, that he did need some guidance in planning and implementing instruction. Scott did not have specific goals or a clear idea of what he was teaching and thus he had problems in his lessons. He felt that all he needed from his mentor was support and encouragement. Since the mentor and the mentee did not use their time together to prepare and plan lessons, Scott had much trouble during that first-year of teaching.

Even though most of the literature suggests that new teachers benefit from relations with trusted colleagues, some first-year teachers, it seems, have not really wanted close relationships with peers. Ryan et al. (1980), whose study was mentioned earlier in this review, found that some beginning teachers in the study felt that many teachers tended to be "cliquish" – staying together in the lounge for lunch and socializing after school hours. With the use of narrative accounts, Ryan et al. found that these beginning teachers felt that they would rather isolate themselves than get caught up into a clique. One teacher went as far as saying that she "viewed the school as a rumor mill –

teachers always talking about kids or other teachers” (p. 29). Another beginning teacher said that the other teachers were friendly but that she did not want them to become her friends. The same first-year teacher said that she wanted her school life to be separate from her private life. She also said that “she did not want to be a teacher all the time. She wanted to feel that when she left the building she was not bringing the school home with her” (p. 29).

For some mentors, descriptions of their relationships with their mentees sound like descriptions of relationships with family members. In a recent study of 124 K-12 teachers – 46 elementary, 18 middle school, 30 high school, 16 special education, and 14 other types of teachers – who served as mentors for beginning teachers in Wisconsin, Ganser (1999) found that interpersonal relationships between the mentor and the protégé were often compared to as a “parent-child” relationship. The 124 mentors were asked to respond to an open-ended item included in a survey. They were asked to provide comparisons of their experiences as mentors. One teacher said that working with a mentee was like “teaching a child to ride a two-wheeler.” Other kinship relationships were found in this study – siblings, uncles, and aunts. On the other hand, some of the mentors felt it was important to keep “enough distance so as to promote individuality” among the first-year teachers and not develop such close ties with their mentees in order to encourage them to become more independent.

#### *Teachers’ Relations with Administrators*

For many first-year teachers, the relations with other teachers – through some type of mentorship, whether formal or informal – seems to be an important factor, but as I review further, relations with administrators can be as important or more important than

the relations with other teachers. Here again I review quantitative and qualitative studies separately.

### *Quantitative Studies*

In the study by Chester and Beaudin (1996) relations with administrators and supervisors were also an important factor in new teachers' self-efficacy beliefs about themselves as teachers, particularly at the beginning of the year. Some young novices in the study experienced declines in their self-efficacy beliefs that were related to excessive attention and attention at the wrong time by administrators and supervisors. For the novices, too much attention could be upsetting and cause great distress due to the comings and goings of the administrators. They feared that if they were being observed often, then they must be doing something wrong. Chester and Beaudin's findings also suggested that putting off the observations until late in the year could lead to negative self-efficacy beliefs for that teacher, because the teacher might feel that the administrator did not value his or her competence. The researchers found that timing and feedback were essential in validating a beginning teacher's competence.

In trying to understand the relations first-year teachers have with their administrators, Brock and Grady (1998) compared principals' perceptions with perceptions held by first-year teachers. With the use of surveys and questionnaires, Brock and Grady asked 49 first-year teachers and 56 principals what their perceptions were for each other. They found that principals expected first-year teachers to have a professional attitude when teaching and to have adequate knowledge of subject areas. Principals, as well as teachers, expressed the need for good classroom management and the belief that every child could learn and should be successful in their learning. First-

year teachers also had certain expectations of their principals — to communicate criteria for good teaching. They felt that principals had not always stated those expectations clearly to them. One teacher said, “The principal should express the expectations he has for students in the school. I need to know expectations for lesson plans. I want to know what my principal considers as good teaching and how my performance measures up” (p. 180). The beginning teachers also expressed the need for communication with their principals and the need to have scheduled meeting times. Some first-year teachers stressed the importance of classroom visits, feedback, and affirmation by their principals. Finally, first-year teachers said they needed a year-long program of assistance. One teacher said, “Don’t forget that at the end of the school year, we’re still beginning teachers. We never ended a school year before” (p. 182). At a time when many studies have shown the need for mentors to help first-year teachers succeed in the classroom (Huffman & Leak, 1986), Brock and Grady found that principals could be the key to the successful socialization and induction process of first- year teachers.

Some research (Chapman, 1984; Covert, 1986; Marlow et al., 1997; Punch & Tuetteman, 1996) has shown that administrative support can help reduce the attrition rate of many first-year teachers. According to Chapman, the more the administrators are involved with their teachers, especially the first-year teachers, the better the chance that the teachers would not leave teaching. By surveying 2,933 graduates of the University of Michigan, Chapman classified teachers into three groups: (1) career teachers, (those who started and stayed in teaching), (2) those who started in and left teaching, and (3) those who prepared for teaching, but never started to teach. Chapman found in his study that, even though there was not a direct link between administrators’ treatment of teachers and the

teachers' attrition rate, career teachers had rated their experiences with their administrators as important to their staying in the teaching profession. The teachers who left teaching said that their experiences with their administrators were more important factors in their decision to leave than were their own academic performance or adequacy of their educational program. According to those findings, Chapman suggested that an administrator could shape the tone and quality of a new teacher's first teaching experience. Chapman also felt that, if administrators worked closely through observations and interactions with their first-year teachers, they could contribute to teacher retention in their schools.

It seemed that administrators can have a great impact on how first-year teachers perceive their first-year of teaching. Covert (1986) asked 94 first-year teachers from Memorial University in Newfoundland, Canada, to complete a questionnaire that was designed to measure teacher self-concept, motivation to teach, two personal qualities (ambition and rapport), and several other factors, including classroom management procedure. He found that if administrators gave positive feedback and had a productive working relationship with their first-year teacher through observations and discussions about teaching methods, the first-year teacher would more likely look back on that first year of teaching in a "positive light." If administrators showed no interest in the first-year teachers and had only words of criticism, first-year teachers would remember their first year as a negative experience. These negative findings would, in turn, break down the first-year teachers' self-confidence.

Punch and Tuetteman (1997) also found in their study that school administrators could counter the increasing stress on first-year teachers by developing a more supportive

climate. The findings showed that moral support, praise, and recognition for a job well done could alleviate much of the stress for beginning teachers. Also Marlow et al.'s study (1997) found that the support system provided by administrators to their first-year teachers could also help these teachers feel less isolated and needed. They suggested that administrators should strongly support a professional environment that would encourage beginning teachers to want to remain in teaching.

### *Qualitative Studies*

Qualitative studies have provided detailed information about the relations first-year teachers have with administrators. One of the studies suggested that first-year teachers can have a difficult time decoding “mixed” messages sent by their administrators. Zepeda and Ponticell (1997) completed, with the use of focus groups and open-ending questioning, a very large qualitative study of 62 first-year teachers from three suburban high schools and examined the struggles they faced with learning how to deal with the organization, climate, and culture of the schools. They also examined the politics involved in the relationships between the first-year teachers and their administrators, faculty, students, and the parents of their students. Zepeda and Ponticell found that beginning teachers felt that they had valuable insights and that their administrators were not listening to their “voices.” Beginning teachers also explained that they needed “positive words” from their administrators. They wanted more classroom pop-in visits with constructive criticism. As one first-year teacher said, “I need acknowledgment, guidance, and evaluation of my current progress – both positive and negative” (p. 19).

For many beginning teachers, there is too little assistance from administrators.

Lortie (1975), in his sociological study, found, at times, that some first-year teachers needed their administrators to protect them from some parents. First-year teachers also wanted their principals to be available and accessible, and they wanted their principals to specify what they expected from them. Bullough (1989) in his case study of Kerrie, revealed that Kerrie did not get the feedback she wanted from her principal, nor was she observed as often as she would have liked. This was extremely frustrating for her. French (1997), in her narrative study of 17 teachers, found those beginning teachers who did not receive assistance from administrators tended not to set realistic goals. The lack of involvement by the administrators made the beginning teachers in French's study feel that no one wanted to help them, which in turn made them suffer from insecurity.

Finally, in a review of professional literature, similar to Veenman (1984) and the testimony of individuals who are new at teaching, Johnson (2001) found that first-year teachers should not be left alone in isolation and be expected to be successful. She also quoted Zepeda and Ponticell (1997) in saying that administrators who do not show enthusiasm for their beginning teachers can affect the first-year teacher's chances of success. Johnson also reinforced Brock and Grady's (1998) findings that principals play a key role in inducting beginning teachers: New teachers need to hear their administrators say that they value their presence and that they are not expendable.

### Summary and Questions

The research reviewed in this chapter has shown that new teachers enter their first year of teaching with high expectations – expectations that are sometimes unrealistic. Many people go into teaching, as Lortie (1995) showed, because they want to *serve* others; but, as other studies have shown, they also want to relate to others and interact

with their peers and students (Fuller & Sown, 1975). Once “reality” (Fuller & Sown, 1975; Marso & Pigge, 1987) enters the picture, many beginning teachers begin to struggle, sometimes changing perceptions of the role of a teacher, and because of this struggle the first research question is important: (1) What are the expectations and perceptions of the three beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?

As beginning teachers start that initial year, some are prepared for the challenges of working with students in the classroom and some are not. A number of qualitative studies have focused on teachers’ relationships with students, showing that new teachers frequently have problems in this area. Veenman (1984) found that the idea of “classroom management” was an issue in classrooms twenty years ago. Even today, Goddard and Foster (2001) find that beginning teachers still struggle with the notion of “classroom management.” Because of the concern for relations between beginning teachers and their students, the next question is as follows: (2) How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?

As I reviewed the research, much was found on the relationships that beginning teachers had with other teachers (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Marlow et al., 1997), particularly the relationships first-year teachers had with their mentors (Evertson & Smithey, 2000; French, 1997). It is difficult to make generalities about *which* kinds of relations are best for *which* new teachers, but, suffice it to say, these relationships were often important to the self-efficacy beliefs of beginning teachers, and without those relationships, many new teachers might not have lasted the entire year. The third research question deals with those relationships: (3) How do they relate to other teachers

in their schools?

The literature also points to the importance of the new teachers' relations with their administrators. It seems that many beginning teachers want and expect their administrators to visit their classrooms, give constructive criticism, and say how much they value their presence (Chapman, 1984; Covert, 1986; Punch & Tutetteman, 1997; Zepeda & Ponticell, 1997). Many of the beginning teachers wanted access to their principals, to know that they could talk to their administrators about their students and any problems that they might have (Chapman; Covert; Punch & Tuetteman; Marlow et al., 1997). Because of the importance put forth by the research, the next question about the new teachers' experiences dealt with administrators: (4) What kinds of relations do they have with their administrators?

Finally, for many beginning teachers, the relationships that they have with their students, other teachers, and administrators can affect their decisions to stay teaching the next year. Other factors may affect those decisions as well, as pointed out poignantly in several case studies (Chester & Beaudin, 1996; Bullough & Baughman, 1997; Bondy & McKenzie, 1999; Evertson & Smithey, 2000). Thus, for my final question I sought to see how the expectations impacted the decision of the new teachers to stay in teaching for at least the initial year: (5) What goes into beginning teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

My study was an inquiry that focused on multiple cases and employed several methods of data collection: making field observations, video taping, collecting of documents, keeping a journal, and conducting formal and informal interviews. In this chapter, I present the general design for the study, including changes that I made after I began the initial study. There were many emerging complications and developments that occurred during the research. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that investigators initiate a qualitative study research with some idea about what they will do, but a detailed set of procedures may not always be formed prior to data collection.

My main attention in the qualitative study was on three new teachers' experiences over a nine-month period. I focused on the first-year teachers' perceptions and expectations, particularly with respect to their relations with their students, their relations with other teachers, and their relations with their administrators. With these foci in mind, I was able to explore the possibilities that existed in first-year teacher attrition.

As mentioned previously, this study employed a qualitative approach, specifically case study. The remainder of this chapter (1) explains the rationale for my case-study approach, (2) provides the major features of my study, (3) summarizes what I learned from my pilot studies, (4) provides a brief description of the participants and their schools, (5) describes my data collection procedures, (6) explains my procedures for data analysis, and (7) considers the matter of my credibility as a researcher and the issue of ethics.

### Rationale for My Case Study Approach

Since I focused my study on three first-year teachers' expectations and

experiences, I felt that the case-study approach was best suited for my research. With this approach, I provided data in great detail for individual cases and made comparisons across cases. I completed 66 interviews with the three first-year teachers and I observed 110 classes where I took notes. In addition, I completed six interviews with principals, eight interviews with the mentors assigned to the new teachers, four interviews with veteran teachers at the schools, two interviews with custodians, five interviews with parents, and informal interviews with students. I also interviewed the superintendent of the school system, a minister who lived in one of the communities, and a student teacher who worked under the first-year teacher from Rural High School.

According to Stake (1994), a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case which holds special interest for the researcher. I observed the first-year teachers' experiences inside of their classrooms and schools in which they taught and attempted to describe and analyze those experiences as I found themes relevant to generalities as well as the uniqueness of each teacher. As Stake (1978) explained, with a case study, the researcher and readers should be left with more to think about than less. The case study provides theory to build upon – causing more exploration of the phenomenon instead of a single answer to the question of “why.”

In this qualitative study of first-year teachers, I provided triangulation with the use of a variety of methods of investigation: field documentation, observations, journal information, interviews, and the collection of physical artifacts. This study was completed in nine months – the full academic year for these teachers. In qualitative case study research, the researcher is expected to spend substantial time on site with the participants being studied, while observing, comparing, and contrasting activities and

operations of the school setting.

#### Major Features of the Study

My study on the perceptions of three first-year teachers lasted through the entire nine-month academic year 2002-2003 and was situated in three high schools. The following were major features of the study.

- I completed an analysis of each case individually as well as completed a cross-case analysis (Feagin et al., 1991; Stenhouse, 1985; Yin, 1994). Since the teachers were teaching in three different schools, I was able to compare and contrast the contextual factors across the sites. Also, I was able to observe any differences that existed among the teachers within their schools and examined individually the cases as they progressed during the year.
- I involved several key informants – the first-year teachers' students, one teacher from each school, the principals, the mentors, a parent from each school, the superintendent, a minister that worked in Suburban High School, a custodian from Urban High School and Rural High School, and a student teacher at Rural High School. The interviews from these informants were used to complement the interviews and observations of the three first-year teachers. The information provided helped me understand the relations that the beginning teachers had with their students, with other teachers in their schools, with their principals, and their mentors.
- I employed multiple means of data collection: field documentation, observations, journal writings, and video-tapes.
- Participants had the opportunity to examine the data, as it pertained to them. They had the opportunity to add to or to clarify any part of the data as the study progressed.

## Pilot Studies

A pilot study helps the investigator refine the data collection and questioning processes (Yin, 1994). Prior to conducting this study, I performed two pilot case studies of first-year teachers. The first pilot case study focused on three first-year teachers – one who was a second-grade teacher in a Vermont public school system and two third-grade teachers from a Vermont Supervisory Union school. The three-month pilot case study revealed many difficult times that first-year teachers have in their classrooms. Based on the data collected, I found that the struggles reviewed in the literature review of first-year teachers were evident, including classroom management, isolation, and with the administration. I also found that the teachers, depending on the school they taught in, handled students differently. One teacher said that her students were not capable of learning unless she raised her voice. It did not bother this particular first-year teacher to yell or ridicule her students while being observed. The other two teachers were both older, more mature, married with children, and seemed to see teaching as a “service” (Lortie, 1975), helping their students no matter what their nationality or financial status. They never raised their voices in order to get their students’ attention. The first pilot case study helped me to understand the enormity of the data collection process. I collected over 30 pages of transcribed interview information from each teacher during a three-month period and I also had the chance to pilot my interview questions. I spent at least 15 to 20 hours transcribing the data that I collected. It was difficult for me, at first, not to repeat the same questions at different times during the interview process. As I continued the interviews, I learned that I needed to stay on the subject of the questions and not deviate. I realized that with qualitative research, I needed to adjust the interview questions based on the outcome of

the observations.

The second pilot case study, which lasted about four months, was a single case study of the first-year teacher, mentioned in the first case study, from the Vermont public school system. Again, as in the first pilot study, I was able to refine my questioning techniques and work on data collection procedures. After reviewing my data, I found that the isolation this first-year teacher experienced was her largest problem. Her classroom was down a long hall far away from any other classroom and because of this isolation, she had no one to talk with if she had a problem. She said that if a child got hurt in the classroom and she needed help, she had to send one of her other second-grade students for help because she could not leave her classroom.

Again, the data collection process was the most difficult part of this study. The transcription of an interview took as much as 10 hours to do. I did get better at the process, but I decided for my dissertation study to hire someone to transcribe my audio tapes as long as I could afford to pay a typist. Finally, I found that the longer I continued the study, the more the principal saw me as a mentor for the first-year teacher. I worried that the principal thought that I was there to give the teacher advice and it bothered me that she inquired about the teacher's progress from time to time. I feared that I would say something that might cause a conflict between the teacher and me and I was careful when having conversations with the principal.

### *Participants in the Study*

The major participants in my dissertation study were three first-year teachers: one English teacher at Suburban High in Massachusetts, one mathematics teacher from Urban

High School in the Bronx, NYC, and one seventh-, eighth- and ninth-grade English teacher from Rural High School located in Vermont. These teachers were selected from a list of beginning teachers that was provided by the Program Coordinator of the Secondary Education Program at the University of Vermont. This list also included the names of the schools, grade levels and subjects where the teachers taught. With the use of the list, I identified the first-year teachers who I felt were best suited for my study, based on the following criteria: (1) they were first-year teachers – having never taught as a full time teacher before; and (2) they taught middle or secondary grades. Also, I tried to choose the teachers in schools, to make my traveling about the New England and New York City much easier for myself, since I was going to be completing observations many times per month. However, this was not possible. The names I use here for these teachers and also their schools are all pseudonyms.

I gave the teachers and all other participants consent forms that explained the study and the attempts that I made to protect them and provide their privacy. The beginning teachers were informed that pseudonyms were used for their names, the names of their schools, and the names of all participants including any students involved in the study.

Also participating in the study were the students from the first-year teachers' classes (to provide research for the relations with students), other teachers from each school participating in the study (to gain information concerning the relations with other teachers), administrators of the schools (to gain their perspectives and relations with new teachers), the three mentors (to get an idea of the relationship between the first-year teachers and their mentors), the superintendent of the school system (to get a better

picture of the school system in which these three teachers taught), and members of each community in which the schools were located (to get an idea of the surroundings that these students came from and how those surroundings related to the first-year teachers).

### *Data Collection Procedures*

The data collection method included four processes: field observations, journals, interviews, and collection of documents and other artifacts. After describing each of these, I consider my role in the study.

#### *Field Observations*

The observations of all three beginning teachers began on August 24, 2002. I collected a large set of data taking notes during formal observations and keeping a journal – based on informal observations and informal interviews.

Twice a month I conducted hour-long formal observations and was able to collect over 400 pages of notes on each teacher. Following Briggs (1986), I divided my field note pages for my observations into two sections. One side of the notebook pages was used to sketch the setting of the classroom and to record any type of interpretations or questions that came to mind during the observations. The other side of the page was used to write detailed descriptive field notes. I also video-taped each of the four first-year teachers as they taught their classes. I video-taped all three teachers twice: once in October 2002 and once in April 2003 for 45 minutes each taping session.

The observations were conducted while the teachers were teaching their classes (their morning lessons as well as their afternoon lessons), having preparation breaks, and eating lunch. I also observed the teachers during Parent Teacher Club (PTC) meetings, staff meetings and grade-level meetings, and during field trips. There were

opportunities for observations during the Teacher Appreciation Lunch and holiday meals: Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. These observations focused on how the first-year teachers adjusted to their students and their classrooms as well as the design of the classroom, teaching techniques, relations with other teachers, relations with the administrators, other personnel in the schools, and any other categories or themes that began to emerge during the study. I wrote detailed, extensive field notes during the observations.

For their classroom teaching, I sketched seating charts of the teachers' classrooms as they changed throughout the year and provided a coding system that I used to identify the students as they sat in the classrooms. I also made sketches of the locations of each classroom compared to other classrooms, the principals' offices, the libraries, the gymnasiums, the cafeterias, and other important rooms in each school.

### *Journals*

In addition to the field notebooks, I used journals, where I recorded reflective notes, anecdotal notes, feelings I had, any information that I felt should not be recorded in the field notebooks that was observed during the observations, comments made by the individual first-year teachers during observation time that were not observable data, or any thoughts that came to my mind during the observations that may have needed further research before the next observation. I wrote in these journals immediately after leaving the observation site. I also read over my field notes each evening filling in gaps and clarifying anything that might have seemed confusing. I had 1,500 pages of hand written field notes and 240 pages of handwritten notes in my journals.

### *Interviews*

There were three phases of interview processes used with the three first-year teachers: (1) one initial interview with each participant based on the perceptions and expectations of the first-year teacher for him/her students and him/herself; (2) 16 interviews with the Rural and Suburban teachers, based on observations over the course of the study; 14 interviews with the Rural teacher, based on observations over the course of the study; and (3) one final interview with each of the first-year teachers at the end of their first year of teaching. I was able to complete approximately 72 hours of interview time with the three first-year teachers.

Although most interview questions were developed at some point before the interviews, all interviews were conducted in a conversational format (Patton, 1990) in which the first-year teachers were encouraged to elaborate on information. The majority of the questions were open-ended. The goal of the interview process was to get detailed accounts of classroom activities and other occurrences in the school which dealt with students, other teachers, administrators, and mentors, and also the participants' interpretations and reactions. Sometimes interview questions were asked about the personal and family lives of the teachers in order to see how those areas related to the teachers' school experiences. As Briggs (1986) has pointed out, interview discourse is highly indexical – dependent on some features of the context. I needed to be certain that the interviewees were comfortable with the surroundings of the interviews and that there was no intimidation on my part or the setting in which the teachers were interviewed. Most interviews were held in the classrooms of the teachers except for the Rural first-year teacher. Since his classroom was occupied by another teacher during our interview times, we had to use the teachers' lounge and two other vacant classrooms for

our interviews. All interviews were audio taped, and were transcribed completely. The interviews resulted in 840 pages of typed protocols.

During the Phase 1 interview, beginning the third week of August, 2002, the first-year teachers were questioned about their perceptions and expectations upon entering their classrooms for the first time. I was also able to get insight into how the teachers thought their school year would progress. They explained their goals for the coming year and their expectations for the relationships with their administrators, colleagues, and students.

Phase 2 interviews began after the first classroom observation and continued through the last week of May, 2003. Phase 2 consisted of interviews held every other week, and most of the questions were developed according to outcome of the observations. I interviewed all of the first-year teachers at least two times each month, from August, 2002 through May, 2003, with each interview lasting approximately one hour.

During Phase 2, I also interviewed students, principals, other teachers, including mentors, parents, and people of the communities where the schools were located. My interviews with students were held throughout the school year. Each principal was interviewed twice during the school year, once during the fall and once during the spring. One teacher from each school was chosen for a 45-minute interview and was questioned about his/her relationship with the beginning teachers in their school. A student teacher who worked in the first-year teacher's classroom at Rural was also interviewed. The superintendent for the Suburban School System completed a one hour interview. Also, the mentors of each teacher completed two 45-minute interviews – one at the

beginning of the school year and one closer to the end of the year. Parents from each school were questioned about their relationships with the first-year teacher. A minister from the community of Rural School was asked questions about the community and the relationship that the community had with the staff of the school. Finally, custodians from Suburban and Urban School were interviewed.

The Phase 3 interviews were conducted during the first week of June, 2003. These interviews, held with the three new teachers, were used to answer any questions that I had before ending the study. This time was used to investigate the future of these beginning teachers. The questions were planned during the last few months of the study. The main question was: Do you plan to stay in the teaching profession or change careers? There were other particular questions, relating to themes I saw emerging during the study.

*Documents and other artifacts:* I collected data from certain documents from the schools and from the community that have provided pertinent information for the study. These items included copies of the teachers' classroom management plans and lesson plans, copies of the Parent Teacher Club (PTC) bulletins, a copy of the sign-in sheet, central office memos, web page information on each school, the individual school report cards, the assessment information on the first-year teachers, and the assessment information on the students of the schools used in this study. I also collected newspaper articles that dealt with the school year and the areas where the schools were located. My collection also included copies of the grading system, rubrics, copies of tests that were used by the first-year teachers, and any personal notes written to the first-year teachers that they shared with me.

### *My Role*

I became a participant observer in the study. I felt that by some direct involvement, as a fellow teacher to the new teachers, I gained rapport with the people who were the focus of my case studies. This rapport helped me construct a descriptive picture of the new teachers and their settings. Goetz and Lecompt (1984) said that assumption of the position of participant observer allows one to acquire data in a culturally authentic manner. Because of this role, I was considered “being- in-the-world.” In that role I observed and interpreted the nonverbal communication as well as the oral and written discourse that accompanied classroom activities. Since I wanted to understand the nonverbal as well as verbal communication, I needed to be extremely accurate in my note taking, writing every descriptive detail that I could. I sought to be aware of everything about the first-year teachers – from the position in which the teachers stood or sat to the manner in which the teachers moved toward their students. I tried to observe everything from their individual appearance to their attitudes towards their students and towards the faculty at the school. When observing the teachers, I considered it important to observe tone and manner in which the act was done.

### *Data Analysis Procedures*

I used three main techniques of qualitative analysis – constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984), domain and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980), and pattern matching (Yin, 1994).

First, I analyzed the data with the constant comparative method of analysis which was concerned with “generating and plausibly suggesting (but not provisionally testing) many categories, properties, and hypotheses about general problems” (Glaser & Strauss,

1967, p. 104). Through the use of this method, I searched for categories. Glaser and Strauss explained that with the constant comparative method of analysis, the researcher may begin with his or her own categories, but during the process of the study, different categories will begin to emerge.

Even though the qualitative approach of study did not encourage rigidly predetermined categories, it was helpful to plan a coding system that aided in the preparation of separating the enormous amount of data that was collected. I began with the areas of my study: (1) expectations of the first-year teachers, (2) their relations with the students, (3) their relations with other teachers, and (4) their relations with the administrators. There were sub-categories that developed during the study. For instance, for the expectations of administrators the subcategories were “support” and “non-support.” In accordance with the constant comparative method, the categories were flexible and subject to redesign. Categories with which I began the study were not necessarily the ones that I used to finish the study, since I created other categories as the study progressed. For example, at the beginning of the study I began the categories with “students liked” and “students disliked.”

I also used domain analysis and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980). With the domain analysis, I created cultural categories using cover terms, included terms, and semantic relationships. By doing so, I divided the categories from the constant comparative method into more specific categories based on specific terms and relationships which were considered as included terms (e.g., kinds of first-year teachers). I found links between the cover terms (e.g., first-year teacher) and the included terms (e.g., is a kind of), that finally matched the domain that best defined the category (e.g.,

good teachers, bad teachers). These terms all gave meaning to objects, events, and activities that existed in everyday life, so by sorting out the categories, I was able to find attributes or components of meaning – meaning that the first-year teachers had applied to their teaching lives (cultural categories). After I formed the domains, I then proceeded with componential analysis by applying attributes (components of meaning) associated with the cultural categories. I found the relations, different or similar, between the categories, and by sorting the categories out, I was able to make more specific matching patterns – for example, “supportive” and “not supportive.”

The final method of analysis that I used was pattern-matching. With this method of analysis, I compared factors (patterns) already found in the literature review with factors that emerged during the study (Yin, 1994). Prior to the study, I created some categories, based on the literature review, which could be compared to new emerging factors of the study.

I coded teachers’ expectations and perceptions regarding the following matters: (1) self as teacher; (2) self in other roles; (3) teaching in general; (4) other people; (5) material things; and (6) policy and procedures. Each of these categories included negative aspects and positive aspects. The expectations were expressed, for the most part, at the onset of the study and the perceptions were expressed as the school year progressed.

For relations with students, I had two sets of subcategories: relations with students and relations with their parents. For relations with students, I coded: (1) students’ participation or non participation in classroom activities; (2) students’ positive or negative attitude toward teacher or school; (3) teacher’s positive or negative attitude toward students; (4) teacher’s interest in, or concern about, a particular student; (5)

“crisis” situation with student; (6) teacher’s attempt to “manage classroom;” (7) students’ response to teacher’s “management” approach; and (8) attention to student assessment. For relations with parents, I coded: (1) parental support or non support; (2) parent in role of volunteer; (3) attention from parent who had been teachers; (4) attendance or nonattendance of parents when invited to school function; (5) attendance or nonattendance of parents at school function when not invited; (6) telephone call to or from parent; (6) attitude of parent when child is in serious situation; and (7) attention to student assessment.

Relations with teachers also had two components: relations with mentor and relations with other teachers. For relations with mentor, I coded: (1) support or nonsupport; (2) assigned or unassigned mentor; (3) interaction at school; (4) interaction out of school; (5) attention on teaching assessment; (6) attention on student assessment; (7) attention on teaching approaches; and (8) attention on other matters. For relations with other teachers, I coded (1) support, (2) mentor role, (3) member of team, (4) interaction at school, (5) interaction out of school, (6) attention on teaching assessment, (7) attention on student assessment, (8) attention on teaching approaches, and (9) attention on other matters.

Relations with administrators included the following: (1) support or nonsupport; (2) accessibility or nonaccessibility; (3) observation in classroom; (4) advice; (5) indication of caring; (6) positive or negative opinion of teacher; (7) attention on teaching assessment; and (8) attention on student assessment.

I saw a need for a category for relations with family members and other people besides those associated with the school. The subcategories included: (1) parental

involvement or lack of involvement; (2) family member as teacher; (3) spouse's support or nonsupport; (3) balance between school and family; (4) attention to child; (5) siblings' support or nonsupport; (6) support or nonsupport from friends; and (7) understanding or lack of understanding about demands on teacher.

In examining the individual teacher's decision to stay in or to leave teaching, I considered the importance of the following factors. These became my subcategories, which were in some cases negative and some cases positive: (1) relations with students; (2) relations with parents; (3) relations with mentor and other teachers; (4) relations with administrators; (5) assessment (teacher assessment or student assessment); (6) salary and benefits; (9) paperwork; and (10) materials and equipment.

Through the use of a variety of methods of data collection – taking notes from observations, keeping a journal, holding structured and unstructured interviews, and collecting written documents – I developed the triangulation which involved inductive analysis of domains, categories, themes, and patterns that emerged from the data. The ability to cross-check through triangulation to support the final findings was crucial in completing qualitative analysis.

Interpretation was based on themes related to individual cases and to the total set of cases. Some themes overlapped across individuals. By examining closely the similarities and differences across the cases, I reached some conclusions. It was extremely important to address each participant case-by-case, but still to expect some intertwining of the cases so as to understand how each case fitted in the final results of the study.

#### *Matters of Credibility and Ethics*

My years of experience as a secondary education teacher helped define my role as a participant-observer in my study. With seven years teaching experience, I have served in a variety of roles: high school English teacher, student teacher supervisor, college coordinator, and first-year teacher mentor. I have also been trained to assess first-year teachers and have presented seminars to student teachers in their last semester of college before getting their first teaching jobs. First-hand knowledge of the problems teachers deal with daily has helped me in the process of observing the first-year teachers, and I was careful to search for important data when observing classroom activities and different types of meetings. I was not part of the class, but given the length of this study, I did become a familiar person in the room. The first-year teachers asked me questions during our interview time and I shared notes with them concerning their part in the study. I was not their mentor, but I did let them read my notes and make decisions according to what they read. I did not critique their teaching jobs, but I was available if I were asked about recent research in areas of concern.

Individual rights to privacy and confidentiality were extremely important in this study. Yin (1994) has emphasized these aspects of case studies. I gave consent forms to each participant in the study, informing them of the procedures of the study and possible benefits and risks. I used pseudonyms for individuals and schools to protect the privacy of the first-year teachers and other participants. Since I was not employed by their school systems, I was not well known in their school and did not know anyone where I conducted my study. I realize the importance of confidentiality and I honored the promises that I made to the participants in this study. I was concerned with the “political forces” within the district and schools where I was working, but I was prepared to handle any

problems that did arise, such as questions directed to me about the first-year teachers' abilities to teach and how they "handled" their classes.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

### The New Teachers' Expectations and Experiences

I began my in-depth investigation with three first-year teachers, beginning late August, 2002, and completed the study in early June, 2003. With the use of interviews, observations, and artifacts collection, I had a rich source of data for this study. To analyze the data, I used three methods of qualitative analysis: constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984); domain and componential analysis (Spradley, 1980); and pattern matching (Yin, 1994). As I progressed through the study, I kept in mind findings of prior studies with first-year teachers, which had shown the importance of social relations and also focused on the social relationships of the three first-year teachers throughout the school year. I was able to form themes based on the domain and componential analysis method of study that were basic to each of the four new teachers.

I kept the initial research questions in mind:

1. What are the expectations and perceptions of the four beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?
2. How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?
3. How do they relate to other teachers in their schools?
4. What kinds of relations do they have with the administrators?
5. What goes into their decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

I found some parallels with other studies, such as expectations of the first-year teachers with respect to their administrators and mentors, concern for their students' social as well as academic well-being, and the necessity of all three first-year teachers' relationships to other teachers for survival of their first year. I also learned much about the new teachers' process of deciding whether or not they were going to stay teaching. Finally, I found new emerging themes during the year: (1) the importance of family to the beginning teachers; and (2) the importance on the first-year teachers' assessment and student assessment.

In reporting my case studies, I use the following as my major sections: Discovering Relationships with Students and Their Parents, Navigating Professional Relationships, and Personal and Family Relationships. Professional Relationships include three subsections: Brokering Relationships with Administrators, Seeking Relationships with Mentors, and Fostering Relationships with Other Teachers. The Personal and Family Relationship subsections vary according to individual, including as many as four but as few as two and covering such matters as Relationship with Parents, Relationship with her Husband, and Relationships with Other Family Members and Friends.

The teachers were Dan B. from Rural School, Kara A. from Suburban School, and Norah G. from Urban High School. The names I used here for the individuals and for the schools are all pseudonyms. Each case begins with a brief description of the teacher and his/her school and classroom.

#### *Case Study: Rural*

Dan's first year was at Rural School, where he taught on a multi-age team in a

middle school. A single 24-year-old man, he was born and raised about 10 miles from the school. His first year was a demanding one – planning and conducting lessons for students, preparing them for the NSRE, and completing the assessment process for his own certification. Along with his teaching, he continued his studies, pursuing a master’s degree in counseling at Green Mountain University, where he had received his bachelor’s degree in education. He wanted to be a competent, effective teacher, respected by his students and needing little help from the administration. Sometimes getting through the first year was difficult, but Dan decided to remain in teaching. He would be teaching at the same school the next year.

### *School and Classroom Setting*

Dan taught at Rural School, located across from Lake Champlain, approximately 10 miles from the town limits. The school, which serves only about 180 students each year, first opened its doors in September, 1913. The old white frame building (and its addition) holds a principal’s office, a secretary’s office, 10 classrooms, the teachers’ lounge, and the auditorium. In addition, on the school grounds at that time were five portable classrooms.

Behind the main building, his classroom was located in one of the portable buildings and it had chairs and tables instead of desks for the students. There were four sets of tables and chairs – four students at each table – Dan’s desk, and another table set to the back of the classroom. In the back of the classroom, he had two working computers and bookshelves. He also had a filing cabinet, bookcases, and bookshelves on the side of the room where his desk was located. To the front of the classroom, next to the only entrance and exit, was a dry-erase board. On the side of the room next to the door was a wall filled with bulletin

boards which were covered with brightly colored poster paper of blue, green, yellow, and white. His desk was on the same side of the room, where he sat in the morning to take roll. During the school day, unless he was monitoring the class or working with a study group to the back of the classroom while sitting at a table, he would sit at an adult-sized student desk to grade papers or check students' work. Next to the adult desk was a stereo system that he used to play soft music when the students were completing quiet seat work, such as art, worksheets, and social studies projects.

*Discovering Relationships with Students and Their Parents*

*Relationships with students.* Dan had 16 students in his classroom, including 14 students identified as “regular” education students, one identified as a gifted student, and one student identified as having special needs. He had three children from families known to be Abenaki Indians in his classroom and the rest of the students were Caucasian. Many of the Abenaki Indians lived in a nearby community, but some moved into the community where the school was located, even though there was not as much farming done in the community. At least four of the students lived in walking distance from the school and the buses traveled only about two or three miles to get the children from their homes and bring them to school. At Rural School about 60 percent of the students are from the community where the school is located and the other 40 percent have moved into the community over the past 5 to 10 years. According to the interview with the principal and a local minister, many new families moved into the area during the last few years because homes were cheaper to buy. The new families that moved into the neighborhood tended to be young with low incomes. At one time, according to the principal, many families in the area lived off the land – fishing, hunting, and trapping –

but much of that “old way” of living had passed. Back then, the wives stayed home and raised the children, but now many of the women work or do baby-sitting and housecleaning for other working mothers. Dan had three students in his classroom whose mothers were school teachers in nearby schools. Most of the fathers worked seven days on the job and seven days at home. About 7 to 10 of the women with children in the school did not work outside of the home and volunteered at the school.

The relationship that Dan had with his students might have been labeled as “a professional relationship.” He said, “I am not here to be their friend. I am here to be their teacher.” He worked diligently with his students, monitoring their progress and asking them questions to be sure they were learning the material. He expected them to follow directions, engage actively with their school work, and be enthusiastic when they walked into the classroom.

Dan wanted his students to be enthusiastic about learning. He said that he wanted them to be eager when they walked into the classroom and to participate in his lessons and activities that he had planned in reading, English, math, spelling, social living, and science. He felt that, if he spent time preparing his lessons to make them interesting, the students would come into the classroom ready to learn. Because of the long hours he spent preparing lessons and activities, he seemed disappointed whenever they showed indifference for his work by acting and looking bored and uninterested.

As was explained by Applegate et al. (1977), the expectations and perceptions of beginning teachers can affect what has become known as the core of “classroom management.” Dan tried different reward systems to encourage his students’ involvement. He rewarded them with stickers and prizes from the box he called the

treasure chest, where he kept small gifts. As the year progressed, Dan constantly reinforced his classroom management procedures. One approach he began using was counting to three when he wanted the students to become quiet. When the students realized that he was counting, they sometimes would stop talking and listen to what he had to say. If they did not stop talking when he counted to three, he lowered their conduct grades. He also reminded the students about raising their hands and not talking out of turn, and he enforced his seating procedures.

Dan's expectations of his students, academically as well as socially, were uppermost in his mind, as was the case for some first-year teachers in Applegate et al.'s study. The other problem that he spoke about was the lack of respect that he received, at times, from some of his students. He, like many other first-year teachers, was affected by "reality shock" that Marso and Pigge (1987) found in their study of 211 beginning teachers. He expected respect, but the "reality" was that the students sometimes seemed disrespectful. He explained that at the beginning of the year, the students were wonderful but toward the end of the school year they were starting to relax a little. There were times when he expressed his concern for the lack of respect for all teachers, not just beginning teachers by their students, and he was not sure how to handle his feelings on the subject.

Dan appeared to go about his classroom activities in an organized fashion. He had particular places for the students to sit when they were at their tables and when they were seated on the floor. When the year began, he had name tags taped to the table tops. The students found their names and sat at their assigned seats. He also marked the floor with numbers on tape and when he told the students to come and sit on the floor, they

knew where they had to sit.

Dan's days seemed nonstop with his students. In the early morning board work, which started the day, the students copied mathematics problems and sentences from the board and began doing their lessons. Dan took roll within a few minutes and quickly began the morning lesson in reading. As the day passed, even when the students would line up, he did not stop his lessons but continued to focus on the material they were studying. The only time he was not questioning or explaining topics was when he ate lunch. He did sit with his students in the lunchroom, as was school policy, but his table was set next to the table assigned to Jane, another new teacher, who was a close friend, and they talked to each other during lunch. Most of their conversations were about schoolwork, but every now and then their conversations changed to personal topics, such as Jane's wedding that would occur in November. After lunch Dan took his students back to class to begin a new lesson. Since there was only one break at this school, in the afternoon, he never had time away from the students except when the students had physical education twice a week or library once a week. Many days I saw him rushing around the classroom preparing homework folders or last minute papers that needed to go home before the bell rang for the students to go home at 3:00 p.m. Even until that last bell he continued to question students and review what they had learned that day.

There were two students who stood out in my observations. The first student was a young boy who was a transfer student from another school in Vermont. This student came to him just two weeks before the NSRE was to be given. Dan was concerned, knowing how important the NSRE scores would be, that he would be held responsible for the test scores of the student. He had not taught the student all year and he was afraid that he

might “bring down” his scores. The anxiety grew as he tested his basic knowledge of reading and math and found out that he was not a high-achieving student. He had actually said, “It is not the kid’s fault, but he’s dropping in on my class right before the NSRE. It’s not his fault that he’s not a strong student, but he’s not a strong student, and that’s going to bring my class down.” I was learning how much pressure this new teacher felt regarding the performance of his students on the high-stakes tests – NSRE’s.

The second student who seemed to cause Dan concern was a student in special education who had been classified as developmentally disabled. As the nation has moved to include all students, whether regular education or special education into classrooms together, so has the state of Vermont. It was mandated by *Bulletin 1706: Regulations for the Implementation of the Children with Exceptionalities Act* that all students should have an equal education in as normal a classroom setting as is possible. Under most circumstances, that meant that special-needs students should not be put in separate classrooms, but they should instead be included in the regular classes. There would be help in the classrooms from special education teachers and aides. However, in his case (and many classrooms like his) the students were sent to a self-contained special education classroom, or resource room, for the basic subjects of reading, math, and English, but it was his job to teach social studies and science without any help. Because of this, the student from special education was in his classroom for the afternoon subjects of social living, art, and music. He came into the classroom about 12:30 p.m. and stayed with the class until the bell rang for the children to go home at 3:00 p.m. Like Kerrie in the study by Bullough (1989), Dan felt unprepared to teach special education. Kerrie in Bullough’s study had worried about the student who had special needs in his classroom and felt that she

“didn’t know what to do.” At least three times during the study, Dan expressed the same concerns. He felt he did not know enough about special education to work effectively with the special-needs child and he did not know how to accommodate his instruction:

“Honestly, like I am trying to do the best I can with him, but he can’t do the work the other kids are doing.”

He was not prepared to teach special education and he felt unqualified to teach this student. When the student entered the room, he stopped the lesson with the other students to find something for him to do, which might be completing a mathematics worksheet, writing his spelling words, or reading a book. Sometimes he sent him to the library corner to look at books or gave art work to complete. The other students did not seem to “include” this student. They reported his misbehavior to the teacher, and he tried to distract them from their assigned work. Dan talked to him frequently about rules and procedures in the classroom.

For the most part, Dan did not have the problems with discipline that Brock and Grady (1998) pointed to as the “number-one-ranked problem” for beginning teachers (p. 180). Even though he looked tired and sometimes seemed frustrated as the year was coming to an end, he was able to maintain leadership of his class with the use of consistent strategies for classroom “management.” He did seem ready for a break and he was short-tempered at times. This occurred closer to holiday breaks. Dan also seemed on edge nearer to the time of the NSRE and his own assessment for his certification. As I observed and compared the conduct grades taken, it was noticeable their conduct grades became lower during those critical times of the year. He lowered at least four or five students’ conduct grades each day. Many of the students, at different times, talked when

talking was not allowed and did not follow the rules or procedures of the classroom.

*Relationships with students' parents.* Out of the two first-year teachers in this school, Dan had students whose parents seemed to be more interested in their student's progress. Several of the mothers were teachers in other schools and they seemed at times to be so interested that they intimidated him. One of the mothers, who was a science teacher at another school, sent him a note saying that she wanted to keep a math test that he had given to his students to show to one of his teacher friends who taught math at another school. Dan wondered:

So I am thinking, does she like [the test] and wants to show it to her friend? Now I am worried because she wants me to call her this afternoon because she has some ideas from a book or something that she wants to share with me. Okay, is she finding mistakes and stuff that ... So I don't know. That is a little intimidating.

Sometimes he felt that the parents were looking over his shoulder and checking every part of tests and papers that were sent home. He seemed to be thinking that they were looking for him to make a mistake.

Several parents of his students worked at the school daily. When the year began, there was one parent who made photocopies of worksheets for the students as a way of helping Dan – about two or three days a week. During January, 2003, I noticed that the parent was not coming as often and I asked him if he knew why. He said that it was probably because many times the parent had come and there was nothing for him to copy because he himself had not had the time to put packets of work together. Dan said in one interview that he wanted to be more organized the next year with his papers that need to be

copied. He felt that he lost a “good” helper because he did not have the time to get the materials together.

Another parent was a regular at school. She was an officer of the Parent Teacher Club and she was at school almost every day from 8:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. Dan said that every now and then this parent would get on the intercom in the secretary’s office and buzz a message to her child about whether to stay after school or get on the bus. This sort of communication was not unusual at the school; in fact, it seemed almost a custom at this school for as long as other veteran teachers could remember. Parents at this school seemed to feel that the school was their “home away from home.” One of the parents whom I interviewed said that the school was part of the community. Many mothers – those who did not work outside of the home – spent many long hours working at the school, and most of the programs at the school were planned by the PTC, whose members were seen working in the copy room, talking, and visiting in the office. They planned student parties, teachers’ luncheons, the Bazaar, the Maple Festival Parade, and the Field Day events at the end of the school year. One day when I was doing my observations, I overheard the parent volunteers talking about their volunteer work, which they took quite seriously – copying things for the teachers, getting whatever supplies they needed for the next activity, and then getting home at a decent hour to cook supper for their families. They seemed to arrange their personal lives around their volunteer work at the school. When the secretary took a break in the afternoon, parents took turns answering the telephones and thus had access to the intercom and could call the children’s classrooms in the afternoons.

Once in a while parents arrived at Dan’s door uninvited just to talk to him or to

give their child a message. Those interruptions concerned him somewhat, but he thought the problem might be due to the fact that he was in a portable building next to the bus drive and parents, instead of checking into the office first, would just go straight to his classroom without permission or an appointment to do so. He talked to other teachers about the interruptions, but they said that it was a waste of time to complain about parents coming to his classroom without appointments, since they have been doing that for years, ignoring the sign on the front door about checking in with the office. He wondered if he could have avoided the problem by taking a firm hand to the situation. He said, "I think that maybe I should have said something the first time it happened, and put a stop to it then." There was not an unspoken "open door" policy for the parents, but since I can remember and after observing the comings and goings of the parents at the school, no one, neither the principal nor anyone else, really tried to stop the parents, so they continued walking around the school as if they belonged there.

Most of the time, if Dan needed to talk to a parent, he called the parent after school or during an off hour. It seemed to me that he was trying to work with the parents to keep them happy. He expected them to support the school rules and the rules that he set for his students, such as students doing their homework, coming with needed supplies, and following his classroom rules and procedures. If the students did not follow the rules, he sent parents a note, had a conference with them, or talked to them on the phone about the problem.

There were four major occasions when parents were formally invited to visit the school: Open House, Conference Day, Lunch Week, and Field Day. Open House was held during the first few weeks of September. It was held at night when most parents

could attend because they did not work then and the turnout should be higher than if it was done during the day. For Dan the turnout was about average for the school. He had about 10 parents come to the meeting. Each sat at his or her student's desk and listened to him explain in 15 to 20 minutes his classroom rules and procedures. I watched the parents listen intently and, after the presentation, walk around the classroom, look over their student's work that was on display, and ask him basic questions about the classroom structure. After about 30 minutes the parents were invited to go to the cafeteria, where refreshments were provided.

The second important day for parent attendance was Conference Day, the day after the second report card went home, 18 weeks into the school year. The parents were sent an invitation with a specific time to come to the school without their child. I was not allowed to sit in on the conferences, but Dan explained the procedures to me. The parents had only about 15 minutes to talk about their child's report card and progress so far in the year. As the teacher, he had his grade book and any other important papers available to look over with the parents: conduct grades, graded papers, student handbook, and NSRE scores from the previous year. Again, he had an average turnout – about 10 or 11 parents who came to their scheduled meeting. The few parents who could not attend sent him notes and asked for telephone conferences. Smaller numbers – about three parents – did not come or contact him about a conference.

The third special event was Lunch Week. Every year a week was set aside for parents to come and eat lunch with their children. During the year of my study, the parents were invited to come to the school for breakfast or lunch any day of one particular week in early spring. Dan, like the other teachers, sent letters home inviting

the parents to attend. He had a good turnout – about eight or nine parents who came to school to eat lunch with their child that week. There was not any special lunch served, just the normal, school lunch – macaroni and cheese and salad with a brownie for dessert. The parents waited in the hallway next to the cafeteria entrance and filed in line with their children as they walked into the cafeteria. The children smiled as they saw their parents or grandparents or guardians. The students sat proud and grinned while their parents sat with them. The teachers and students sat in their usual places in the cafeteria with the teachers sitting at the head of their assigned tables. When the teachers finished eating lunch, they walked over to where parents were sitting and said hello to them and said something nice about the student, such as, “She is the sweetest thing,” or “He is such a hard worker.” The teachers also thanked the parents for their participation in Lunch Week.

Finally, the last special event that the parents were invited to attend was Field Day which was usually held in late April. The parents picnicked with their children in the yard – the field area located behind the school buildings. The parents laid out beach towels and blankets under the oak trees and brought a variety of foods to eat: fried chicken, hamburgers, lunch meat sandwiches, chips, and cold drinks. After everyone ate, the parents watched the activities that the students participated in, such as tug-of-war, bean bag toss, and volleyball that were monitored by the teachers and parent volunteers.

Another special day that parents were not invited to attend was the Christmas party, which was held the last day before the Christmas break. In other classes, parents came to the parties and offered to help serve cake and drinks, but Dan did not encourage this type of participation by the parents. However, all during the day, parents dropped by to give gifts or treats to their children for their party; the party did not begin until the last

hour of the day – around two o’clock, but he complained that the students were so distracted that they could not do any kind of school work. By the early afternoon, all he could do was let his students work on holiday art and play games until it was time for the party, where they exchanged gifts and shared their treats. Many of the students gave him nice gifts: candy, a gift certificate, and many other gifts.

### *Navigating Professional Relationships*

*Fostering relationships with other teachers.* Dan, as a child, had been a student at the school where he was teaching and many of the other teachers at the school knew him personally. Actually, several of the teachers there had taught him and he explained the situation to me:

I already knew just about everybody because I came to school here when I was in elementary school. My mom has been teaching here for 25 or 26 years, so I knew all the teachers. My co-worker [the other new first-year teacher in the school] and I graduated together. We went to college together, so I know just about everybody.

He was friendly to all the teachers in the school, but his self-confidence and desire to “learn the ropes on his own” caused him to stay much to himself. He did not seem to search out the support of other teachers shown to be so important in studies by Punch and Tuetteman (1996) and by Marlow et al. (1997). When I questioned him about how little time he spent in the lounge talking to other teachers, he said that he did not have time to visit with anyone. As I observed, he spent his “off” time copying papers, grading papers, and just tending to his personal needs, like going to the restroom and getting a drink of water. He wanted to be accepted by all the teachers, but there was never much

time for socializing. Even though acceptance was important, Dan also wanted to teach in his own style. I did not see him ask teachers, outside of his mentor and his mother, for advice on teaching strategies. He showed confidence even when he was being assessed. When I questioned him about the assessment, he told me that he was not nervous, even though he did show some tension a few days before it was conducted. But, overall, he was very confident going into his assessment and he felt that, if he was not doing a “good” job the way he was teaching, then maybe he should not be teaching.

As I observed, he did, indeed, have his own teaching style and did not like being compared to other teachers, especially to his mother. He was proud to be the son of a teacher, but he wanted to make his own way. He told me that some teachers and parents compared the two of them, but he said he did not think that they taught in the same style. For instance, he had his students sit at tables of four. He called on the students for quick answers and rarely used learning centers or reading groups. His mother had the students sit at one large table and she worked with small groups during reading time. However, there were similarities; they both seemed to be firm in their discipline. They did not allow the students to move around the room or talk without permission. There was always a reason for movement in the room or a special place to go. Students were taught to raise their hands to ask questions by both teachers. Even though there were similarities, after talking to Dan, I knew that he thought that it was important to “make his own mark” with the parents.

Many of the parents thought that Dan might teach like his mother. If a parent had problems with his mother when he taught their children two years before, then they automatically thought that they would have problems with him. Since his mother taught

many of his students two years before, the parents thought that he should have similar approaches to teaching. For instance, many parents thought that he should write down assignments he gave the students as his mother did, but he thought that middle schoolers should be able to copy the assignments into their planners. There were times when the comparisons to his mother made it difficult for him, and so he quickly wanted to set it straight that he was not his mother.

Dan spent much of his time with the other new teacher and they spoke on the telephone two or three times a week. At one point at the end of the year he mentioned to me that he wished that he had grown closer to more of the other teachers. He did not build strong relationships with the other teachers at the school. Since Jane was leaving at the end of the year for a new school, Dan felt that he did not have any friends at the school besides those teachers whom he had known as a child and that he did not have time to make friends with the other teachers. The other teachers got together at least once a month to play card games, but neither Dan nor Jane went to the events. The two new teachers felt out of place – too young and inexperienced to mingle with the other teachers after hours. Even so, most of the teachers seemed to like Dan. When asked, other teachers told me that they knew that he would be a “good” teacher. If he was anything like his mom, he would do a fine job.

In one of his interviews, he told me that it was a known fact that he was given the “smarter” middle school class in the school, and the other first-year teacher in the school confirmed that point to me. Dan was given the “smarter” students because of who he was – his mother’s son. The parents thought that he would be a “good” teacher just like his mother. Jane explained that many parents of higher-performing students had requested

Dan:

None of them knew who I was, so they weren't going to put their kids in a class where they didn't know what kind of teacher was coming in. Can you imagine? It is kind of scary. I mean like the unknown is coming. Like you can get a really bad or a really good [teacher].

Most of Dan's students were honor roll students and there was one gifted and talented student in his classroom. He did have one special needs student, who was developmentally disabled, in his classroom; but, overall in achievement, his students were considered the higher-performing class. That concerned him sometimes because he realized that much was expected from him by the parents, the principal, and other teachers to achieve higher scores on the NSRE Assessment. He worried that since he was given "better" students, the other teachers would think that his class had to have higher scores on the NSRE and on their overall averages. He wondered what these people would think if his students did not do well on the NSRE. During my interviews with other teachers, the principal, and during casual talk, I never heard any of them say that Dan was expected to accomplish more with his group of students than the students from the other middle school classes.

Other teachers did say that Dan and the other middle school teachers had much pressure on them to have all of their students do well on the NSRE coming up that spring. That pressure was obvious throughout observations and at the workshops on student assessment. He ran around the school copying new material, searching for other resource materials, drilling his students on math facts and in other subject areas. I never saw him where he was not covering new or old material with his students or doing an activity. At

times, he would actually tell his students that they needed to learn certain information for the NSRE. Also, they had to learn how to write answers in complete sentences for when they would take the PSAT test the following year. This was an unending subject for him, since the school was identified by the state.

*Seeking a relationship with a mentor.* In Rural School, all beginning teachers were assigned a mentor to guide them through their first year of teaching. The explanation of how mentors are chosen in Rural School relates to the study by Little (1990), who found various approaches to identification of the person who fills this “role:” formal applications, peer and supervisor recommendations, interviews, observations and portfolios. In Rural School, the mentor must be a certified teacher who has gone through a special training program. For Dan, the choosing of a mentor presented a dilemma. The only certified mentor at his school was his mother, and because of the district policy, his mother could not be his mentor.

The principal asked someone else to be my mentor, but she had kids and she couldn't do the training. Then she asked someone else, and she couldn't be my mentor. Finally, she got someone who was willing to get trained. She finally found a mentor for me.

The principal asked other teachers at the school to get the training necessary to become a mentor, but most refused. There were several reasons that the different teachers refused. As Dan stated, some teachers had children, and could not devote a week to the training without interfering with their own family life. Others felt that the stress of the training and the low pay that resulted – \$175.00 for each new teacher mentored – was not worth the effort. In addition, most veteran teachers felt that they could not provide the

time needed during the year to help the beginning teacher, and they were also worried that mentoring would take away from their own students and their families.

To become certified to be a mentor or assessor in Rural High School, a veteran teacher, who was recruited by their principal or volunteered, had to go through an extensive one-week training. Principals and vice principals had to go through the same training also. As a certified mentor and assessor, I had first-hand knowledge of the training process. The teachers who wanted to become mentors were trained to be assessors as well as mentors, and this was not something that many people wanted to experience. For about seven hours each day for one week, the teachers being trained had to listen to lectures and watch films on observation skills. They were required to learn how to take “script” notes quickly – writing down as much as possible of what was said by the new teacher being assessed as well as by the students in the classroom. After sitting through several video-taped observations, taking notes, and completing at least four written tests, the trainees learned how to complete the pre-observation interview forms, observation assessment forms, post observation forms, and professional development forms. The teachers and principals with whom I spoke about their training were extremely upset by the process. They felt that it was a long and tedious process and the salary for the position was not worth the stress of being trained. When the teachers found out how stressful the training was, the principal had a difficult time getting anyone to accept the position.

The mentoring program was part of the Teacher Assistance and Assessment Program which began in 1994. All beginning teachers and new teachers from out-of-state or from private schools, in or out-of-state, who want to teach in the public school

system in the state of Vermont have to pass assessments in order to become certified to teach in the public school system. This program was in addition to passing the National Teacher Examination, now known as the PRAXIS, completion of required college/university coursework, and earning of college degrees. The assessment process, at the time of the study, took an entire year, two semesters, in which to complete. During the first semester, considered the assistance semester, a mentor was assigned to the new teacher and that mentor assisted the new teacher throughout the entire assistance and assessment year. During the second semester, the assessment semester, the new teacher was subjected to a formal assessment by the principal or an assigned designee by the principal and a parish-assigned outside assessor. At the end of the assistance and assessment year, if the new teacher passed the formal assessment, he or she was then considered to be a certified teacher. As a trained mentor and assessor, I was able to discuss the assessment process with the beginning teachers whom I studied, and as I later explain, I was actually an active participant in one teacher's formal assessment.

Because of the importance of the mentor's position in a new teacher's assessment, Dan had concerns about the principal's difficulty in getting him a mentor. He did not want to cause so much trouble, but he had no choice. He had to go through the assessment process for certification, and he had to have a certified mentor working with him that year. Dan said:

They had problems finding one, because it is just extra work for that person, and they had to miss a week of school. As far as people being mad, I know that one of them was supposed to be my mentor. She kept calling asking, 'You're sure you're not mad?' I felt like it was out of my [hands]. I wasn't trying to pick

[someone]. I didn't care who my mentor was going to be as long as I had one.

He expressed his frustration at having to ask people to be his mentor. This was not something that he wanted to do. He felt that it was not his fault that there were only two trained mentors at his school and that one was not even working at the school that year because she was on sabbatical. So the shortage of mentors did bother him a great deal. He thought that the Central Office of the school district or the State Department of Education should have had more trained people. "I think that not a whole lot of people want to be trained. Maybe if they would pay a little more, people would want to be trained."

The person who did agree to become Dan's mentor was someone with whom he seemed to work well with – a ninth-grade teacher of 28 years who had been teaching at the same school for most of her career. Since their lesson plan times were not the same, the two met on an unscheduled basis at the end of day when there was time to talk. One problem for Dan and his mentor was the fact that, since they did not teach the same grade, many times his mentor did not know how to advise him about lessons and certain subject areas.

Dan would talk with his mentor almost daily, and so would Jane, the other first-year teacher at Rural School. They congregated mostly in Dan's mother's classroom and discussed the day's events. As Gratch (1998) explained in her study of Gina, a first-year teacher, it is extremely important that beginning teachers have a strong support system with their mentors. For Dan, this support system seemed necessary, since he had some of the same concerns as Gina: "operational concerns, instructional concerns, and social/personal concerns (p. 222)."

I observed the new teachers at least two times each week in their classrooms and almost every time when I observed in the afternoon, I would see Dan, at the end of the day, visiting with his mentor and mother, who was mentor to Dan's friend, Jane. Since Dan's mentor taught in the classroom next door to his mother's classroom, he would talk with his mentor when he went to visit his mother at the end of the school day. Dan and Jane would sit and discuss the day's activities with both of the mentors. There were times when I sat in on the visits and listened to their conversations. The new teachers talked to their mentors about problems with classroom discipline and "on-task" and "off-task" behavior. They discussed reading lessons, English lessons, and social living lessons. The new teachers also wanted to learn how to integrate subjects, such as reading, spelling, English, social studies, and science. Topics of discussion included teaching with a balanced literacy approach with language arts, and working with reading groups. The mentors shared ideas, activities, visuals, resources, and whatever they had that might help the new teachers.

During my interview with her, Dan's mentor discussed how she felt about being in the role of mentor for the new teacher. It seemed to me that her approach was similar to the mentors in Dolley's (1998) study of mentors and their protégés who advised but kept "some distance," allowing the protégés to find their own style. Dan's mentor was glad to be able to help, but she did not want to overstep her bounds, especially with a beginning teacher like Dan who seemed to have his own ideas of how he wanted to teach. The mentor said that the mentor training was a difficult process, but it was worth it to be able to help Dan. She also found out that, once she retires in another two or three years, if she maintains her certification as a mentor, she can become an outside assessor of beginning

teachers at various schools in the region. The mentor also thought that, since she was one of only a few qualified to be a mentor and was in the school without the responsibility of a family, she was in a position to help the principal and Dan by accepting the job.

For Dan, his assessment for certification was a concern. He felt that he could pass his assessment, but he thought that being observed once or twice by his principal and an outside person could not really show if he was a “good teacher.” His mentor was helpful during his assessment – completing a practice assessment in the fall, giving him pointers on his weaknesses, and encouraging him on his strengths. He was confident going into his final assessment, but his mentor kept a close eye on him in case he had any questions or concerns. When the final assessment took place during the spring of 2003, Dan was relieved, since he passed with a perfect score. His principal and the outside assessor gave pointers as to how he might improve his skills in the future, but overall he did a great job.

*Brokering a relationship with the administrator.* Because of the small size of the school, Rural School had only one administrator, a principal. Dan had what he deemed a professional relationship with his principal, Mrs. Scott. He asked her for input on school related needs, such as supplies, and also on academic questions and classroom management issues. If he wanted anything for his classroom, he said, “I just went to Mrs. Scott and asked. Yes, her door is always open.” He felt that he needed to be familiar with the rules, procedures, and policies of the school, and by doing so he would not need to bother the principal with unnecessary questions. He did not see the importance of having a personal relationship with his principal outside of the school even though they had a friendly relationship in the school setting. He wanted to work well with his principal and appreciated his principal’s help whenever he offered assistance:

I don't really have a real personal relationship with my principal.... I guess in a way maybe it wouldn't be really a good idea because if you have too personal of a relationship then if you get in an argument or something then maybe your relationship at school wouldn't be, you know, as good as it was before.

He thought that the principal's job was to run the school and help teachers with school-related issues, not personal problems. Since there were no specific guidelines to the access to the administrators for the new teachers, he decided that he would approach his principal in the same manner in which other teachers approached her. The principal used a school newsletter to keep the teachers abreast of the weekly on-goings of the school telling; for example, who was going to be out for workshops or school business or what particular report was due to her office or the Central Office. The newsletter also included teachers' birthdays and other special occasions, such as weddings and baby showers for teachers. The principal wrote notes on the sign-in sheet, letting everyone know which teachers were absent for the day. The sign-in sheet was also used to give information that came into the office on a daily basis, such as announcements for workshops or school board decisions made at the last meeting, which was held every second and third Tuesday of each month.

Dan was fortunate, he thought, because his principal had a laid-back approach to working with the teachers and did not bother teachers who seemed to know what they were doing. He knew the principal from prior experience student teaching at a nearby school the year before and he felt that he could talk to her. Dan did expect his principal to support him in his discipline of students and support him when he had to send a student to the office. He also felt that the principal should intercede when he had problems with

parents. However, he did not express the need for classroom visits, feedback, and constant affirmation that was connected with the 173 newly hired and novice teachers in Chester and Beaudin's (1996) study. He was satisfied with having his students to himself and only reached out for help when absolutely necessary.

The atmosphere at the school was informal and congenial throughout the school year. My name was on the daily sign-in sheet and I had a mailbox with my name on it. The principal encouraged me to stay for workshops and staff meetings. On one occasion, the principal planned a workshop for the teachers and decided to have a stress relief class because she felt that the teachers were becoming nervous about the NSRE test. I was asked to attend, but was unable due to other observations scheduled that morning. She also cooked for the teachers when they had special lunches for the major holidays. She got the PTC to assign parents to watch the students while we ate and she monitored the classes during the luncheon. She did not come to eat until the teachers were finished with their meal because she felt that it was important that someone from the staff watch over the parent volunteers with the students.

Dan rarely had discipline problems, but, when he did, he tried to deal with discipline on his own and not involve the principal until he had used all other options available, such as talking to the students, keeping them after school, using the detention room, or calling parents. Seldom did I see him approach the principal about classroom management. He monitored student behavior by walking around the classroom, reminding students about the consequences of poor behavior, and following through with those consequences when it was necessary.

Each school in the district had to develop a school-wide management program. At

Dan's school each teacher had to provide a bulletin board that displayed conduct cards for each student in the classroom. The conduct cards were marked with colored circles which stood for letter grades: A was green, B was yellow, Red was a C, and black was D. If a student misbehaved in a manner that the teacher thought was inappropriate (e.g., talking out of turn, getting out his or her seat without permission, disturbing others), the student had to move his or her card to the next color. If a student got a D (black dot) in conduct, he/she was sent to detention. This procedure continued throughout the day. At the end of the school day, whatever conduct grade the student had was written in the grade book and the process repeated itself the next day.

In her interviews, Mrs. Scott, the principal, had nothing but praise for Dan. She felt that the new teacher was a self-confident person who wanted to be independent, was able to work more on his own, and was doing quite well in his role. She told me that Dan's self-confidence was one reason that she did not worry about him working in a portable building. Even though he was a beginning teacher, he should be able to manage alone if needed. In the portable building if there were any problems, or if he needed help, all he had to do was buzz for help on the intercom and someone would respond in a few minutes. He could not leave the students alone in the classroom if he became ill or needed something from the main building, so it was important that the principal thought that he, as a new teacher, could handle most situations that might arise. Since the principal also felt that she did not have to be concerned about a teacher as efficient as Dan, she did not come to visit Dan's classroom as much as she did the other new teacher.

#### *Personal and Family Relationships*

*Relationship with his parents.* During most of this study, Dan lived with his

parents, long-time residents of the area who lived only 10 miles from where the school was located. Dan, who grew up in the country, had attended Rural School as a child and was thus comfortable with his surroundings at the school. His family enjoyed camping and traveling. His father worked in the land clearing business and his mother, as mentioned above, was a teacher at the school. His fraternal grandmother, who lived next door to his parent's home, had also been a teacher and she joined Dan's mother in helping her grandson prepare for his position as a teacher. The two women gave him suggestions and guidance during his college days, his student teaching, and throughout his first year of teaching. As pointed out earlier, Dan's family history of teachers seemed to have made a difference in him becoming a teacher (Goddard & Foster, 2001).

Dan moved from his parents' home into his own apartment in March, 2003. Before, when he lived with his parents, he did not have to worry about cooking, cleaning, and taking care of anyone but himself and, since his mother was a teacher, the "busyness" of being a teacher was nothing new. He stayed up late hours working on lessons, grading papers, typing tests, and preparing hands-on activities and visuals. Most of the time, he did not have a problem with his parents, but one night in October his father woke up late – about 1:00 or 2:00 a.m. – to set the furnace and noticed that the light in his bedroom was still on and realized that he was still up working. He was upset with him and told him that it was not necessary for him to put so much time into his schoolwork. Even though his wife and his mother, a retired school teacher, had worked long hours preparing for their classes, he seemed frustrated with the fact that his son, like his mother, was following the same pattern of putting in late hours to prepare for school the next morning. Dan tried to tell him that he did not understand his situation and that he could

not just leave his work at school as other people leave their paperwork at their offices. If he did not stay on top of things, he would get behind and would still have to catch up later.

There were times when Dan's mother would remind him about the importance of getting his schoolwork completed and getting to school early in the mornings. She told Dan that he needed to get his schoolwork completed before doing other things like going out with friends, playing ball, or going to the movies. She reminded her son that he needed to learn to "juggle" his schoolwork and his personal life, but he needed to be responsible to his job.

*Relationships with other family members and friends.* Since Dan had several family members in the teaching profession – his aunt as well as his mother and his grandmother – he did feel pressure about being a teacher. He felt that he knew what he was getting into as a teacher, but he still felt that unless people were teachers, they did not understand all the hard work that goes into teaching. "A teacher cannot stop and go to a movie or play basketball until his work was done. A teacher cannot leave his schoolwork at school at the end of the day." Dan thought that sometimes people, like his father, did not understand this. His sister (who was a pharmacist), his girlfriend's mother, and his friends who went into other careers besides teaching all seemed not to understand why he went to school so early in the morning. Dan said, "I get to school at 7:00 or 7:15 a.m. even though school does not start until 8:00 a.m." He said that people just "don't get it." They do not understand the time that is needed to get a classroom ready for the day. He felt that some people thought that teachers do all of the extra work, such as designing hands-on activities, putting up bulletin board activities, and thinking up new strategies to work with the students only because they like doing it, not because they have

to do it in order to provide their students with a quality education.

*Case Study: Kara*

Kara Anderson, a 26-year-old married first-year teacher, was born in Suburbia but did not attend Suburban School. Her father had come to Massachusetts to begin his own business during the seventies, where he met Kara's mother and settled down in Western Massachusetts. Kara, the only first-year teacher in the study who was also a mother, had a daughter who was seven months old when the study began. Another recent graduate of Green Mountain University, she taught at Suburban School, where she had done her work as an Instructional Aide the previous year and now works with students in other teachers' classrooms. During her first year of teaching she worked in the fall with special needs students and in the winter she became the teacher of the class in which she had been assisting – the class that had been taught by her district-appointed mentor. For Kara, being a “good” teacher meant she had to be creative, understanding, and caring. Even though she had many struggles that year – changing grade levels, dealing with mentor problems, and trying to have a family life outside of school – she decided to remain a teacher in Suburban School for the next year teaching English.

*School and Classroom Settings*

Kara worked at Suburban School located beyond the city limits of Boston, Massachusetts. The school is an extremely large building with five wings. Each wing houses mostly one grade level, but a few have two grade levels. The school has 531 students of whom 85 percent are Caucasian, 13 percent are African American, and 2 percent are Asian American.

Kara's classroom was on the wing of the school that was closest to the main

highway leading from the city to the North Shore. She had round tables instead of student desks in her classroom. There were four sets of tables and chairs in the center of the classroom and one wall held bulletin boards for some items such as a calendar, student expectations, a conduct chart, and a display board for student work. Another wall held shelves for textbooks and other supplies, and the room had small windows decorated with cloth curtains. The wall at the front of the classroom had a dry-erase board and a chart board used to set up learning centers for the students. There was a computer at the corner of that wall and a tape player, ear phones, and tapes set on a table near the door. Placed against each wall were four rectangular tables which were used for learning centers for the students: a listening center; where the tape player and tapes were placed, a phonics table where phonics games were located, a writing table where the writing supplies were found, and a table for math manipulatives and books for literacy time. Also, there was a large kidney-shaped table set to the back of the classroom that Kara used as her desk and for her reading table when she had guided reading time.

### *Discovering Relationships with Students and Their Parents*

*Relationships with students.* For Kara, working with her students seemed to be “a mission” or a “service” as Lortie (1975) and Joseph and Green (1986) described in their studies of first-year teachers. The idea of a *service theme* – performing a special mission in their society – was how Kara looked at her students. She wanted to be everything to her students. She said, “I want to be creative, and more creative. Not just the cutsey little stuff.” She felt that it was important to help the students both academically and socially. Kara had an idea of what a “good teacher” was: creative, understanding, and caring. These character traits are reminiscent of the qualities of a good teacher pointed

out by Dolley (1998): creativity, flexibility, enthusiastic, and intuitive when teaching. They are also reminiscent of those identified in research by Norton (1997) with her findings of first-year elementary teachers. The novice teachers in that study said teachers should be “caring, committed, creative, reflective thinkers with a strong internal locus of control” (p. 17). Kara had certain criteria for what would happen if she were to become a “good” teacher: Her students would learn from her the way that they had learned from their other teacher – Kara’s first mentor. She felt much empathy for her students, most who lived in single-parent homes. Kara said:

I want them to know that I am there for them – that they can come to me when in time of need. I will never turn my back on any of them. I need to be gentle with them but in the same aspect I am their teacher, and they have to follow school rules.

As I observed, Kara became frustrated when there were student disruptions. That concerned her because she felt that the students had potential and she attributed the disruptions to lack of motivation for learning. She worried that they did not “have the ‘I want to do it’ inside.” When she became frustrated with the students, she reminded herself that these children did not have the advantages that she had as a child or that her own child had. She was also exposed to the “culture shock” (Bullough, 1989) that many first-year teachers experience with their students. As a teacher, Kara felt that it was her job to educate her students. She also felt that she needed to relate to her students, but it was difficult for her to do so. She explained:

They can come to me in times of need because I will never turn my back on any of them. In that aspect, being motherly, they need to know that I care. Also, I

need to be gentle with them, but on the same note, I am their teacher, and they have to follow the school rules. It is kind of two relationships: the teacher/student relationship and the nurturer/student relationship.

Kara wanted to expect more from her students, but she realized that her expectations should not be as high as what she would have liked. She struggled with the thought of how she should treat her students. Bringing these students up to the expected reading level was not going to be an easy task and she thought that if she could advance her students even one reading level during the year, she would have made a great accomplishment. Kara had reasonable expectations and this helped her when working with them.

Inclusion seemed to present problems to Kara as it had to the teachers in Snyder's (1999) study of teachers involved with inclusion classes. Out of 16 students in her class, five students were classified as "developmentally delayed." Kara had difficulties with a few of those students. As I observed, she did not have an aide with her at all times and the special education teacher, an elderly retired school teacher with no training in special education, was assigned to her classroom and was of little help. This new special education teacher agreed to take the position, not realizing the extensive work involved in teaching special education, especially an inclusion class. The teacher told me that she never expected that working in an inclusion class would be so difficult. After a few months of struggling to work in the inclusion setting, she finally closed in a corner of Kara's classroom with bookcases and asked the special education students to come into the area where she worked with them one-on-one. Given this arrangement, she had no help with the other students during the lessons and as I watched, I could see how difficult it was for Kara to teach the class without help. She wanted to be an effective teacher and

she perceived herself as a loving person who hugged her students and tried to make them feel wanted and cared for. However, she felt she had a daily struggle, not knowing what the next day might bring.

There was one particular student who needed much of Kara's attention almost daily. Earlier in the year, she spent as much as 80 percent of her time sitting with this student while the mentor taught the lessons and she had to literally run after him in class during literacy time. He took up most of her teaching time for the most part of the morning lessons until finally in early spring the special education department decided to put him into a self-contained class for the morning lessons. He returned to the classroom only for the afternoon activities.

Close to the end of the school year, Kara told me that she was getting tired and was ready for the school year to end. During the last month, while she tried to work with her reading group, she felt that she could not allow the other students to have freedom to go to the centers or work on individual projects because they would begin running around the classroom unsupervised. I noticed if she turned her back to the students for a second, some of them would begin fighting or begin throwing their school supplies around the classroom. She said, "It's sad that you have to constantly be on top of them. You have to constantly be watching over them because they'll totally get off task like that, with the drop of a hat. There are always problems." Kara said, "One day they're all great, participating and making good choices. The next day their attitudes are poor, and it's so hard to build them up."

Even though she was discouraged at the end of the school year, she regained her spirit when she thought about the coming year – starting off in her own regular education

classroom, with her own students. She would be teaching at the same school. The class this year never became really her own. Kara said, “They’re not mine. And so, it’s kind of like having to train them all over again. It’s hard because I feel like they’re not mine because they weren’t mine from the beginning.” She was ready for a break. She said:

I’m starting to get burned out. I’m starting to get tired. I try every morning. I come in with a new attitude, but come 10 o’clock, I think God this is going to be a long day, and it was. It was long. I think the days are going to get longer and longer because I’m ready to go.

Another problem as a result from taking over a classroom in the middle of the year was a lack of teaching materials. The teacher who preceded Kara had taken all of her teaching supplies with her. She realized that it was now her job “to get these kids where they needed to be.” She started teaching in a new setting as a regular education teacher in February and had only mathematics’ supplies to work with and only 25 dollars of school funds to purchase school supplies. Many teachers and friends loaned her supplies to get through the year – visuals, teaching aids, manipulatives, books, crayons, and scissors. Even though many teachers tried to help her by loaning her supplies, she still felt frustrated that she had to start working, during the middle of year, in a classroom that was bare. There was only the minimum of essentials. She said that she now knew how the new beginning teachers felt when they started in their new classrooms in the fall.

*Relationships with students’ parents.* During the year, I saw few parents at the school. When I interviewed a school custodian who was also a parent, she told me that parents rarely came to school. I also asked her about the PTO. She said that the club met

only once that year, sometime in September. Many parents did not have their own cars to come to the school and so they either used the bus system, which passed in front of the school, or had another family member who owned a car bring them to school if it was needed. If a child became sick or got into trouble with the office, the parents were called to come to the school. If the parent did not have transportation, the student, if sick, went back to the classroom, or if suspended or expelled, he or she had to sit in the office until the end of the day.

Sometimes it was difficult to maintain contact with parents. The contact Kara had with parents was on occasion, when they showed up for conferences. I was in the class one day when a parent came for an unscheduled conference about her child's progress. Kara, who was not sure how to handle the situation, stepped outside while I monitored the students' work and she talked to the parent. Another time she had a difficult conference with a parent who blamed her for the child's difficulties, but she calmed the parent and explained her classroom procedures. The parent left somewhat satisfied. She felt that most of these parents were quick to blame the school for their children's problems, but rarely did they look at their own lives for a cause of their children's difficulties socially or academically.

Once she tried to call a parent in for a conference only to find out that the parent had caller identification on the phone and if the call came from the school, she would not answer the phone. She then tried to call the parent's workplace just to find out that the parent no longer worked there. She could not understand how a parent would not answer the phone if she knew the call came from the school. She said, "And I thought, what if something happens to her child? She doesn't want to know?"

*Navigating Professional Relationships*

*Relationships with other teachers.* Since the school was extremely large, Kara did not have the time to meet and mingle with all of the other teachers, but she did feel she had a workable relationship with most of the teachers. She said:

I am friendly with all of them [other teachers]. I am not really close to all of them and that is because I choose not to be. Instead I found one or two people .... I am friends with everybody at the school, but there is really one other teacher in this school that I talk to, and it is not my mentor.

The staff at this school was large – 28 regular education teachers for grades 7 through 12 and 22 teachers for specific subject matter or groups of students, such as self-contained special education teachers, inclusion teachers, teachers for the gifted classes, teachers for the special programs (e.g., Project Read and Reading Recovery), and teachers for homebound children. There were also a band teacher, a math coach, a teacher for children who were severely and profoundly handicapped, and a math facilitator on the campus. On a wing connected to the back of the building, the curriculum specialists for the entire district had their offices. In addition, there were office workers, custodians, and cooks. It was a difficult task to get to know everyone. As I walked around the school grounds, I saw teachers talking firmly with students but not loudly, patting them on the back and praising them for a job well done. Although frustrated and tired at times, most seemed to work hard at trying to fulfill the goals of the school: “To provide equal opportunities for all students to achieve intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically and to provide an atmosphere which is conducive to growth and development.”

Since all of the ninth-grade teachers were housed in one wing of the school

building, these teachers had access to each other during the day. Kara said that she wanted to connect with the other teachers, especially the other ninth-grade teachers. She wanted to be able to throw out ideas of things that this one is doing and that one is doing – steal ideas from other people because that is what makes the better teachers.

You know when you steal a little from this one and a little from that one. Because I know myself, I get a mental block of what to do. When someone mentions it, I'd say, 'Why didn't I think of that?' That is the type of relationship where everyone is willing to share.

The one teacher Kara “would talk to” most often was another ninth-grade teacher who taught across the hall from her. This teacher, who seemed to fill the mentor role, was a young teacher with only a few years of teaching experience. She was accessible and extremely welcoming. If Kara had any questions about teaching, she went to this teacher for guidance. She visited with the teacher at least three times a week after school to share the day's events. She tried not to bother the teacher when she was teaching and most of her questions came after school or during the monthly grade level meetings. One time when I was observing, she asked me if I knew what chicken pox looked like. I told her it had been years since I had had the chicken pox and I was not sure how to describe the marks or recognize them on a student. She had the student walk across the hall to ask the other teacher to check the red swollen spots on her arms. The other teacher sent the student back with a note saying the spots might be chicken pox and that she should send the child to the office to see the nurse. That she did immediately. The nurse decided the spots were just mosquito bites and Kara had nothing to worry about, but, by coincidence, two weeks later she had four other students out with the chicken pox.

Kara's confidante was the ninth-grade-level leader and once a month she and the other ninth-grade teachers sat together and planned lessons and units for the next month. They spent time after school sharing ideas and thoughts about the day and discussing their families. The other teacher told me in our interview that she enjoyed helping new teachers. This teacher was assigned to supervise the student teacher who had been working with Kara's mentor before she left, so she was very busy. She tried to assist Kara as well as she could, but it was difficult to do so with teaching her own class and having her own student teacher. As I watched the teachers work, I noticed how little time the teachers had for themselves. They were constantly miming around trying to get all of the paperwork and school work completed during the little bit of lesson plan time that they had – four hours per week.

The teachers at the school were extremely busy and the administration provided many activities for the students and teachers to participate in. For instance, the school provided special activities for Black History month as a part of its program of improvement. The principal felt that it was important to stress the heritage of the students. To accomplish this, she provided outings for the students and invited other African Americans to come and perform for the students. For Black History month she invited Charmaine Neville to perform with her band for the students and the teachers. Ms. Neville, who imitated Louis Armstrong and sang "Hello Dolly" for the crowd, was a hit with the students. She took a few volunteer students from the audience and asked them to sing and pretend to play a trumpet. The teachers participated too. We were asked to stand up and march in a line, doing a "Second Line Dance," while waving white tissues and Mardi Gras colored umbrellas as the band played the *Mardi Gras Mambo*. All the

teachers stood and marched and pulled the students into the line while laughing and singing.

Because of the size of the school and its staff, Kara had difficulties getting to know everyone, but she did get to know a number of the other teachers besides her assigned mentors, her informal mentor, and the other ninth-grade teachers. When she was teaching in an inclusion classroom, she worked well with at least one of the other veteran special education teachers. If she was confused about an individualized educational plan (IEP) or other paperwork dealing with special education, she went to this one special education teacher who provided explanations on these matters and also advised Kara as to how she should work with behavior problems that arose during her time as a special education teacher. When I interviewed the special education teacher, she told me that Kara was doing a “good” job considering she did not have a special education background. She felt that most of the teachers in her school had the same vision for the school and the students. They were encouraged by the administration to treat the students in a positive manner and always, always reinforce “You can” instead of “You can’t” to the students.

*Seeking relationships with mentors.* Teachers like Dan and Kara thought that they knew what to expect from their mentors. The Central Office explained during the orientation of first- year teachers that the mentors’ jobs were to get the new teachers through teacher assessment, but Kara had a unique situation with her mentor. She began the school year as a special education inclusion teacher, working each day in the classroom of her mentor, who was the classroom teacher. This situation, according to Little (1990) in his review of studies on mentors and their mentees, should have been the

perfect scenario – a mentor and mentee working together all day long, not having to find time to discuss strategies and lessons, and the mentor being able to oversee the mentee’s class on a daily basis. This seemed not to be the case, since there was some tension in the relationship.

Kara’s mentor was one of two regular education teachers working with her, who was the special education teacher for some of their students. As the special education teacher in an inclusion classroom, Kara spent her mornings in her mentor’s ninth-grade classroom, as described above, and she spent the afternoons in another tenth-grade classroom that I did not observe. She was working in an inclusion process in accordance with the federal government’s *Bulletin 1706*, which requires placing students in the least restricted or most “normal” environment that can be provided in the school. Because of this mandate, special education teachers like Kara work with their students in a regular classroom setting. These teachers also help the regular education teacher by teaching lessons and assisting other students in the classroom.

When I first began the study with Kara, she mostly sat and watched the classroom education teacher (her mentor) or the student teacher teach the lessons. She monitored her students and, during the small group sessions, she taught a reading lesson to her five or six students. Within a few weeks of observations, she began teaching some of the lessons and I was able to see her present the lessons and not just oversee one particular special education student. When she was able to teach, she began her lesson by having all of the students sit in a large group in a circle, and she started with the day’s introduction to the agenda and the “Student of the Day.” Each day a different student was chosen to be the “Student of the Day.” The student helped the teacher write a sentence on

the board and other students called out adjectives that described good qualities of the student of the day, such as “nice,” “helpful,” “cheerful,” “hard worker.” If the mentor was out sick or at a meeting, Kara then led in the morning activities. As I observed, the students did most of their class work with the use of learning centers. They had specific activities to accomplish in each center which pertained to the subject being taught. Reading was taught in the mornings and all learning activities in the morning were related to literacy development: reading words from a set list of words placed on the overhead machine or dry erase board; reading books; writing stories in the writing center; and listening to the taped stories in the listening center. During this time, the mentor worked with a small group of three students on their guided reading lessons while Kara helped her special needs students with their lessons in the Mastery Reading program. Afternoons were spent doing basic math lessons and other activities. The math lessons were completed with the use of centers, while the other lessons were done in large groups. During the last weeks before the mentor took her leave of absence, which I explain in more detail later, she had Kara work with individual students in centers instead of working with her special education students.

For center time in the morning, working with the language arts block, and center time in the afternoon, working with mathematics, social living block, art and music, there was a procedure that all of the students followed. Each morning the mentor or Kara would explain what they were to do in each center before the procedure began. To be able to accomplish the center activities, the mentor had a chart board which every student could interpret in order to know which center they were to begin for the morning and afternoon lessons. Once the teachers explained what was to be accomplished for the day,

they began the lesson with the assignment of certain students to move to their center. Each was joined in the assigned center by the individual who was to be his or her partner. Then the students were instructed to begin their center work for the day. Then the students cleaned their centers and moved quietly to the next assigned center. This continued until all five centers were covered during the time permitted. It took about a month for the students to learn where to go without being told, but once they learned the procedure, they moved without much disturbance.

At first, Kara said how she appreciated her mentor's help and guidance. She explained how much she had learned from her mentor about a "balanced approach" to teaching language arts. Many teachers in this school learned what is called balanced literacy by attending a month-long summer session of training and meeting once a month for an entire year for updates and focus group sessions. The approach that was used in Suburban School was based on Fountas and Pinnell's book *Guided Reading* (1996). A reading specialist and a small number of veteran teachers who were extensively trained in the approach presented it to about 30 percent of the teachers in the District. Once the teachers were trained, many of them took the ideas and strategies back into their classrooms and incorporated what they had learned into their language arts programs. Kara and her mentor approached the program with the use of centers, whereas other teachers followed the eight components of balanced literacy with a variety of techniques: read alouds; shared reading; guided reading; independent reading; shared writing; interactive writing; guided writing or writing workshop; and independent writing in group settings. With the use of books, a variety of other texts, and an assortment of writing papers and utensils, students were encouraged to be

creative and active in their learning process.

As I observed during the lessons, Kara was learning the procedures of the different centers, being creative with lessons, and applying positive reinforcement and praise in many different ways. She learned so much about the learning centers that when she became the classroom teacher later in the year, she adjusted well to the workings of the centers. The principal told me that she wanted Kara to take the position for the rest of the year because she knew how the mentor approached her center program. No other teacher in the school set up centers applied a balanced approach to language arts in the same manner as the mentor. Also, the principal did not want to make too many changes for the students since the year was more than half way over. She said that Kara knew the students and was familiar with their individual needs and thus she was the best person for the position.

In her narrative study of 17 beginning teachers, French (1997) found that first-year teachers sometimes felt insecure when working with their mentors. They also feared rejection by their mentors. Finally, they had certain expectations of their mentors and if those expectations were not met, then the beginning teachers became frustrated. The idea that mentors should guide the mentee step-by-step throughout the year was a recurring theme in a study by Gratch (1996), who interviewed Gina, a first-year teacher who participated with a group of 10 first-year teachers. Gina wanted more guidance from her mentor during the first year. For inference, on one occasion she was put in charge of the computer for the learning center games and activities but did not know how to use the relevant programs. She struggled with the computer center, but she finally figured out how to work it for herself.

There were at least two occasions when I saw the mentor unexpectedly turn over the day's activities to Kara. On both occasions, she became stressed, in part it seemed, because she was working alone with the centers and the mentor was working on other odd jobs in the classroom. Kara felt that she needed assistance with her students with special needs and that she did not always get it when she was teaching.

I was able to interview the mentor once during the year, right after she left for her leave of absence. We discussed the reasons that she took a leave of absence and discussed her relationship with Kara. She honestly did not know what caused the friction between them, but she did say that she hoped that they could become friends and would be able to work together in the future.

After her district-assigned mentor took sick leave, Kara was left without a designated mentor, and another teacher was asked to fill in the role for the rest of the school year. The new mentor taught in an entirely separate building, did not have the same lesson plan time, and had never had a mentee before. The new mentor told me in an interview that she did not know what to do to help Kara, but that if Kara needed to speak to her, she would help in any way. I asked her if she thought she could work with her, and she said that since the final assessment had been completed, there was not anything left to do until the closing of the year. Kara did, however, need some guidance before the closing of the year. There were forms she did not know how to complete, cumulative folders that needed attention, and grades to average.

Kara said that she hardly spoke to her new mentor. She thought that it was easier to go to another teacher who worked in her building than to find the time to go to her mentor. As I observed, the person who actually helped her get through the rest of the year

was another ninth-grade teacher about whom I will speak under the next category – Relationships with Other Teachers. For Kara, having a mentor, whether it was a trained mentor or just another teacher in the same grade level, was beneficial. Contrary to Evertson and Smithey's (2000) findings that trained mentors seem to do a better job working with mentees than nontrained mentors, Kara did seem to work better with the untrained teacher down the hall than the trained mentors who were assigned to work with her.

*Brokering relationships with administrators.* The school where Kara taught had a principal and an assistant principal, both of whom she liked and respected. Since Kara came to Suburban School as an Instructional Assistant (IA), she had some understanding of the rules and procedures of the school. It seems the principal too wanted new young teachers who were sympathetic to the needs of the students, academically as well as socially.

Once Kara began her student teaching at the school, a year prior to the study, she knew this was the place where she would like to teach when she completed her year as an IA. She did not teach in the spring after her student teaching because she had a baby in January, but she later began her first job at Suburban School as an uncertified special education teacher in the fall the following year. She eventually took a position as a regular classroom teacher that same year.

I asked Kara about the orientation process for new teachers at her school. She said that the special education department had its own orientation session, which mainly covered such matters as IEPs for special education students and the accommodations for those students in the regular education classrooms. For Kara it was important to have the support

from the administration and the special education department. She needed the encouragement and knowledge that the special education department would help her, especially since she was not certified in the field of special education. Snyder (1999) explained in her study of teachers who worked in special education or inclusion classes that support was essential to their success in the classroom.

The department's session also focused on their special reading programs (e.g., Project Read and the Corrective Reading Program for grades 4 through 12) that all special education teachers were expected to use with their special education students. Because the orientation did not address such matters as classroom organization, Kara knew that she was going to have to depend more on the administration and other special education teachers to help her settle into her new position. Her administrators talked to her and other new teachers in the school about the procedures and rules of the school and the school's academic goals and the philosophy of the school. After talking to the administration, she felt that there was an open door policy with respect to their office that would be helpful to her as a new teacher.

The present principal started in this school about four years earlier. The principal had been specifically selected to work at the school; it needed a "strong" leadership base. Before the principal came to the school, teacher attrition had been extremely high – about 50 percent. Many beginning teachers and veteran teachers who transferred in from other districts and states were sent to this school for their first jobs. After one year of teaching in the school, many of the teachers would transfer to other schools in the district or leave teaching to pursue other careers.

In Suburbia, teachers earn seniority in accordance with the number of years they

have taught in the district, and for many years before this study, many teachers did not want to teach at Suburban High School or other schools with similar demographics and reputations. Another problem was that Suburban School had physical condition deficiencies – dusty yard areas without many trees, old buildings, gym and walkways, and some inoperable bathrooms. This problem made teachers feel that no one cared about the condition of the school or the people working there. Also, there were problems with students' behavior. The principal found out quickly that she would have to get the discipline situation under control before she could deal with the numerous other problems. During the first months she spent most of her time calling parents and many times the police to come and deal with the discipline problems.

The principal said that when she first arrived, the situation seemed almost impossible. She explained to me: My first job was to pick up the morale of the teachers, and the second job was to gain control of the discipline.”. She assigned the vice principal particular duties to deal with the student body and she took on the task of building a “workable” relationship with her staff. She encouraged strong veteran teachers from other schools to transfer and work with her at the school and many did. Some new teachers chose to work at the school. Attitudes of the students and the faculty improved once the administration began their work to address discipline problems of the school. The attrition rate for teachers dropped to about 30 percent during the past four years. In addition, the principal made strides to improve the overall condition of the school with a new building project scheduled. The administration was the “backbone” of the school and without their support and guidance, new teachers like Kara might not have stayed teaching at Suburban School.

Punch and Tuetteman (1997) found that school administrators' support of beginning teachers can alleviate much of the stress on those teachers. The principal at the school where Kara taught gave recognition and support to the teachers, including Kara. The principal said that once she got those two areas – student discipline and teacher morale – more settled, she could then begin working on the academic problems of the school. The principal was able to get the community and community support for improving of the school grounds.

The administration was able to encourage their teachers by giving incentives for their attendance at school. At one of the faculty meetings that I attended, the principal gave away tickets to a local performance of a Broadway play to the teacher who did not miss any days of school during the month of October. Since there were several teachers who had not missed days, the principal drew from a box the name of one teacher for the prize. This sort of thing was an ongoing incentive for the teachers. Teachers were encouraged to attend workshops to learn new techniques and strategies through programs supported by grants and funds donated to the school. Improvement on the academic side of the school has been a slow process, but improvement was visible during the year that I was able to do the study. The MCAS scores have been slowly rising during the past four years since the arrival of the new administration.

Kara knew coming into the position that the administration had a vision for the school – to provide a well grounded education as well as a feeling of safety and a loving atmosphere. Very seldom did I ever hear teachers raise their voices or belittle students, and most of the teachers used positive feedback with their students. The principal carried a pocket full of coupons to use as a reward system and singled students out and rewarded

them with these coupons during the day. It was public knowledge – through the newspaper articles, radio broadcasts, and state web site – that the school had the lowest tests scores on the North Shore. Thus, it was the job of the administration to keep the morale of the teachers up as well as work towards improving the scores of the students.

According to Kara, the administrators were “good role models.” Kara said that their enthusiasm, energy, and dedication to the students were “contagious.” The school, which was extremely large, housed as many as 800 students, grades 7 through 12, and the administrators stayed busy. As I walked around the campus, I saw the vice principal talk with the teachers and students in the hallways and on the school grounds. The principal also walked around the campus checking on the business of the school. As difficult as it seemed because of the size of the school, the administrators were highly visible to the teachers and their students.

If Kara had any questions concerning her teaching assignments, which changed during the school year from being a special education teacher, working with a small number of students, to being a ninth-grade teacher in a self-contained classroom, the administrators answered those questions to the best of their ability. For teachers like Kara the support that was given during a transition from a special education teacher to a “regular” education teacher was vital to their transition into their new positions (Snyder, 1999), so if the administrators did not know the answers to Kara’s questions, they needed to find someone who did know the answers. To my knowledge, she consulted with the principal as many as eight to nine times throughout the year about the students’ needs, her own personal needs, or her professional needs. If she needed suggestions in dealing with her students or their parents, she felt that she could talk to the administrators

about those concerns. Kara gave an account in an interview of an occasion when a parent came to school and began criticizing her for the academic problems that his child was having in her classroom. This occurred right after she assumed the regular education position that had been held by her mentor. The parent complained about the grades of his child and he strongly suggested that if Kara could not help in the situation he would take the matter to the Central Office. She immediately told her principal about the situation and received reassurance. The principal stepped in immediately and helped her so that the problem would not escalate. It was obvious by the manner in which Kara spoke about the administrators – always smiling, complimentary – that they were helpful to her during what would have been a difficult year, given the changes in teaching assignments and other challenges.

The experience that Kara had with her administrators supports the findings of studies by Chapman (1984), Punch and Tuetteman (1996), and Marlow et al. (1997). These researchers found that administrative support helps reduce attrition rate of first-year teachers. For Kara and other teachers in the school, the administrators' positions of working closely through observations, interactions, helping with discipline, and providing morale "boosters and incentives" were the key to keeping new and experienced teachers in their school.

### *Personal and Family Relationships*

*Relationships with her parents.* Kara, who was born and raised in suburbs of Massachusetts, seldom spoke about her parents or siblings in her interviews. She had two younger brothers, ages 23 and 16. Her father, who had lived in Rhode Island as a child

and came to Western Massachusetts to work when he was a young man, worked in the service industry since Kara was a child and traveled often. Her mother, who was of Russian ancestry, had stayed home to raise the children. When I asked her about her childhood compared to her students' lives, she mentioned that, since her family had lived through the hardships of poverty, she understood what it was like to watch every penny you had and not see your father for long periods of time.

During her first year of teaching, Kara dealt with illness of her father and the death of two family members. Her father had to have by-pass surgery at City Medical Center and she expressed deep concern for him. This situation caused Kara much concern about the time she had to spend away from her students. During this medical emergency, which occurred soon after Kara took the class as her own, she was torn as whether to stay with her students or go to the hospital to be with her family. She decided to take the days off and had to do much to get ready to be away. After the fact, she thought it would have been easier to have stayed with her students than to plan materials for a substitute teacher. When she was with her father, she worried about her students, and when she was with her students, she felt that she should be with her family. Time away from school was difficult for Kara. Also, Kara had to get the students back on track when she came back to her classroom. Her students were unruly, and it took several days to reinstate her rules and procedures.

*Relationship with her husband.* Kara's husband was supportive of her work. He helped around the house, washed dishes, and picked up the baby's toys. He cooked and played with the baby when she had to work late. She felt that she neglected her husband during the first year of teaching, and she said:

Now, my husband I really don't spend any time with him. He watches television, and I do school work. I don't think that I've taken a whole lot of time away from my daughter, but I think I've taken time away from him.

Kara explained to her husband that, if she got a job teaching, he would have to help her with the chores and help with the baby when it was necessary. When she was offered the position at the school, they were both ready for her to accept it. They wanted the extra income and felt that if she worked outside of the home, their financial situation would improve, but according to Kara, neither realized the time that would be taken from her family when she began to work. She recalled a comment her husband made during the school year when she mentioned that she would like to open a day care center, since she loved babies and enjoyed working with that age group. Her husband told her, "No! If you ever get another job, it's going to be a job where you leave your work at work."

There was only one other time that Kara remembered her husband complaining about her spending so much time at home on school work. It was Good Friday, school was out, and she had planned to do her lesson plans, grade papers, and do any extra school work that she needed before sitting back and relaxing for the coming week off. She said her husband told her, "No! No! I am off for three days. You have 10 days off. You are taking this time with me." She did take the days off and enjoyed the time with her husband and baby. She did not speak about what they did during the holidays except to say that she had a good rest, and she explained, "I spent pretty much the whole week just being with my little girl and enjoying every minute of it. And I didn't start school work until Friday night." She said that before that day, her husband had never

complained and she had not realized that he was disturbed by how much time she was spending away from the family on weeknights and weekends. She said:

I find that I always, you know, in the back of my mind, [think] I have to do this, I have to do that. I won't take away from my daughter because she is my number one priority, but it's like my daughter can't wait but my husband can because he's older and he can fend for himself. I find that I really don't take away from her too much, but I do from him because at night when I feel like I should be winding down ... I don't. I don't ...

*Relationship with her daughter.* Kara was the only first-year teacher in the study who had a child. As was said earlier, Kara made her daughter her “number one priority,” but several times during the study that priority interfered with her commitment to her students. Kara said in frustration:

With the baby, I'm limited to what I can do [at home] during the day. Clean house and that's about it. I don't do any school work when she's up because I can't concentrate. So I have to wait until nighttime and by that time I'm exhausted.

Kara's schedule, with time split between family and school, seemed exhausting to her. Her mother-in-law baby-sat for her daughter, who was seven months old at the beginning of the study, so that Kara could go to work. She described her schedule for weekdays in the following way: She got up about 6:00 a.m., dropped her daughter off at her mother's in-law about 7:00 a.m., and headed to work. In the afternoon, as soon as she straightened her classroom for the next day and took a few minutes to talk to the other ninth-grade teacher about the day's activities, she rushed to pick up her daughter, usually

around 4:00 p.m. If she had a faculty meeting, it might be as late as 5:00 p.m. Kara then went home and played with her daughter while cooking supper until her husband came home. She did not do any schoolwork until she put her baby to bed, which could be as early as 7:00 p.m. or could be much later. Then, and only then, Kara would begin grading papers, filing tests, or making manipulatives until quite late, between 11 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. Finally, she went to bed, hoping that the baby would sleep through the night. The next day she got up early to begin the routine all over again.

During several interviews, Kara likened her role as mother to her role as a teacher (Bullough & Knowles, 1991; Bullough et al., 1989; Ganser, 1999). She compared her motherly feelings for her child to those for her students who she felt, did not have, in all cases, the love and attention that they deserved.

*Relationship with other family members and friends.* Rarely did Kara talk about other family members or friends, although I knew that she had other relatives living nearby. As mentioned earlier, Kara had her grandfather and an aunt, who lived in the town near Suburbia, pass away near the time of her father's surgery. It was an extremely difficult time for Kara, because she had already spent much time away from her students with her father's surgery and was feeling the stress of the new position during this time of mourning and loss.

Even though there were conflicts during the year, Kara felt that her husband and parents understood and respected her position as a teacher. She did feel like Dan in that some people, in general, did not understand how difficult it was "to juggle" a family and a teaching career. She seemed hurt when friends and family members made critical comments to her about the time she spent working after school. She said, "The people

think that we have the benefit of having the summer and the holidays off, that should make up for I guess the time that I put in after school and on weekends.” She felt that they did not believe that she needed to work that hard. They thought that she should be able to leave her work at school at the end of the day, as other people do in other jobs.

*Case Study: Norah*

Norah, who was 24 years old when the study began, taught seventh-, eighth-, and ninth- grade special education classes at Urban High School where she had once been a student herself. She was born and reared just outside of Bronx, New York City. Her family, who have a public service background, have lived in the Bronx for two generations. Norah, who married during the study (and separated from her husband), was living in the Bronx. She, like the other three first-year teachers, had her degree from Green Mountain University; she was certified in secondary mathematics and history as well as all levels of special education. For her, a good teacher was someone who showed concern for her students’ academic as well as for their personal welfare, kept order in her classroom, and was actively involved with the staff of her school – both in the school and out of the school setting. She was not able to create the kinds of relationships she had hoped with her students, and she had some struggles with the special education department in her school. For Norah, a major priority was her role coaching the girls’ basketball team. As a former student and basketball player at Urban High School, she had fond memories from her past as a student. She worked well with the other faculty and the administration and seemed to thrive on the personal relationships she formed. Norah was willing to continue teaching at Urban High School the next year as long as she could teach regular education and continue coaching the girls’ basketball team. She was given a mathematics

position and also her coaching position for the following year.

### *School and Classroom Settings*

Norah taught a self-contained special education class for seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade. She also coached the girls' seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade girls' basketball team. She worked at the only High School that was part of the study – Urban High School, which is located at the eastern outskirts of the Bronx. Norah's school, which stands alongside of the main parkway that leads into the Bronx, was built in 1923. From Norah's classroom window could be seen the Bronx Zoo. Norah's classroom on the outer wing of the school facing the parkway was situated near the side entrance to the school. On the same wing were a few other special education classrooms, a language arts class, and a computer lab. Although she had 16 students, she had at least 25 desks in her room at all times. By the front door of the classroom was a television set which sat on a platform high above the door and was used every morning for the students to watch updated news reports for the state and the country. The wall next to the door had a chalkboard where Norah wrote the objectives for the day and any assignments for her lessons. On the wall facing the highway were six small windows covered with plastic blinds. The opposite wall had bulletin boards that Norah used to hang students' work for display, students' pictures, and a chart listing consequences and rules. At the back of the classroom were two desks: Norah's desk nearest to the windows and another teacher's desk located by the bulletin boards. On the back wall were shelves which held textbooks, magazines, dictionaries, and art supplies. There was also a large round table set to the back of the classroom between the two desks that Norah used for her Remedial Reading lessons. Earlier in the school year Norah had a broken computer in her classroom

against a wall, but by mid-term, it was gone. She also had a stereo system, which she used to play soft music when the students worked on individual classroom projects, and a shelf that was used as a learning center.

*Discovering relationships with Students and Their Parents*

*Relationships with students.* Norah had three classes, but I was able to see her work only with her second period class of 12 seventh- and eighth-grade self-contained special education students ranging in ages from 14 to 16. In her interviews she was clear about what type of teacher she wanted to be and how she wanted her students to react to her:

I don't expect to be their best friend or their buddy. I expect them to respect me. I expect them to look at me as a person who is just trying to help them, not a person who is trying to ridicule them and make fun of them or trying to make them feel stupid. I'm hoping that they see me as someone they feel safe with, and they are not afraid to answer questions. I hope that they have fun. Learning shouldn't be boring.

Her idea of how she wanted to relate to her students seemed to be a reaction to memories of teachers she had when she was a student. She recalled how some teachers treated students – with disrespect and ridicule. Norah wanted her students to enjoy her classes and to trust her as a teacher. Norah did not want to be a teacher who made her students feel stupid and lower their self-esteem. She explained:

I want to be the kind of teacher that students think that they can come to and confide in. I know it isn't a contest about who likes whom best, but I don't want them to dread coming to my class. I want them to either enjoy it or be okay with

it, [to] be comfortable and feel like it's a safe environment for them to learn and not feel ridiculed or feel stupid.

My observations showed Norah's efforts to make the lessons interesting. She had the students participate in plays, using art to make brochures, pamphlets, and masks for their plays. She encouraged her students to read books and magazines during their spare time. Norah had her student teachers do hands-on activities with the students and other interactive activities that should have encouraged participation. When there were activities, most students seemed to enjoy the lessons. However, some students took those opportunities to sleep in class.

Perhaps out of pure frustration or lack of knowledge about how to get the students on task or interested in being in school, there were times when she treated her students in a manner that she did not want to treat them. She criticized them for not participating or not doing their work. At least four or five times when I observed her teaching, she got upset with some of the students who would not participate in the lesson. She said to me, in a frustrated manner, that the students were not trying and did not care about their work. This class began at 7:15 a.m. [and I too found it difficult to stay awake because it was so early], and, for many of the students, it did not take much for them to put their heads down on their desks and go to sleep. She would walk up to the students who tried to sleep in class and tell them to sit up or they would receive an F on their daily class work. Many of the students would sit up for a while, but before the end of the hour and a half class, they would have their heads on their desks again. One time while I was in the classroom, she questioned a student about her absence from the day before. As I sat there, she asked her why she did not come to school. The student told her she missed class because of

personal reasons. Norah told her that she had heard that she was picked up by the police for taking her mother's car the night before and asked if that information was correct. Again the student shrugged her shoulders and tried to go back to sleep. When I observed her teaching, Norah had the most progress with her students when she had hands-on activities planned for a lesson or when the student teachers helped with the lessons. She admitted that it was not easy to get the students to participate in the lessons that she taught because they had to try to read books that were too difficult for them and also because they did not seem interested in reading.

All did not go smoothly with "discipline" that first semester. There were several students who gave Norah a difficult time that semester. Those students talked out of turn, made unnecessary noises, and were rude and disrespectful to Norah. At least five or six times, when I was observing, a well-respected teaching assistant came into the classroom and talked to different students about their behavior. During the first half of the school year, Norah had more occasions when she needed assistance with students than during the second half of the year. On one occasion, she had problems with a student who threatened her. According to Norah, a student came into her room one day with what Norah called "a bad attitude" and ended up threatening her. A teacher in another classroom called for help for her over the intercom and the student was taken by the police and the principal from her classroom.

Although some students had difficulties, there was one student that was extremely fond of Norah and even seemed to have a crush on her. He gave her sweet notes and blackberry dumplings for Teacher Appreciation Week, and was most of the time attentive in class.

The second semester, Norah's class members, three students from the first semester and nine new students, were more involved and participated in more of the activities provided. Norah seemed to have built a reputation with the students for being firm on discipline. She explained to me that during the first semester she had to be "a witch." She said, "I was a witch for the first month, but I think that's what has made this second semester so enjoyable. I knew that I had to be strict to make it work. I had to change. Now I find it's easy."

As I mentioned earlier, for Norah, the fact that she worked in the kind of environment that she enjoyed in her youth (–ie, the "*continuation* theme" (Lortie, 1975) – was an important part of her success at Urban High School. I believe that the continuation theme that Lortie spoke about was manifested in Norah's desire to coach the girls' basketball team – to continue the good times she had had when she played basketball at the same school. She said that she related better to her basketball team – The Lady Wolves – than to her students, and she felt that it was coaching basketball that got her through the year. Basketball season began in late October and continued through the beginning of February. She was always in a good mood when she spoke about her basketball team – smiling. Sometimes she came to class speaking with a slight laryngitis and looking tired from a game the night before, but she felt it was worth it to have had the opportunity to coach the girls. Norah was in her glory when she was coaching. She bragged about her girls and tried to encourage other teachers to come and watch the girls play basketball. When her team won, which was all but two games, she was in her prime. She beamed when she talked about the games that her girls played. Norah seemed to relive her youth through her basketball players.

Norah seemed not to want the school year to end because she liked having something to keep her busy. She applied to teach summer school, but did not get the job because the positions were given to teachers with seniority. However, she was looking forward to teaching mathematics next year, at the same school, instead of special education. The new position was going to be seventh- and eighth-grade mathematics and a beginners' algebra course in the ninth grade. She was glad in some ways that the year was ending, because she was ready to start a new year with a new teaching assignment and new students.

*Relationships with students' parents.* Since Norah was a special education teacher, she was supposed to have annual IEP meetings with the parents to present plans for their children, but this did not happen for all the students. Norah scheduled and planned for IEP meetings, but many parents did not attend. She mentioned only two face-to-face IEP meetings that parents attended and indicated that most of the "meetings" were held on the phone or by mail. Norah was concerned about the lack of parental involvement. For the Open House, not one parent came – a situation not met with high regard. On the night of the Open House, Norah and I walked down the halls and she asked other teachers how their turnout was. Some said that two or three parents came, and a few said that they had eight or nine parents attend. She was very unhappy that night and felt that she wasted her evening expecting the parents to come to talk to her. She expressed her frustration:

Until parents want to take that responsibility, nothing is going to change. By the time I get them [the students], a lot of things have happened and their personalities, how they are, are set. When you've got eighth-graders, you're

talking about 14-year-olds. You're telling me that I've got to change 14-year-olds in 182 days? I don't think so.

As a child Norah had strong support from her own parents. She remembered her parents attending every school function or activity in which she was involved and every basketball game that she played. As a matter of fact, her parents were still attending her school activities. It was difficult for Norah to understand how parents choose not be as involved with their children's lives as her parents had been and still were with hers. The students' parents seem to show so little interest in their children, and for her this had been the most puzzling part of teaching the students that she had this past year.

#### *Professional Relationships*

*Fostering relationships with other teachers.* As a coach for the girls' basketball team, Norah spent much of her spare time with the other coaches at the school. They had sports in common and got together after games to talk, and she sometimes went to out to dinner with some of the coaches. She helped the other coaches with their sports activities; for instance, assisting the cheerleader coach with her squad. She was dedicated to the sports of the school and rallied support for sports from other teachers. Norah personally invited the other teachers to come to the basketball and football games. One night when I attended one of her games, several of the teachers also attended. They invited me to sit with them, and I was able to say hello to Norah's parents who were also at the game that night. One of the teachers told me that Norah was a "good person" and that she was happy to come and support Norah and her team. She told me the next day that there were several teachers, even a teacher who never attended games before, who came to her games because she had invited them. She showed me the thank-you notes that she was sending

the teachers who had been attending the games.

Chester and Beaudin (1996) found in a large study of 173 newly hired and novice teachers that support from experienced teachers was vital to their self-efficacy beliefs. They needed to know that other teachers in the school liked them and supported them. This was the case with Norah, who spent long hours working on her relationship with other teachers. She felt that she had a good rapport with the other teachers at the school. Norah had the self-confidence that was needed to get through a tough year and the emotional support that she gained from the staff was an enormous boost to her self-image. She originally thought that her relationship may have been based on the fact that she was a former student at the school; nevertheless, she felt good about her relationship with the teachers. When I spoke to teachers about her, most had nothing but good things to say about her. One teacher said that she had school spirit, which was important to the school. Her principal and vice principals saw her as a person who took pride in her students and her basketball team. Other teachers liked her enthusiasm and several remembered her as an outgoing sports-driven student. They felt that she continued that same attitude in her teaching and her coaching. Norah said:

I came here as a student. A lot of the teachers I had, when I was a student, are still here. I had a very good experience here as a student. I was a little nervous because they had so many new people, but everyone greeted me with open arms. It is so nice. It makes me feel so wanted.

She did feel that it was important to be related to as a colleague and not as a prior student, but as with Lortie's (1975) findings, teachers often like Norah, want to teach in a school that was or resembled the school that they attended as a young student – the

*continuation* theme. Earlier in the school year Norah said, “Some teachers still see me as a student. They don’t see me as a peer teacher, so that was kind of weird.” She seemed to strive for that acceptance.

So far this year I have been to every volleyball game. I have been to football games and to dances. I am trying to make myself well-known and well-liked. I think that I am still getting to know the faculty, and they are still deciding, ‘Hey, do we like her, or do we not like her?’

As the year continued, Norah felt that the teachers in her school were extremely helpful. The teachers who shared the same planning time gave her pointers on teaching reading and English. She said, “I’m lucky that I’m off with a lot of the reading and English teachers. They’ll always interject things. If I ever need help, I know they’ll help me.”

Norah was accepted by many of the teachers. Much stress was alleviated from Norah because of the relationship that she had with the other teachers – the kind of “praise and recognition from fellow colleagues” that Punch and Tutteman (1996) found to be so important for new teachers. Norah’s efforts to befriend other teachers and the work that she had accomplished through sports and socializing at the school did not go unnoticed. She made many friends and enjoyed going out to dinner and the movies with them. By the end of the year, it was the many new teacher friends who helped her get through a tough time in her personal life.

As for the special education teachers at her school, she mostly had positive relations with them. Norah spoke frequently and favorably about one particular special education teacher at her school. This teacher was her supervisor and he was the head of the

special education teachers at the school. When she needed help with writing an IEP or understanding paperwork sent from the Central Office, she knew that he would help.

Finally, Norah was given an opportunity as a special education teacher to have two student teachers from City University to work in her classroom from January until early May. These young women observed Norah teach and were allowed to teach lessons to Norah's class. They were extremely helpful to her during those months with the students. She worked well with the student teachers and they seemed to learn much from their experience in the classroom.

*Seeking relationships with mentors.* Norah's mentor was a mathematics teacher who taught ninth grade honors algebra in a wing of the school building that was entirely separate from Norah's. Since their lesson plan times were at different periods of the day, there were few opportunities for the two teachers to work together. After completing the practice assessment in the fall, the mentor met with Norah and gave her suggestions for improving her lesson. She also told her about her strengths. This was the only major interaction that they had as mentor and protégé; thus, when the practice assessment was completed, unless she had any questions, the two rarely saw each other for the rest of the year. Norah and her mentor said in their interviews that the situation they had, with the mentor being a mathematics teacher and Norah being a special education teacher, made it difficult for the two of them to work together. For Norah and her mentor there was no relationship to establish (French, 1997) as there was for the other two beginning teachers. Her mentor tried to advise her early on in the year, and whatever the mentor did not know, she found someone who could help. Her mentor felt that it was important to give suggestions and then allow her to act on those suggestions much like the mentors in

Dooley's (1998) study.

As a special education teacher, Norah needed and wanted guidance from someone who could relate to the students whom she taught. She explained that a teacher of honors algebra could not provide that guidance and mentorship that she needed. Norah said, "She [the mentor] felt so bad. We got along so well. It wasn't her fault. It wasn't my fault. It was not a match up." There was no one in special education trained and certified to be a mentor in the district. Her mentor explained to me in her interview that she was able to share important deadlines and information with Norah to prepare her for her final assessment, but as far as guidance in preparing a special education lesson for her final assessment, she said she did not know how to help. However, she was able to get help from the head of special education at her school who gave her suggestions and went over what she needed to cover during her final assessment.

*Brokering relationships with the administrators.* Norah had three administrators: a principal and two assistant principals. She also had special education supervisors and a facilitator from the Central Office who worked with several teachers in the school. The principal and assistant principals at the school were extremely busy with discipline problems and paperwork in their offices and were seldom seen visiting classes. Interactions were few in number. There were only a few times that I saw an administrator visit Norah's class, and that was to ask her questions about particular students. As I walked through the halls, I saw different administrators talking to teachers and students. Once when Norah's class had a play, the principal was invited and he came to watch the students' performance. According to Norah, the only other time that she was observed by an administrator was for her practice assessment in the fall and her

formal assessment in the spring. Other than that, every now and then, an administrator might poke his head in the door during a lesson to say hello.

Norah explained that she was recruited by the principal for her special education position. She did not have the difficulty finding a permanent position, especially since she was a special education teacher (Boe et al., 1998). She had done some coaching at the school and as soon as the principal knew that she was available to teach, he called her by phone and offered her a position at the school. There were several openings in the special education department in the school and he allowed her to choose and rank the three positions she would most like to teach. She said that she was given her second choice because a veteran teacher with seniority in the school got Norah's first choice. Nevertheless, she was extremely satisfied with the position that she received – seventh-, eighth-, and ninth-grade special education reading and spelling classes.

She spoke kindly of the assistant principals. One of her assistant principals was actually her basketball coach when she went to Urban High School. As a student and a basketball player, Norah had had some difficulties with him when he was her coach, but as a colleague and a coach herself, she seemed to get along quite well with him. The other assistant principal was “wonderful,” according to Norah. This particular assistant principal was also her inside assessor (i.e., the person assigned at the school to assess new teachers for the State Assessment Program). She got along well with him and he seemed to like her. He told me during our interview that he thought that Norah was doing a “great job.” During his two observations and the few times that he was able to walk into the room for a minute, he felt that she had “good” classroom management. As did the principals in Brock and Grady's 1998 study, Norah's vice-principal equated

“good” teaching with “good” classroom management skills. When he walked into her classroom the students were always quiet and she hardly ever sent students to the office for discipline problems. If she did, it was for serious offenses. He said that he felt she did a good job during her assessment and he liked the fact that she was able to get her students to participate in her lessons. She had much respect for this person and felt that if she had a problem, or a need as a new teacher, she could go to him for help or advice. Norah prided herself on not being afraid to approach her principal or assistant principals with concerns she had with her classroom, students, or other teachers. She also felt that the administrators thought of her as a working teacher – instructing students, coaching basketball, and attending extracurricular activities. Norah said:

I think we have a good relationship because they know that I know what I am doing. And they know that. They know that I am good at it because they have all seen me. Once again I’m not just a 7 to 2:15 teacher. They have seen me at all the games and tournaments. They have seen me at all the away games. All that kind of stuff. They know that I am not in it just for the paycheck, that I am in it because I want to be involved.

Norah seemed to have some difficulty in her relationship with the Central Office’s special education personnel. She would have liked more support from the Central Office personnel; she wanted more visitations and more access.

Early in the school year, Norah decided that she would not continue as a special education teacher the next year, and when a mathematics position became available for the coming year, she accepted it. In connection with the feelings of Norah, Chapman (1984) and other researchers found that first-year teachers need help and guidance and if they do

not get it, many times they leave the teaching profession. She did not leave the profession entirely, but she left a field of education that is desperately trying to retain certified teachers.

#### *Personal and Family Relationships*

*Relationships with her parents.* Norah's parents lived in the Bronx all of her life. Her father worked in the service industry and her mother worked in the business department at the City Medical Center in the city. Her grandparents were retired and when her mother went to work, Norah and her younger brother spent many a day at their grandparents' home.

Norah's parents were extremely supportive as she was growing up and the support continued when Norah became a teacher. During her first year of teaching, they attended all of her basketball games, her Open House, and her Awards Ceremony. They helped her prepare her classroom and bought many of the supplies that she needed to set up her room. Her parents were proud of her and they were there for her throughout the school year when she was going through some rough times. As mentioned earlier, the relationship that Norah had with her parents made it difficult at times for her to understand the different sort of family patterns of the students that she taught.

*Relationship with her husband.* When the study began, Norah was married. She had been married about two years to a policeman who worked the night shift. Her position as a teacher and the girls' basketball coach kept her busy from six in the morning until 10 or so at night, and her husband worked the graveyard shift and was never around during the day. Norah did not say whether or not her husband supported her teaching career. In fact, she rarely spoke about him during the entire school year, until early in

April when she informed me that she was getting a divorce. For the rest of the year she spent much of her extra time, after school, adjusting to living alone and trying to get through the days with her students. She did say that if her school year had been any more difficult – her divorce, her assessment, the students’ assessment, and her disruptive students – she did not know how she would have survived the year. Some days were fine and other days were difficult. She sometimes came to school exhausted from sleepless nights. Her support system during this difficult time was composed of both her family and her friends, including many of the teachers and coaches with whom she worked.

*Relationships with other family members and friends.* Norah did not mention many friends outside of her teacher friends. She did say that she felt that most of her family understood her position as a teacher because several other members in her family were also in the teaching profession. Her aunt was a home economics teacher and a great aunt had been an elementary teacher.

#### *Conclusions*

As the preceding pages show, all three beginning teachers wanted to be “good” teachers, and to all of them, being a good teacher meant having particular kinds of relationships with students, administrators, and other teachers. However, they differed in the kinds of relationships they sought and achieved. Dan valued being “professional” in all these kinds of social interactions; Kara tried to form a relationship with her mentor but instead reached out to another teacher who seemed to relate to her during a time that she needed guidance and encouragement – moving from being a special education teacher to a classroom teacher; and Norah wanted to engage her students – excite them about learning – and establish close connections with administrators and other teachers.

There was another kind of definition of “good” teacher that also impacted their first year of teaching – that defined in the state credentialing procedures and in the state accountability system. All three teachers were in a probationary period and their certification was dependent upon their first-year assessment, which relied to a great extent on observations. The assignment of a formal mentor was associated with this assessment, since the mentor was supposed to help prepare the new teacher for observations and evaluations. Also, in the current accountability climate, the quality of a teacher is often determined on the basis of students’ scores on high-stakes tests, such as the NRSE or Iowa Test.

These three cases illustrate the importance of other relationships too – relationships with family and friends – which had a great bearing on how the year progressed for each of the teachers: Dan’s support from his very involved parents; Kara’s priorities for where her attention would go; and Norah’s failed marriage but her supportive network of family and friends.

## CHAPTER 5: CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS

The three case studies reported in Chapter Four are accounts of the lives of three new teachers during the course of an entire school year, as they checked out and accommodated their expectations through actual experience. In this chapter, I consider similarities and differences across the three cases, focusing first on their expectations for the year and then on the relationships that the individuals had with their administrators, mentors, other teachers, and students. After that, I discuss what went into the decision that all three made to stay in teaching for another year. I organized this comparison with respect to the five kinds of questions that I asked in the study. My conclusion, which follows the comparison, considers the contributions that are made by the study.

### *The First-Year Teachers' Expectations*

The first questions that guided the study were as follows:

- (1) What are the expectations and perceptions of the three beginning teachers participating in the study? How do their perceptions change over the course of the year?

All three beginning teachers – Dan, Kara, and Norah – wanted to be “good” teachers and thought that they would be good teachers, but they had different ideas about what made someone a good teacher.

Dan, whose own mother was a teacher at the school where he taught, emphasized the competence of a teacher. Competence for him meant being prepared with his lessons, keeping his students on task, being able to adjust to unexpected occurrences, knowing the policies and procedures of the school, and not needing much assistance from others. He wanted to be firm but not too strict with his students – wanted them to

respect him – and he wanted “professional relationships” with the administrators and other teachers. In contrast to Dan, Kara emphasized connectedness. She wanted to be a nurturer, whose students knew that she cared for them, and she too wanted to be nurtured in her relationships with her colleagues. In her view, a “good” new teacher would not have all the answers but should be able to get them from those who had more experience. Kara also believed that good teachers can do well with “difficult” students. She knew that her school had a reputation for having difficult students in regards to behavior and a reputation for lack of achievement. However, she also knew that a new administration had made changes and that the school now had a reputation for supporting the faculty and helping students develop positive self images. Even though she considered herself a good teacher, she realized that she had much to learn, particularly since she was teaching out of her area of specialization. Kara thought she could learn much about teaching in a mentor-protégé relationship. Finally, Norah thought a good teacher should motivate her students to learn – get them engaged in their learning. She seemed to see the level of student interest and engagement as criteria of the quality of her teaching. In joining a faculty, she would be joining a social group of people who could be friends as well as colleagues. New teachers might need advice and they should be open to suggestions and feedback. They should have access to those who can provide guidance.

How did these perceptions change? For two participants, there seemed to be major shifts, and they were in the area of connectedness with colleagues. Dan thought, toward the end of the year, that it would have been better for him to develop closer relationships with other teachers. Toward the end of the study, he was thinking that a good teacher establishes collaborative relationships with other teachers.

The other two participants – Kara and Norah – did not really have changes in their ideas about what a good teacher is. However, they did seem to change their expectations for what they personally could accomplish. Both felt somewhat disillusioned about their own abilities and preparation with respect to special education and believed that they could be good teachers but only in regular classrooms.

#### *Their Relations with Students*

The second focus was on students:

- (2) How do these beginning teachers relate to their students? How do they “manage” their classrooms?

All three of the beginning teachers wanted to establish positive relationships with their students, but how they went about their relationships varied. Dan believed in being clear to his students about what was acceptable in the classroom, how they were to approach their work, and how they were to behave, and then in being consistent in his own behavior with them. He wanted to treat them with respect and have them treat him with respect, and that – respectfulness – is what characterized their interactions for the most part. He had developed what some people call “a classroom management plan” and others call “a leadership plan,” with the various rules and procedures he and the students would follow, and he enforced it with little modification or difficulty throughout the year. He assigned particular seats for the students, not only when they sat at their desks but also when they sat on the floor. Even though his classroom seemed organized and orderly, his instructional approaches were not all seat work and drill activities. He also included what he called the “fun stuff” – interactive learning activities with much student participation.

At Suburban School, Kara sought to foster the kinds of relationships with students that were valued by others in her school context and that fit the school mission – treating the students with respect and teaching them to have a positive attitude. The “management” program at Kara’s school was not a program like Dan’s, where the focus was on behavior, but the focus was on having a positive image: “You can do and you can be anything that you want to be.” Only once at that school did I ever hear a teacher raise her voice to her students. Kara was extremely proud of her students and this fact showed in the manner in which she treated them – bragging about their accomplishments and hugging them. She often reminded them to “make good choices” not “bad choices.” When they did make what she considered to be good choices, they were rewarded with a big hugs and grins. When they made what she saw as bad choices, she sat them down and talked to them about those choices, asking them if they could have done things differently. To some extent, she was the nurturing type. She was a mother and felt that her experience as a mother enhanced her “nurturing” tendencies. She worried about her students – about their well being – and wanted them to come to her in time of need. The belief that the students needed her and she needed to be there for them helped her survive the rough times. Kara was very much “service oriented” like the first-year teachers studied by Lortie (1975) and Joseph and Green (1986).

Finally, Norah emphasized engagement in her interactions with her students at Urban High. She wanted her students to be active learners, interested in the material being considered in class and eager to learn. She wanted to make a difference in their lives – turn them on to learning. It was important to her for the students to be motivated in her class and to enjoy the class. She tried to make her lessons “interesting” and, even

though they probably would be considered interesting by most people, it was difficult for the students to stay focused in a class that began at 7:15 a.m. Some of the students could hardly keep their eyes open. Many said how they stayed up most of the night watching television or playing video games. Some mornings she spent more time trying to keep her students awake than teaching a lesson. She had no “management” program displayed in the classroom: conduct charts or consequences charts. If Norah’s students misbehaved, she tried to reason with them, and if the problems persisted, she either asked for help from the IA, gave the students extra work for punishment, or sent them to the vice-principal’s office. As a coach, she formed strong relationships with her basketball players – stronger, it seemed, than with her students. She said she had more in common with her players, since she played basketball at the same school when she was a young girl.

#### *Their Relations with Other Teachers*

The third question focused on their colleagues and peers:

(3) How do the first-year teachers relate to other teachers in their schools?

The three beginning teachers’ relations with other teachers also varied. Dan, who knew most of the teachers before he took his position at Rural School, consciously limited most of his interactions to those with his colleague, mentor, and mother. He had gone to the university with his colleague, the other first-year teacher in the school, and they had a very friendly relationship: calling each other on the phone almost nightly and having dinner together on occasion. He spent time discussing his teaching – instructional strategies and other factors – and his assessment with the mentor assigned by the district. The mentor, whom Dan respected and appreciated, was happy to provide

assistance, but she kept her distance as long as she thought Dan could handle himself in the classroom.

Since Dan had attended the school when he was young and since his mother was a teacher there, it was important to him that the other teachers treat him as an adult and as another teacher – not simply as a former student and his mother’s son. He tried to show, and succeeded in showing them, that he was a capable teacher. He did not interact much with many of the other teachers and thus experienced some of the isolation spoken of by Marlow et al. (1997). Toward the end of the year, he regretted the distancing and he planned to change that for the next year.

In Suburban School, a much larger school than Rural School, Kara had a difficult time getting to know the other teachers. She did, however, have access to the other teachers at her grade level, since they were all housed together in the same wing. They had monthly grade level meetings so that everyone could meet and discuss lessons and activities for the students. By doing so, Kara had the opportunity to talk to her peers. She had little time to socialize or mingle with other teachers, but she did create a friendship with one particular English teacher – a young beginning teacher, with three years of experience, who was open to helping Kara “learn the ropes” of being a teacher. As for the first-year teachers in Chester and Beaudin’s (1996) study, the relationship with this other teacher was extremely important to Kara. The support she received made her feel a sense of self-efficacy that was evident in many of the studies on teacher relationships. Kara wanted to share ideas with the other teachers and talk to them about what was working and what was not working.

Kara’s experiences with her first assigned mentor contrasted with Dan’s experiences

with his. Kara did not feel secure in her relationship with her first assigned mentor, even though she respected the mentor's teaching abilities, knowledge, and rapport with the students. After the first mentor went on sabbatical, she was assigned a new mentor, whom she never really got to know since the teacher taught another grade and subject, had a different planning period, and was in a different wing. Besides, both seemed to limit the mentor-protégé role to Kara's assessment, believing that since the formal assessment was completed, their work together was basically over. However, Kara did need help with the closing of school and still had questions about rules and procedures of the school, classroom management, and lesson plans. When there was no involvement by the new mentor, Kara became even closer in her relationship with the English teacher who became her confident and supported her in the ways that her trained mentors had not.

Probably the most "social" of the three new teachers, Norah saw her relationship with other teachers as an important aspect of her first year teaching and she established social relations as well as professional relations with many of them. These teachers, like the teachers in Chester and Beaudin's (1996) study, provided the support that seemed to enhance Norah's self-efficacy beliefs. Norah was known to be a hard worker and a fine teacher by the other teachers. She said three or four times during the study that she did not want to be known as a "7 to 2:15" kind of teacher. Norah had a difficult year and the emotional support she gained from the staff was an enormous help to her self-image. Norah worked at having a relationship with the other teachers. She invited them to her basketball games and they went to restaurants, the Mall, and the movies. She helped the other coaches with their teams and offered assistance to other teachers who needed help. Norah, like Dan, had been a student at the school where she was now a teacher and

she too worried that the teachers might not see her as a colleague. Like Dan, she tried to convince the teachers, by her dedication to her work and her students, that she should be taken seriously. Many remembered how active she was as a student and were glad to see her continued enthusiasm as a teacher.

Norah had some difficulties relative to mentor assignment, since her mentor taught in a different subject area. The mentor would not have answers to the many of her questions and the two had little time to get together. However, because of policy relative to the state-required mentor program, the two had to form some type of relationship in order for Norah to complete the requirements for her assessment. Her mentor did advise her on policy and procedures and tried to help whenever she could. Since Norah seemed self-confident, it made sense to the mentor to keep her distance and allow Norah to use her own approaches to her teaching. After the assessment was completed, the two had little contact. Norah acknowledged that it was not her mentor's fault that they were mismatched, and (much as was the case with Kara) she found another teacher to become her mentor. This individual advised her on specialized procedures, advised her on discipline matters, and was available to talk whenever she had a problem.

#### *Their Relations with Administrators*

The fourth focus was on social interactions with principals and other administrators:

(4) What kind of relations do they have with the administrators?\_

Dan kept his relationship with his administrator as professional and he seemed happy that the principal did not encourage a personal relationship. He knew that he could approach the principal when he had particular needs, such as discipline problems or

questions about rules and procedures of the school, but he rarely needed any kind of assistance from the administration.

The administrators – a principal and a vice principal – at Kara’s school were very visible: walking around the school, speaking to students and teachers, trying to keep spirits high, staying in touch. Kara admired these administrators for the work they did to change the course of Suburban School and she felt that she could go to them if she had problems with academics or discipline or needed supplies. She did meet often with one or the other of them. Kara felt that her administration was the “backbone” of the school and without their support and guidance, she might not have stayed teaching at the school.

Finally, Norah had three administrators – one principal and two vice-principals – all of whom she respected. In particular, she spoke highly about one of the vice-principals who was also her in-school assessor. If she had problems with students, parents, or other teachers, she knew she could talk to any of the administrators and they would provide support and assistance. She knew their doors were open to her. To a greater extent than the two other new teachers, Norah wanted affirmation from the administrators. She wanted praise when she felt that praise was warranted. Norah considered herself a hard worker as a teacher and a basketball coach and she felt that she should be appreciated for her contribution to Urban School. As I watched Norah working with her students and coaching her basketball team, I could see how much she wanted to help her students succeed.

#### *Their Decisions to Stay or Leave*

The final question guiding the study was:

(5) What goes into the new teachers' decisions to stay in or leave the teaching profession?

During the last few months of the school year, the first-year teachers had to make decisions about where they wanted to be the next year. Early in March, all of the teachers in each school had to sign a letter of intent for their individual schools – a letter designed to tell administrators which teachers wanted to remain and, of those who wanted to stay, which ones were interested in teaching a different grade level. The principals used the information to decide on how many teachers they would need for the coming year. Once all of the letters were turned in, the principals at each school let the teachers, especially the beginning teachers and other teachers new to the school(s), know if they were going to be able to keep the position they were now in or have to transfer to another school. Later during the month of April, each teacher signed another letter of intent – this one designed to find out which teachers were interested in a possible transfer to another school, retirement, a sabbatical, and other reasons.

All three of the beginning teachers in my study wanted to stay in the teaching profession, but their decisions to stay teaching varied. Dan had no doubt that he wanted to stay in the classroom. Even though, there were times during the year when he was frustrated and had doubts about staying, in the end he wanted to stay. Sometimes when he would become uncertain about a career in teaching, he considered the complications and cost of beginning a new career. Dan was fortunate in knowing that his position at Rural School was safe, since he was teaching one of three middle school classes and for most of the last 15 years the school had had enough students to justify three classes.

The other two teachers – Kara and Norah – agreed to stay at the schools where

they spent their first year, but they changed their teaching assignments. Kara, like Dan, had a position at her school if she wanted it. She knew that if she wanted to teach at Suburban School, she could. She felt that the students needed her and she decided to stay for at least one more year. She did say that she wanted to teach a regular class, not an inclusion class for which she felt so unprepared. Her only other decision was which room she would teach in. She wanted to stay in the same room, since she already had her materials there, had good storage space, and liked the location (across the hall from her friend, the other English teacher who had helped her during the past year). In the end, no one took her classroom and she would be able to stay there for the next year.

Like Kara, Norah had a tough time adjusting to the special education classes that she taught. She was not able to accomplish what she wanted to with her students. When a position in mathematics became available at her school, she quickly accepted the position. She wanted to stay at the school – where she was very happy with the relationships that she had formed during the year with the administrators and staff. She was also offered her coaching position at the school and that was important to her. There was no doubt in her mind that she wanted to stay teaching as long as she could teach what she wanted and coach the basketball team.

#### *Implications of the Study*

What kind of contribution is made by a study of only three first-year teachers each in unique settings? What kinds of insights can be derived from it? The major contribution, it seems to me, is what it has to say about the concept of “good teacher.” All three individuals wanted to be good teachers and all of them thought of quality in terms of relations with other people, including students, other teachers, and administrators. Yet

they thought about those relationships differently and gave different weights to different kinds of relationships. To Dan, a good teacher was competent, professional, prepared in work with his students, and was not overly dependent on administrators or other teachers. To Kara, a good teacher was a nurturer, who could, in turn, be nurtured and supported by others, but she also thought a good teacher was understanding and creative. To Norah, a good teacher motivated her students – got them excited about learning and was an active contributor to the school community. All considered themselves to be good teachers, but all acknowledged areas they might strengthen. For instance, the latter two teachers thought they were good teachers, but they saw limitations with respect to the students they could teach. They did not feel equipped to teach inclusion or special education classes.

Prior studies have addressed the question of qualities that make for a good teacher. For instance, in Dooley's (1998) study, good teachers were seen as being caring, committed, creative, reflective in thinking, and having internal locus of control; and in Norton's (1997) study, good teachers were described as creative, flexible, enthusiastic, and intuitive in their teaching. These studies focused on qualities that are manifested particularly in the teacher's interactions with students. My study had a broader scope in looking at other relations that went into the concept of "good" teacher relations with administrators, with other teachers, including assigned and informal mentors, with the students' parents, and with one's own family.

The new teachers' perceptions of what makes a good teacher were complemented and complicated by data from other sources. The administrators in my study provided another perspective on what a good teacher is and most emphasized administrative

strengths, though they mentioned other qualities. To them the three beginning teachers were all “good” because they had their classrooms well organized, kept their students on task, did not have many discipline problems, and did not need an excessive amount of assistance. This finding was similar to that of a study by Brock and Grady (1998), who said that administrators thought a “good” teacher had good classroom management skills and believed that every child can learn and should be successful in their ability to learn.

In today’s emphasis on accountability, formative and summative assessments are also relevant to the issue of whether or not a new teacher succeeds as a “good” teacher. The issue of assessment – student and teacher assessment – was a recurring theme in my study. I found that first-year teachers’ assessment for certification was a continual concern for all three first-year teachers along with the high-stakes student assessment. These new teachers had official mentors assigned by the district for the purpose of helping them prepare for their assessment for certification – to help them score as good teachers on those evaluations. Interestingly, two of the three, Kara and Norah, had to form mentor-protégé relationships with people other than trained mentors. Kara, because of a conflict of interest, had to turn to another teacher for guidance. As for Norah, her mentor was teaching in another subject area and was located in another building making it difficult for the two to communicate. These two teachers found someone they knew who could help them.

They talked with me about their concern about completing and passing their assessments. They also voiced their opinions about student assessment and how the results of their students’ scores reflected on their first year in the classroom. The outcome of the assessment of their students had high stakes for all associated with the school, since

good scores keep schools from being identified by their respective states.

This study was completed in Vermont, Massachusetts, and New York City. Few studies dealing with first-year teachers have been conducted in this way and no previous research of this type has been set in three different settings. Of particular importance is what the study suggests about the importance of “family” – family ties and ties to the community – in a first-year teacher’s life. These beginning teachers depended much on their family’s acceptance and help during their first year of teaching. All three mentioned how their parents supported their choice to teach and Dan and Norah had family members who were teachers or were retired teachers. This close connection to someone who taught has been pointed out before in studies of individuals’ decisions to be teachers (Goddard & Foster, 2001). For Norah, who was a newly married beginning teacher, support or lack of support by her spouse was important. Kara, the only married first-year teacher with a child, needed and received much support from her husband and other family members. Dan, who was the only single first-year teacher in the study, lived with his parents for most of the study and considered that essential to his successful year.

The study suggests areas that might receive more attention in future studies: For instance, the first-year teachers’ relations with family and friends received some attention but not much. Further research into the personal lives of beginning teachers could explain much about first-year teachers’ teaching lives. More attention needs to be directed to the impact of teacher assessment and student assessment on beginning teachers’ experiences. Also, research dealing with the relationship of the administrators and mentors with the first-year teachers should continue.

First-year teachers have to deal with opening a school year for the first time,

learning the “ropes” of teaching, developing their own teaching style, understanding the culture and how it fits into teaching strategies and classroom management, and adjusting to teaching while still maintaining some type of personal life. Through my study I was able to see how extremely difficult it was for these beginning teachers. Without the support of administrators, other teachers, especially mentors, family, and friends, it would be difficult for a beginning teacher to get through that first year of teaching.

Additionally, current studies have shown that mentoring programs such as telementoring, mentoring by a veteran teacher, novice teacher learning communities, and peer coaching keep new teachers motivated and enthusiastic while increasing their skills and self-efficacy. As a result, schools that employ these practices experience less turnover (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Reducing turnover is important because it is costly for both school districts and their students.

The average cost to recruit, hire, prepare and lose a teacher is \$50,000.00 (Carroll & Fulton, 2004). This adds up to a lot of money that could be spent on students and programs designed to raise teacher job satisfaction. With so many qualified teachers leaving the profession, students are experiencing a substandard education in a considerable number of school districts. Simply stated, teacher turnover is disruptive to the education of students. In fact, Bob Chase (2000) writes:

NEA members know that high staff turnover has devastating consequences for children. Research shows that the single most important factor in a child’s education is the quality of his or her teacher—and quality depends in large measure upon years of experience. (p. 5)

In order to give students the best education we can possibly give them, we need to

encourage good novice teachers to stick around and work at becoming great veteran teachers. Telementoring, mentoring by a veteran teacher, novice teacher learning communities, and peer coaching can help beginning teachers realize their potential and reach this goal. Linda Darling-Hammond (2003) contends:

School systems can create a magnetic effect when they make it clear that they are committed to finding, keeping, and supporting good teachers. These teachers become a magnet for others who seek environments in which they can learn from their colleagues and create success for their students. (p. 12-13)

Clearly, mentoring programs help school districts and administrators to create these nurturing environments which reduce teacher isolation, and, in turn, inspire new teachers.

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