University of Alberta

Educating for Democratic Citizenship
A Narrative Inquiry into Teacher Experiences

by

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Abstract

This narrative inquiry was designed to enter into the conversation about what it means to educate for democratic citizenship. The introduction and literature review probe the meanings of democracy and citizenship and the role of education in creating democratic citizens. I used narrative inquiry as the method of exploring what schools and teachers do to develop democratic citizenship in students. The participants were me and three other teachers. I looked for participants who would be willing to investigate their own practice and who were willing to contribute to knowledge in the area of educating for democratic citizenship. This is a study of how we storied ourselves on the professional knowledge landscape within the context of educating for democratic citizenship. This study is situated in the Deweyan view of experience and education. I present four narratives that emerged as a result of research conversations over the time period of a school year. Our conversations were focused on how we work as teachers to foster the democratic spirit. Each of the narratives stands alone as my interpretation of the recorded conversations and my field notes. Each of the participants read a draft of their narrative and gave it his or her approval. Upon rereading the narratives, I saw some common threads, on which I have commented in chapter eight. I have also commented on some individual strands that caught my interest. Chapter eight contains elements of a retelling after the experiences of research conversations, field texts, and composition of the research texts. The final chapter contains further reflections upon my own experiences and the narratives of the three other participants. The theorizing in chapter nine is based upon ideas that emerge out of the whole experience of coursework, literature review, and the encounter with the participants.

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I dedicate this work to all those mentioned here and to the democratic spirit.

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Chapter 1: Coming to the Questions: Autobiographical Narrative Inquiries

> *Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.* (Richard Shuall in Freire, 1989, p. 15)

A Passion for Democracy

My life story leads me to a passion for democracy and the democratic spirit. I am a teacher. A goal of education in Alberta is to help create democratic citizens. As I embarked on a narrative inquiry into my experiences on the professional knowledge landscape (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995) and the professional knowledge landscapes of several other teachers around the issue of educating for democratic citizenship, I wondered, where does the democratic spirit start? My personal observations tell me that democratic behaviour does not come easily to us as a species. I thought about the nurture versus nature debate within the context of democratic impulses, and I decided that the democratic spirit is arrived at more through nurture than by nature. Of course, I am not the first to say that education plays an important part in developing democratic habits of mind (Dewey, 1916).

I believe that the most basic impulse guiding us toward democratic behaviour is the care for others. Noddings (2003) tells us that “most parents are deeply concerned that their children develop the capacity to maintain caring relations” (p. 159). However, the ethic of care does not result simply via instruction from an adult. Noddings goes on to say that parents “show children first what it means to be cared for, and then teach them how to care for others” (p. 159). The ability to understand and care about another’s needs leads us outside ourselves. What starts at an

emotional level may eventually lead to an intellectual understanding of the common good and a public sense of the spirit of democracy. What role does public education play and what role do teachers, in particular, have in developing that spirit? I am mindful that learning about democracy, learning to behave democratically, and being taught democratically occur in the home, in schools, and in society. However, for the purpose of this study, schools are of central interest. Callan (1997) suggests that “schooling has a large place in children’s lives across the full span of the transition from membership in the family to membership in the polity” (p. 276).

Examining my own early landscape helps me understand how I came to be passionate about democracy and how that landscape affected my future as a teacher. Maxine Greene (1995) proposes that “the narratives we shape out of the materials of our lived lives must somehow take account of our original landscapes if we are to truly be present to ourselves and to partake in an authentic relationship with the young” (p. 75). In democratic societies, schools play an important part in the creation of democratically inclined citizens, but the democratic spirit is also created in public life, in the family, and in the daily engagements of work and leisure throughout life (Dewey, 1938; Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, & Goodlad, 2004). It would be unwise to place all the responsibility for the development and health of democracy on the schools. Although my narrative inquiry focuses on the experiences of several teachers on their professional landscapes, I remain conscious of the larger context.

My experiences as a teacher and school administrator form a large part of the landscape for my exploration of democracy. I believe that teachers are professionals with a moral purpose (Fullan, 1993). The role of the democratic principal is to facilitate the work of teachers by building a learning community where staff share knowledge with each other in all aspects of

their work (Apple & Beane, 2007). Instructional leaders should have a good sense of what effective teaching looks like and have contact with new research in pedagogy. The key, however, to building a collegial and democratic teaching team is in facilitating shared knowledge and leadership (Barth, 1990; Eisner, 1998; Apple & Beane, 2007). A school principal will have presence and credibility if the teachers know that any genuine interaction to the end of improving the quality of teaching will not be used against them. Starratt (2004) tells us that:

> The work of educational leadership should be work that is simultaneously intellectual and moral; an activity characterized by a blend of human, professional, and civic concerns; a work of cultivating an environment for learning that is humanly fulfilling and socially responsible. In cultivating that environment, moral educational leaders enact the foundational virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence—the same virtues that should characterize students' learning. (p. 3)

Instructional leaders must know the difference between feedback and criticism and they must engage teachers in dialogue about practice. Democratic and collegial relationships are, in part, determined by how well these interactions go.

Purpose of This Study

Most societies value the usual goals of education, such as literacy, numeracy, and the variety of skills needed for work. Canada and Alberta are no different in expressing comprehensive lists of goals, including citizenship. The purpose of this study is to understand the role of public education and teachers in creating democratic citizens. More specifically, I want to understand my own story and the stories of several practitioners who are conscious of teaching for democratic citizenship. Democratic citizens are open minded, critical thinkers, who have a sense of the common good and who participate in local, national, and global institutions for the

good of themselves and society (Dewey, 1916; Goodlad et al., 2004). Democratic citizens are concerned about fellow citizens, especially the disadvantaged and oppressed, and they care about the planet. Curriculum and pedagogy for democratic education are designed to foster this concern for others. The Program Rationale and Philosophy of the Alberta Social Studies program mandates a curriculum that captures the essence of democratic citizenship (Alberta Education, 2005). However, a curriculum statement is not enough to accomplish the goal of developing democratic citizens. Instruction and experiences are equally necessary to the development of the skills and attitudes of democratic citizenship, and teachers have an important role to play in nurturing the democratic spirit (Dewey, 1938; Ayers, 2001; Apple & Beane, 2007).

Democracy goes beyond the opportunity to freely elect representatives to legislative bodies. Dewey helps us understand this in his early writing:

> To say that democracy is only a form of government is like saying that home is a more or less geometrical arrangement of bricks and mortar; that the church is a building with pews, pulpit and spire. It is true; they certainly are so much. But it is false; they are so infinitely more. Democracy, like any other polity, has been finely termed the memory of an historic past, the consciousness of a living present, the ideal of the coming future. Democracy, in a word, is a social, that is to say, an ethical conception, and upon its ethical significance is based its significance as governmental. Democracy is a form of government only because it is a form of moral and spiritual association. (Dewey, 1888, p. 240)

Democracy is intertwined with the deepest moral values of civilized society, where the dignity and value of being human demands mutual respect among all humans. Macpherson (1992), in his 1965 Massey Lecture, explores several versions of democracy. He asserts that, for both liberal democracy and conceptions of democracy in the underdeveloped world, "the basic moral assertion made by this doctrine is the ultimate worth of the dignity and freedom of the

human being" (p. 29). Essential to this doctrine is the belief that humans have intrinsic equality. Dahl (1989) puts it as follows: "Yet democracy might, like Plato's republic, be little more than a philosophical fantasy were it not for the persistent and widespread influence of the belief that human beings are intrinsically equal in a fundamental way" (p. 85). Taylor (2004) traces the development of a social imaginary, beginning in the 17th century and well-established today, which proposes that "human beings are rational, sociable agents who are meant to collaborate in peace to their mutual benefit" (p. 3). The social order emerges from a consciousness present in a large collection of individuals who then form the political structures to live out their concept:

> The picture of society is that of individuals who come together to form a political entity against a certain pre-existing moral background and with certain ends in view. The moral background is one of natural rights; these people already have certain moral obligations toward each other. The ends sought are certain common benefits, of which security is the most important (p. 3).

Charters and codes and bills of rights in many countries capture the most basic tenets of democratic human behaviour. In a democracy, there is a balance between individual aspirations and collective needs; this balance is continually negotiated by an active and informed citizenry. Democracy is not easy, as Callan (1997) reminds us:

> The claims of democratic virtue and liberal pluralism can in general be reconciled. But it is a much more tense and precarious reconciliation than we might like it to be. The marriage of liberalism and democracy is a turbulent one, and its turbulence is inevitably manifest in our educational thought and practice (p. 11).

Democracy is always a work in progress (Dewey, 1916). At its best, democracy is desirable because it offers freedom and choice, elevated by a sense of the common good. Democratic citizenship is a simultaneous recognition of our individuality and our communal

responsibility.

> Without a strong notion of commitment to other people and our shared undertakings, without a sense that we are together creating a just world, a world not ruled by cheap acceptance of inevitability or the easy superiority of wealth, our hard-won individualism loses his deeper significance (Kingwell, 2000, p. 15).

My interest in this study centred on understanding what schools and teachers do to develop democratic citizenship in students. To gain this understanding, I wished to engage in personal reflection upon my own story and the stories and thoughts of several teachers who are intentional about democratic education. The following are some questions that guided my research conversations with the participants:

1) What do teachers perceive as education for democratic citizenship?
2) What are the stories of teachers and administrators who are educating for democratic citizenship?
3) What are the stories that teachers and administrators tell about teacher preparation in their development as teachers of democratic citizenship?
4) How do the planned curriculum and the lived curriculum act in creating democratic citizens?
5) How schools are held accountable for educating for democratic citizenship?
6) What are the obstacles to educating for democratic citizenship?

Significance of this Study

In the broadest sense, this narrative inquiry is intended to enter into the conversation about the purpose of education in a democratic society and therefore be of interest to anyone who cares about how we continue to grow our democratic way of life. Educating for democratic citizenship is a stated goal of education in Alberta. This study is intended to bring democratic

education into sharper focus and raise it higher on the public agenda. Perhaps educational policy makers will come to better understand that education for democratic citizenship goes beyond lofty curriculum statements and a narrow accountability structure to policies that support curriculum, pedagogy, and structures that make classrooms an experience in democracy. My hope is that this study will have significance for teachers and other educational practitioners. The narratives presented here may be a catalyst for teachers to think about their own practice as they educate for democratic citizenship.

This study continues the conversation around the kind of pedagogy that enhances democratic habits of mind and heart in young learners. Through narrative, teachers may see that self-awareness and mindfulness increases the probability of democratic education. Teachers will develop a better understanding that democratic education is an experience in democracy. A stronger consciousness will emerge that democratic citizenship is local, national, and global and emerges out of human dignity. The narratives express the idea that democracy is a work in progress and change is not grand and dramatic but rather occurs in small steps and in the day to day lives of all citizens, young ones included.

Definitions

I have chosen the phrase “educating for democratic citizenship,” but the literature uses a variety of expressions that have overlapping meaning. These include “democratic schools,” “education in a democracy,” “developing democratic character,” “citizenship education,” and “education for citizenship.” The term “democracy” is a contested term, but my intention is that my literature review will reveal the characteristics of democratic behaviour for the purpose of this study. Suffice it to say that, at this point, the meaning of democracy goes beyond the act of

participating in elections of governments. A phrase that resonates for me is “spirit of democracy.” I encountered the phrase in an online description of a democracy project:

> The organizing idea for this project was born several years ago when two Canadian researchers, Andrew Hughes and Alan Sears, witnessed a compelling appeal from colleagues from Argentina at a civic education conference. Argentinean educators, working to foster an emerging democratic culture in their country, said, “Don’t teach us about the structures of democracy—we know all about the structures of democracy; teach us the spirit of democracy.” (Goldfarb, Kondratova, & Kinnie, 2002, p. 4)

I will be exploring how we build a spirit of democracy.

In choosing the title of my research, *Educating for Democratic Citizenship*, I thought about and then chose the word “educating” rather than “teaching” or “schooling” because I believe the word better captures the experiential aspect of learning. The choice of some words is never entirely satisfying because there are nuances of meaning that are either missed or implied and, thus, misunderstood.

I realize that, when we educate for democratic citizenship, we seem to have an outcome in mind. However, in reality, democracy is experienced here and now and is both an outcome and a current experience. The role of the teacher in educating for democratic citizenship is complicated by many factors outside of the control of the teacher, all of which impact the way students learn democracy. Within the current testing regime of schools, students’ own socioeconomic circumstances and other factors shape their learning. For that reason, Biesta (2011) argues that:

> There is a need to shift the focus of research, policy and practice from the teaching of citizenship towards the different ways in which young people “learn democracy” through their participation in the contexts and practices that make up their everyday lives, in school, college and university, and in society at large. (p. 6)

"Citizenship" is likewise a contested word that I will flesh out in the literature review. However, Simon captures the essence of its meaning for the purpose of this study: "To be a citizen it is not just to hold a legal status in relation to a particular nation state; rather it is to possess the capacities, and have the opportunities, to participate with others in the determination of life in one's society." (Simon, 2001, p. 12).

I am basing my "narrative inquiry" approach on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000), who describe what narrative inquirers do. "We think the stories illustrate the importance of learning and thinking narratively as one frames research puzzles, enters the inquiry field, and composes field texts and research texts" (p. xiii). "Grand narrative" is another term emerging from Clandinin and Connelly's work, with which I identify. Edward Thorndike, an educational psychologist, popularized the measurement of behaviour as an educational research approach. Lagemann (1989), quoted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), declared that "Edward L. Thorndike won and John Dewey lost" (p. xxv). "The story scripted by Thorndike became so pervasive, so taken for granted, as the only valid story, that we call it a 'grand narrative' of social science inquiry" (p. xxv).

Narrative inquiry allows for a research approach that goes beyond quantitative measurement approaches and beyond qualitative approaches that seek themes. My impression is that the social sciences have been endlessly attempting to meet a level of certainty that the hard sciences seem to achieve. I believe that doing science is compatible with narrative and imaginative complexity. I am comfortable with the idea that narrative inquiry brings meaning and significance to a research topic without producing generalizations or certain knowledge that can be replicated. In my own work, I hope to illuminate teacher practice in democratic

citizenship by telling stories that will resonate for teachers in contexts similar to those of the participants. Our stories will “offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 42).

Chapter 2: The Literature Tells a Story of Educating for Democratic Citizenship

> *The teacher cannot think for his students, nor can he impose his thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about reality, does not take place in an ivory tower isolation, but only in communication*. (Freire, 1989, p. 64)

As I embarked upon this journey of discovery into educating for democratic citizenship, I knew that I would be encountering what others have to say about the topic. I am astounded by the volume of literature that is available—much more than I thought. Many thinkers and authors are engaging in a vigorous exploration of the history, meanings, and development of democracy. The expansive discourse is heartening and fills me with hope. My disappointment is in how infrequently ordinary citizens (including myself) encounter the ideas presented in the literature. This review reflects my story of engagement with the literature. Much more was read than is presented here. Of necessity, I have been selective. Sometimes material included in this review may not seem directly relevant to my study, but because it resonated in some way or left the door open for further reflection, I have included it. Most of the material I selected is intended to illuminate the meaning of education for democratic citizenship.

Education in Canada is a provincial matter, but there is a remarkable similarity between education systems across the country (Young, Levin, & Wallin, 2007). The similarities are such that numerous authors write about the Canadian educational scene as though it were one system (Hennessy, 2006; Lund & Carr, 2008; Portelli & Solomon, 2001; Ungerleider, 2003). The Canadian educational research community has strong links to American educational research. Rare indeed would be a Canadian scholarly work in education that did not reference American authors. Nonetheless, there is a rich storehouse of Canadian educational research literature informing education for democratic citizenship. I draw on literature mostly from English

speaking democracies because of the historical connections, but I acknowledge that the conversation about democracy is global.

What Constitutes Education For Democratic Citizenship?

Countries of the western world place a high premium on the education system as an institution of democracy. Since their inception, public schools have been seen as a vehicle to create a common experience (and shared curriculum) in the interest of creating civic capacity; out of this would emerge participation and leadership. John Dewey, in *School and Society* (1899), points out that participation in the schoolroom community provides the training ground for democracy and, therefore, for leadership in democracy. Americans have defined public education as a right, along with an undisputed right to access for all children:

> The founding fathers viewed the education of all citizens…as essential to sustaining a representative form of government. Thomas Jefferson, for example, advocated the creation of free "common schools" that would teach young children the moral values and basic skills needed to be economically self-sufficient and virtuous citizens. (Corcoran & Goertz, 2005, p. 25)

Hansen (2004) provides a statement that captures a common view:

> The schools are entrusted with a tremendous human and civic responsibility. Our nation is always one generation away from losing a form of government that has taken centuries to develop. If the young do not learn about citizenship and the public good, they will not be prepared for their roles as worthwhile citizens. The next generation needs to understand and to desire freedom, choices, responsibilities, integrity, and democracy. That is a substantial part of what schools are all about. (p. 54)

Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, in their recent book, *Education For Everyone* (2004), choose the subtitle "Agenda for Education in a Democracy." They remind us that

education is a continuous activity, with schools providing only a part of it. They suggest that:

> A democratic society is different from other kinds of societies in that while it looks to its schools to perform all of these essential functions, it also looks to its schools to create a very specific kind of citizen: a democratic citizen. (p. 8)

They go on to explain that literacy in a democracy means more than reading and writing. It includes the abilities to engage in critical enquiry, to see issues from a variety of perspectives, and to see beyond the obvious. Ayers (2001) places the role of education in the centre of democratic society: "A strong democracy requires a thoughtful, engaged, and active citizenry, and an education that encourages critical thought, reception and resistance, participation and empowerment." (p. xii).

The Structure and Purpose of Schools in a Democracy

In *Democratic Schools* (1995), Apple and Beane affirm that schools in a democracy must remain compulsory and publicly funded despite the pressure for privatization and "choice." They suggest that democratic schools must have wide participation by parents, professionals, community members, and students in the issues of governance and policy making. However, local decision-making must be guided by democratic principles. Goodlad et al. (2004) reinforce the idea that education must be for all, regardless of individual circumstances:

> Whatever the medium intended for educating, the provision of *total inclusion* is a moral imperative in a democracy and, it is essential to point out, a practical necessity for the health of all and for the continued renewal of democratic culture. (p. 7)

Total inclusion means that the vast majority of children are in public schools. Equity and equal access are basic to democratic schools. Inequity in schools reflects the inequities existent in the community. For Apple and Beane (1995), despite the rhetoric of democracy in our society,

schools in many ways are undemocratic places:

> While democracy emphasizes cooperation among people, too many schools have fostered competition—for grades, for status, for resources, for programs, and so on. While democracy depends upon caring for the common good, too many schools, stimulated by the influence of political agendas imposed from outside, have emphasized the idea of individuality based almost entirely on self-interest. While democracy prizes diversity, too many schools have largely reflected the interests and aspirations of the most powerful groups in this country and ignored those of the less powerful. While schools in a democracy would presumably demonstrate how to achieve equal opportunity for all, too many schools are plagued by structures like tracking and ability grouping that deny equal opportunity and results to many, particularly the poor, people of color, and women. (p. 12)

Public schools are an important vehicle for carrying forward the democratic ideal because, as Barber, quoted in Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon (2001), points out, schools are the means of creating the public. "Public schools are not merely schools *for* the public, but schools of publicness: institutions where we learn what it means to *be* a public and start down the road toward common national and civic identity" (p. 13). The surrounding culture of the marketplace does not place a high premium on fairness, justice, and care for one another. The marketplace public has a different set of values from the ideals proposed by the humanitarian, democratic narrative. Barber, quoted in Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon (2001), also reminds us that, "We honour ambition, we reward greed, we celebrate materialism, we worship acquisitiveness, we cherish success, and we commercialize the classroom—and then we bark at the young about the gentle art of the spirit" (p. 15).

Despite the realities that the marketplace surround is powerful and that schooling is only part of the education of children, public schooling is the starting point for nurturing the

democratic narrative. The presence of students from a variety of ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds mirrors society. Public schools are an experience in diversity for both learners and teachers.

> In this process of developing a strong, educated citizenry, public schools have a particularly vital role that has no equal in private education: teaching tolerance and respect for diversity. The U. S. Supreme Court has recognized this role, articulating as one purpose of public education the teaching of fundamental values essential to a democratic society, including "tolerance of divergent political and religious views" and "taking into account consideration of the sensibilities of others." (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001, p. 175)

The agenda of public education is the same as the agenda of democratic society: preparation for the duties of citizenship, preparation for earning a living, and preparation for leading a good moral life (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001).

There is no particular structure to democratic schools, but there are some possible commonalities, such as the right of all those involved in school life, including young people, to participate in decision-making. Diversity in democratic schools is not a problem; it is valued. At the same time, cooperation and collaboration are emphasized over competition. Equity of access is basic but not sufficient. Every effort is made to reduce institutional barriers, such as tracking and biased testing that discriminates against disadvantaged groups (Apple & Beane, 1995).

Citizenship Education in England

Education for Citizenship has been legislated as part of the National Curriculum in England since 2002. The program is mandatory for secondary schools and optional for primary schools. The implementation is intended to develop in students a stronger sense of citizenship in a democracy, to develop values of active participation, and to develop the values of staying

informed about issues and becoming politically literate. A qualitative study by Holden (2004) investigates the parent perspective on Education for Citizenship. Holden uses case studies of three schools in the southwest of England. Holden examines parent attitudes as part of a larger study of attitudes of teachers and children to Education for Citizenship. The need for awareness of parent attitudes resonates with Goodlad et al. (2004) when they say that education happens beyond schooling. As Holden (2004) conducted her research, she realized that teachers lacked awareness of the parents' attitudes.

> This lack of awareness of the views of parents…is particularly pertinent to the introduction of education for citizenship as social and moral education starts in the home and the values of the home will undoubtedly influence the values the child brings to school. (p. 249)

Holden finds that parents were largely uninformed about what schools were doing with regard to Education for Citizenship. Many offered vague support, but a number suggested that citizenship was better taught at the secondary level. Holden concludes that better dialogue between schools and parents was needed.

> Indeed, if we do not engage in such open debate, genuinely listening to parents' perspectives and creating a curriculum which has the support of home and school, then one of the dangers is that citizenship education will become just another academic subject. (p. 257)

The inclusion here of the Holden study supports the idea that democratic education is important beyond Canada and the United States. This article demonstrates that parents are an important part of the picture.

Educational Accountability

Human learning is a complex activity and accountability systems have to recognize this

complexity. There is growing evidence that learning driven by high stakes testing may not produce solid knowledge and skills. “A test score is a mighty poor indicator of a human being’s potential to become all that he or she can be” (Sirotnik, 2004, p. 8). Kohn (2005), a critic of current accountability systems in North America, contends that:

> Just as you can’t cram a math fact down a child’s throat and expect a child to understand mathematics—the child has to invent the understanding from inside out—so you can’t transmit values to kids or instil virtues in them. You can’t make them honest or responsible or considerate. These ideas have to be constructed, just like understanding of scientific principles has to be constructed. (p 19)

Accountability structures in North America, like Alberta’s Provincial Achievement Tests and Diploma Exams, centre on measurable criteria and ignore unmeasurable goals like citizenship education.

The Canadian Teachers’ Federation (CTF), in its publication, *Educational Accountability with a Human Face* (2004), tells us that “accountability must be situated within the multiple goals of public education...and must be driven by a strong vision of the role of public education in forging a democratic society” (p. 23). The CTF suggests that the Canadian public must engage in a meaningful discussion about the purpose of education. The Canadian School Boards Association (CSBA), in its *Discussion Paper on Accountability* (2002), states that “too often, when accountability measures are put in place without a clear consensus on goals, the measured outcomes have little bearing on what is important or relevant” (p. 3). The CSBA contends that all of us in the educational endeavour—those who govern, the professionals, parents, community, and students—must accept that the goals and outcomes that are measurable may not be the most important.

I examined two important policy documents relating to education in Alberta. The Worth

Commission On Educational Planning (1972) seeks person-centred education and autonomy for learners without the constraints of diploma exams and external tests. There is surprisingly little said by the Worth report about results and outcomes reporting. Most evaluation that would occur in the system was intended to be used by the learner. The need for data is rather mildly but succinctly put in the following statement: "The key questions are how the most significant data for any purpose can be identified, how the reporting can be made meaningful, and how the whole activity can be carried out in harmony with good learning and teaching" (p. 210). The report, however, does make recommendations regarding the accountability of teachers. One recommendation suggests that school councils should audit the extent to which school objectives are achieved (p. 127). Another recommendation states that teachers should periodically be appraised by the community and, further, that teachers should be contracted and paid on the basis of end results (p. 247). Centralized accountability structures are not a feature of the Worth report.

Written almost 30 years later, Alberta's Commission on Learning report (2003) contains numerous recommendations for accountability practices. The preamble to the section of recommendations, entitled "Making the grade," states that "accountability is critical" (p. 12). The report recommends comprehensive reporting systems for professional growth plans, school growth plans, and school jurisdiction growth plans. It recommends the retention and expansion of provincial testing and the reporting of results. The final recommendation of this section was to "provide ongoing comprehensive, consistent and transparent information to Albertans and the outcomes achieved by Alberta students" (p. 104).

When we look at the goals of basic education in Alberta (Ministerial Order 4.2.2, 1998), the list is comprehensive and includes, among other goals, citizenship, critical thinking, and life-

long learning. A large bureaucracy has developed around the testing process and accountability pillar in Alberta Education and this theme of accountability seems to be continent-wide. There is very little in the implementation of accountability being thrust upon our schools that is likely to help internalize democratic citizenship, critical thinking, and life-long learning in the behavioural repertoire of the young. Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad (2004) protest that attaining high test scores has become an end in itself. "Such scores do not predict or correspond to success in such things as personal relationship, good work, play or sound mental and physical health" (p. 58). In fact, similar concerns surface in the research literature in the United Kingdom:

> In a climate of external accountability, and the necessary political demand for improved standards of performance of young people in schools, it is all too easy for the "person" of the learner and the processes and relationships of learning to be eclipsed by a "high stakes" focus on learning outcomes. (Crick & Wilson, 2005, p. 364)

Crick and Wilson (2005) go on to quote empirical evidence from around the world showing that summative testing has a negative impact on students' motivation for learning (p. 364). Accountability structures are an important feature of an education system that has an impact on democratic education.

Curriculum and Pedagogy

I am concerned that the current curriculum has become so bloated with subjects perceived as necessary to be competitive in the global economy that, even though democratic goals are mentioned in the programs of studies, they are given scant attention in practice. "The curriculum of the public school has become bloated, fragmented, mired in trivia, and short on ideas" (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 105). Teachers' desires for balance are derailed by testing, accountability requirements, and the shortage of time (Apple & Beane, 2007; Soder, Goodlad, &

McMannon, 2001; Ayers, 1993). Adding yet another course directed at character education or democratic education is not the answer, for a variety of reasons, including the shortage of time in the school day for more subjects. Goodlad in Soder, Goodlad, and McMannon (2001) notices that, whenever society wishes to engage in social improvement, attention turns to the schools. "Our thoughts go immediately to schools, the steps that might be taken to make them safer havens for children and youths, and the courses on character development that might be added to a bloated curriculum" (p. 3). While it may be desirable that teachers should be teachers of democratic citizenship and, ideally, that all students should be part of the process of democratic citizenship education, what is needed is a reduction of the crowded curriculum, leaving a more democratic, "humanitarian narrative as the guiding mission of schools" (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001, p. 4).

By the time a child enters school, many of the attitudes and beliefs are already formed toward the adult who is to be (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001, p. 12). Democratic attitudes in young citizens are not evenly nurtured by the family and society. To counter the narrative of the marketplace, a democratic narrative, as is called for by Goodlad, is necessary. "This narrative is three-pronged: interpersonal and social, civic and political, environmental and ecological" (Soder, Goodlad, & McMannon, 2001, p. 13).

In the literature dealing with educating for democracy, much is said about the need for critical thinking in a democracy and the need for schools to instil these skills. Critical thinking implies possible criticism of governments, policies, institutions, and belief systems. Criticism can be a complicated activity because of the risks involved in speaking truth to those in power or in offending persons or groups. Some writers suggest that, even in our democracies, where we

value freedom of speech, subtle and sometimes not-so-subtle restrictions have been placed on speech that is critical of government action or of influential groups in society (Giroux, 2005; Collini, 2010).

Giroux (2005) expresses concern about the oppressive climate in the United States, wherein journalists and other critics often self-censor what might be a critique of government action. Collini (2010) explores the complexity of offering potentially offensive criticism to persons or groups but feels that it is necessary in a democratic society. To put it in the simplest terms, we want to live in a world in which people are considerate and supportive of each other, but we also want to live in a world in which we exercise our powers of discrimination and do not flinch from the truth (p. 66).

A person educated in a democratic school system will develop the thinking skills necessary to evaluate what is going on in the world, along with enough imagination to see varying points of view and to be able to enter into conversations about possible courses of action. "A vital part of what is involved in functioning as a human being depends on developing the imaginative capacity to see the world through the eyes of others" (Collini, 2010, p. 41).

Beyond written democratic curriculum per se, elements of democratic education include the development of critical thinking, open mindedness, and a sense of the common good. In democratic education, issues of poverty, oppression of fellow human beings, and environmental care of the planet are engaged. This is done carefully, to direct the learning as much as possible toward the spirit of investigation and understanding and to avoid painting a cynical picture. Noddings (1999) cautions that:

> We have to be careful when we engage in this kind of political education. We want to encourage free and honest discussion, but we should avoid messages that destroy hope

> and induce cynicism. Some forms of radical pedagogy are too one-sided and leave students with the notion that everything good about their nation and their schooling is but a myth. (p. 5)

Educating for Democratic Citizenship in a Global Context

Democratic citizenship has a global dimension because, as I have argued earlier, each person is part of the entire human family. My journey through some of the literature helps to establish that teachers must have an understanding that democratic citizenship goes beyond local and even national boundaries. The literature helps us develop a critical view of the global forces that have teachers and learners explore the impact of capitalism and Eurocentrism upon the human condition. In democratic education, there is need for understanding the diversity of ideas, values, and cultures that are part of the global community but that are also increasingly part of the classroom.

There is a growing consciousness that the world is in crisis on many fronts. World poverty, disease, global warming, and violence continue to escalate, and solutions to the seemingly intractable problems elude us. Pike (2008) laments that “on a global scale, despite decades of media coverage of famine, diseases, and other catastrophes that afflict the world’s poor, the gap between the richest and poorest quintiles of the global population continue to widen inexorably” (p. 227). The circumstances in Sub-Saharan Africa are desperate because, added to the poverty, drought, and political instability, there is an HIV/AIDS pandemic sweeping the continent. In his book, *Race Against Time*, Lewis (2005) describes the devastating impact of the pandemic on Africa. Among the usual purposes of education, Lewis quotes Carol Bellamy, executive director of UNICEF, to describe a goal that is the key to the very survival of children:

> In a bold initiative to put education at the forefront of the fight against HIV/AIDS,

> UNICEF Executive Director Carol Bellamy today called on African leaders to join a campaign to abolish all education fees, and other costs for primary school-age children. (p. 74)

The United Nations has long called for universal public education as the necessary means for eliminating poverty and disadvantage in the third world, as expressed in *The Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989):

> **Article 28**
>
> 1. States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
>
> (a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
>
> (b) Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
>
> **Article 29**
>
> 1. States Parties agree that the education of the child shall be directed to:
>
> a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential.

In his work with the United Nations, Lewis (2005) places critical importance on education within the process of human development. "From UNESCO to UNICEF to the World Bank, it is agreed that universal primary education is the ultimate vector of human progress" (p. 75). The number of children excluded from primary education worldwide is estimated to be between 105 million and 120 million, with 44 million in Africa, about 60% of them girls (Lewis, 2005). Generally, since the 1930s, the international community has endorsed primary school

education as a means to improved economies, better health, better nutrition, better parenting skills, and human well-being (Lewis, 2005).

Any discussion of educating for democratic citizenship is complicated because so much of the terminology has been co-opted by neoliberals to support the capitalist market economy. It becomes necessary to constantly clarify the language, including the meanings of “democracy” and “citizenship.” McMurtry (2002) presents an interesting analysis of the meanings behind the rhetoric of the global economy. He provides a powerful way of understanding the value wars, through the opposition of the global market with the life economy. On the one hand, we are immersed in the global corporate system (GCS), which grows continually, described by its proponents as inevitable, “no alternative,” and as a “free” market; however, it is a non-living entity (p. 4). On the other hand, the life economy is, basically, the living human force that shares a common language and needs clean air and water, public literacy, health care, and the rule of law (p. 55). The life economy is at the mercy of the global corporate system, which has co-opted the language of freedom and democracy. Anyone who opposes the “free” market is accused of being against freedom and development. This is despite the fact that there appears to be growing evidence that billions of people and the earth’s ecosystem are being harmed by the global corporate system. McMurtry (2002) worries that most people of the world are blinded and anaesthetized by the corporate elite, their compliant governments, and the media, who have created a preconscious value set of the global market.

Dussel (1996), Frank (1998), and Smith (2006) trace the current global crisis back to the birth of capitalism in modern Europe. These thinkers are important, from an educational point of view, in that they show us the need to shift curriculum and pedagogy away from the

Eurocentrism of our education system.

Dussel (1996) describes a view of modernity that places the beginning of the history of the “world-system” at the year 1492, with Columbus’ discoveries (p. 492). He contends that Western historians write as if, prior to this date, cultural systems and empires merely co-existed without any sense of a world system. Eurocentrism tends to deny that “Europe’s superiority would be the offspring of its accumulation of riches, experience, and knowledge derived from the conquest of the Latin American continent” (p. 471). The mostly untold part of the story of European colonialism is replete with the abuse of indigenous peoples. Dussel (1996) finds it remarkable how the “civilizing mission” remains powerful, even today, despite the postmodern critique of Western hegemony (p. 472). His critique may partially explain why our education system continues to struggle with the provision of satisfactory education for many of our indigenous youth.

Frank (1998) proposes a holistic world economic system that is not as Eurocentric as most Western theorists and historians have been describing. He presents a compelling rationale for his claims that a global economy existed before Europe’s brief domination and the American ascendancy and that China and Asia were the centre of the world system for a longer period of time and will soon be the centre again (p. xxvi). The implications of Frank’s work on education are huge. Adopting his ideas would require a major reshaping of the understanding of the global economy. Globalization from the capitalist standpoint has so much rhetoric around preparing students to be competitive in the consumer capitalist system. Western education does not provide much opportunity for discussion of the responsibility of being conscious citizens in the global economic system. We protest human rights abuses in China, while we allow our own abuse of

humans in the name of the expansion of democracy. Frank calls for a more holistic theory of the world that is “humanocentric” and “ecocentric” (p. 4).

Smith (2006) digs deeper into the role of the teacher and teaching in the face of globalization. He asserts that teachers find themselves in a political and epistemological crisis brought on by changes that include the meaning of “public” in public education, the growth of commercialization of education, the “post” critiques, technology and communication, and various forms of fundamentalism. Teachers are caught between the two imaginaries of the development of a human being and the constructing of a citizen who is nothing more than a capital resource (p. 17). Smith alerts us to the possibility that the western academy has been compromised by the market agenda. He believes that autonomous scholarly work is on the decline because of the pressure from market forces, which are reluctant to fund universities that may be presenting challenges to their hegemony. He argues that the rewriting of taxation rules to favour economic interests over social interests has generally degraded social institutions (p. 20). Teachers will continue to struggle with the tension between educating for a meaningful democratic life and educating for a competitive position in the global economy.

In the context of creating a global consciousness, educating for human rights is a basic feature of democratic education. Educating for human rights has meaning on a local scale and on a global scale. “To achieve some measure of this, we should not underestimate the role of education in instilling in the minds of people core human rights values and the sanctity of a global citizenship ethic”(Abdi & Shultz, 2008, p. 3).

For some, the hope that democracy and justice would eventually prevail is fading. Giroux and Giroux (2006) suggest that democracy and educating for democracy in the United States and

Canada may well be in crisis. “At the center of this crisis is a tension between democratic values and market values, between dialogue engagement and rigid authoritarianism” (p. 21). The welfare state and public institutions are under attack from neoliberal capitalism at both national and global levels. “Free market fundamentalism rather than democratic idealism is now the driving force of economics and politics in most of the world” (p. 22). Public education needs to shift its focus from merely preparing workers and consumers to the goal of creating global democratic citizens. The Program Rationale and Philosophy of the Alberta Education (2005) Social Studies curriculum presents powerful rhetoric for democratic citizenship:

> Social studies develops the key values and attitudes, knowledge and understanding, and skills and processes necessary for students to become active and responsible citizens, engaged in the democratic process and aware of their capacity to effect change in their communities, society and world. (p. 1)

Among other attitudes, understandings, and skills described by the document, the following relate to global citizenship:

- demonstrate a global consciousness with respect to humanity and world issues
- understand how political and economic distribution of power affects individuals, communities and nations
- recognize and responsibly address injustices as they occur in their schools, communities, Canada and the world (p. 2)

My hope is that, even though global citizenship values are placed in the social studies program, all teachers come to accept the responsibility of developing a consciousness of democratic education in their students. Democratic education means educating for citizenship that has dimensions beyond the local and national to a global human family. My hope is that the values presented by such a program of studies reflect societal values promoted beyond the

schools.

Critical Theory

As teachers in democratic schools, we encourage critical thinking on the part of young learners. As teachers, we understand that democracy depends upon open critique by citizens of the structures, institutions, and social arrangements of society with the goal of making life better for all. As I read and discovered the meaning and history of critical theory, I found that many of those readings closely relate to my exploration of the meaning of citizenship and democracy in education. I wish to understand and advance the knowledge of the role of schools in developing engaged democratic citizens. I realize that, as I express this goal, I continually have to clarify what I mean by “advance” and “democratic.”

Capitalist behaviour tends to concentrate wealth in the hands of an elite group and simultaneously concentrates social and political power in those same hands. The majority of workers and other participants in western society accept the inevitability of capitalism and its attendant political systems. Ben Agger (1991) suggests, in his review of critical theory, that this is a false consciousness. “The particular character of false consciousness in a society founded on commodity fetishism—capitalism—is the inability to experience and recognize social relations as historical accomplishments that can be transformed” (p. 108). Canadian elections reflect a measure of evidence for this observation; increasing numbers of voters choose not to participate because they perceive the results as inevitable. Many citizens, young and old, disengage from the political process because their engagement seems to make no difference. Marcuse, referenced in Agger, would say that people exchange social and economic freedoms for abundant consumer choice (p. 109).

Agger (1991) says that thinkers like Adorno, Horkeimer, and Marcuse target positivism as the new form of ideology in late capitalism. “They argue instead that the positivist theory of science has become a new mythology and ideology in the sense that it fails to understand its own investment in the status quo” (p. 109). Positivism purports that the world works in a predetermined rational way and knowledge reflects that world. The postmodern view is that our relationship with the world is constructed and “reality” can be changed. Indeed, there are multiple realities. I agree with the critical theorists referred to by Agger who target “positivism both on the level of everyday life and in social theories that reduce the social world to cause and effect” (p. 109). Agger’s interpretation of Habermas illustrates a refinement of critical theory to communicative theory that shifts “critical social theory, like all western philosophy, from what he calls the paradigm of consciousness to the paradigm of communication, thus enabling workable strategies of ideology-critique, community building, and social-movement formation to be developed” (p. 110). I find it heartening for the advance of democracy that critical theory is gaining legitimacy. This has not yet happened universally, of course; nevertheless, the shift has been substantial. If Habermas’ critical communication theory moves in the direction of parliamentary social democracy (p. 111), there is reason for hope of democracy advancing.

Postmodernism offers a challenge to positivist thinking. Human sciences cannot produce universal truths, as positivists would like. Postmodern social theory examines the world from the multiple perspectives of class, gender, race, and other groups. The methodology of research in sciences, human sciences, politics, and economics must be democratized. Habermas (1987) provides us with the vehicle of communicative action under the conditions of equality and reciprocity, wherein everything is open to public debate.

Habermas (1987) makes a case for a universal speech situation with the goal of consensus and a levelling out of hierarchies. Mutual trust, reciprocity, and shared knowledge are features of a dialogue that seeks to overcome systematically distorted communication. Communicative action calls us from the constant re-enactment of our social and cultural stories. People put aside biases and, through dialogue, seek the common good. Coercion and force have no place in the exchange; differences are resolved with an appeal to reason through a process Habermas calls rationalization. Poststructuralism helps us realize that language has a hand in constructing reality. Speakers and "writers learn how to bring their own foundational assumptions to the surface, not concealing them underneath the methodological artifice of science…they enhance democracy by opening science to public debate" (Agger, 1991, p. 120).

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) present a recent interpretation of critical theory and critical research. The authors are careful to explain that there is not one concept of critical theory and that there is a range of "criticalist schools" (p. 304). There is a strong emancipatory tone to the Kincheloe and McLaren presentation. They allow that critical research may be partisan in the struggle for a better world. Traditional researchers present their research as neutral and value-free, but that stance is challenged by the criticalists, who would say that all research is language-bound, socially constructed, and value-laden. At least, critical researchers lay their cards on the table. "Thus, critical researchers enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site" (p. 305). Narrative inquiry provides the opportunity for democratic research when both researchers and participants declare their intentions and assumptions.

Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) present a vigorous critique of American neo-imperialism

and exhort critical theorists to find new and sophisticated ways to expose the "epistemological violence that helps discipline the world" (p. 307). Canada and other nations are not immune; these authors suggest that "critical theory questions the assumption that societies such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the nations in the European Union, for example, are unproblematically democratic and free" (p. 303). Perhaps many people in these societies have grown comfortable with the way things are because a majority of them perceive economic conditions as satisfactory. I often think about the need for change and how the dominant forces take the challenge from oppositional voices. The grand narrative folks usually hold all the power, and the challengers have to find ways to subvert gently so that their cause is not dismissed as coming from "those crazy lefties" or some such label.

Miller and Rose (1990), in their interpretation of Foucault, bring a view of the distribution of power that is different from the usual concept of sovereign power over subjects. They present a relational view of power as a function of a network of relations between subjects. We seek to understand the distribution of power in the analysis of everyday life. To understand how government works, we explore the "govern mentality." Miller and Rose (1990) explain:

> To understand modern forms of rule, we suggest, requires an investigation not merely of grand political schema, or economic ambitions, nor even the general slogans such as 'state control', nationalization, the free market and the like, but of apparently humble and mundane mechanisms which appear to make it possible to govern: techniques of notation, computation and calculation; procedures of examination and assessment; the invention of devices such as surveys and presentational forms such as tables; the standardization of systems for training and inculcation of habits; the inauguration of professional specialisms and vocabularies; building design and architectural forms—the list is heterogeneous and is, in principle, unlimited. (p. 8)

In Miller and Rose's understanding, Foucault sees truth as being dependent on history, culture,

and power relations in a given society in a given time. Knowledge or truth must be subject to an analysis of the context in which it is created and how that knowledge or truth is oppressive to certain groups in society. What is appealing about this approach is that research in this mode illuminates the power relations and leaves us to draw conclusions. Narrative inquiry as an approach allows spaces for individuals to compose their stories, and readers are able to draw their own conclusions about power relationships.

Progress in a Postmodern World

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe the development of qualitative research in the social sciences and humanities. "The eighth moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom and community" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3). The authors place the eighth moment in the now. Their discussion makes me think about the idea of progress. It seems to me that most of the postmodernist social theorists place the idea of progress in the modernist camp. In the modernist view of progress, there is an ultimate goal to be measured against a standard not yet discovered but eventually discoverable. Postmodernists argue that any notion of progress is socially and culturally constructed. There are multiple realities and, therefore, from a postmodern perspective, progress in the modernist sense is not possible.

We must seek better democratic processes in our political, economic, and educational systems. I am optimistic that we can create a more democratic world. Deliberative democracy presents a hopeful way to advance the common good. "Deliberative democracy is grounded in an assumption about individuals that stresses their capacity to reflect upon their own preferences, values and judgments in light of their participation in political dialogue with other individuals"

(Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, p. 216). A number of writers about deliberative democracy draw upon Habermas' ideas on communicative action and dialogue (Mansbridge, 2010; Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009; Chambers, 2003). I agree with Habermas (1987) when he says that emancipatory knowledge challenges technical and practical knowledge and that, through communicative action, we seek a better world.

From a postmodern point of view, progress is possible through communication and deliberation among citizens. Critical theorist Peter McLaren (1989), using Foucault's view that truth is constructed in relationship with others and is not absolute, suggests criteria by which we can act in the world:

> Critical educators argue that praxis (informed actions) must be guided by phronesis (the disposition to act truly and rightly). This means, in critical terms, that actions and knowledge must be directed at eliminating pain, oppression and inequality, and at promoting justice and freedom. (p.182)

Deliberative Democracy

Theorists in deliberative democracy declare that democracy goes beyond electoral politics (Benhabib, 1996; Chambers, 2003; Dunn, 2005; Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009). There are a variety of positions taken by theorists, but essentially, deliberation is seen as a process where citizens participate in conversations to arrive at consensus around decisions for the common good. "Talk-centric democratic theory replaces voting-centric democratic theory" (Chambers, 2003, p. 208). Deliberative democracy does not eliminate voting and legislatures; however, its citizens are much more engaged in the process of decision-making.

> Democracy, in my view, is best understood as a model for organizing the collective and public exercise of power in the major institutions of a society on the basis of the principle that decisions affecting the well-being of a collectivity can be viewed as the outcome of a

> procedure of free and reasoned deliberation among individuals considered as moral and political equals. (Benhabib, 1996, p. 68)

Deliberative democracy has been gaining traction since the early 1990s, but its roots go back to thinkers as far back as ancient Athens (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, p. 215). This study is investigating how we create the capacity for participation by citizens in a democracy. Deliberative democracy presupposes that citizens have the skills and attributes necessary to participate effectively in the process of coming to collective decisions for the common good. "Deliberative democracy is grounded in an assumption about individuals that stresses their capacity to reflect upon their own preferences, values and judgments in light of their participation in political dialogue with other individuals" (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, p. 216). In this context, educating for democratic citizenship goes beyond teaching about the forms and structures of democratic government. "An alternative approach to civic education would focus more on developing the critical competencies of students" (Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009, p. 210).

Benhabib (1996) argues that deliberative democracy is not a replacement but an improvement upon existing democratic practices.

> Among the practices that such a theory of democracy can elucidate are the significance of deliberative bodies in democracies, the rationale of parliamentary opposition, the need for a free and independent media and sphere of public opinion, and the rationale for employing majority rule is a decision procedure. (p. 84)

An aggressive head-on challenge of the undemocratic aspects of our institutions is not effective enough in itself, nor is it likely that a political or social revolution will happen or should happen. This study engages in research that will help illuminate current structures and practices, particularly as they relate to educating for democratic citizenship and will, eventually, help us seek changes that will move us toward a more democratic society.

Dewey Revisited

Dewey's work underpins much of the discussion in this study. Although his ideas were penned almost a century ago, it is remarkable how relevant they are today. My goal in presenting some current authors who reconsider Dewey's work is to encourage teachers, policy makers, and others to reengage Deweyan thought. The world has changed substantially, yet Dewey's ideas are worth reconsidering in the light of current circumstances. Jenlink (2009), with the help of a number of scholars, re-visits Dewey's *Democracy and Education* (1916). Democracy demands the engagement of citizens in seeking communal solutions in a shared life. Engagement is not always easy to achieve because communities consist of a diverse mixture of citizens with a variety of ethnic, religious, economic, and philosophical backgrounds and interests. The diversity Dewey spoke of is even greater in North America today than it was 100 years ago. The skills and predispositions necessary for democratic engagement must be learned and schools have a major role in developing these skills and predispositions. Democratic engagement is a social and political experience, one that is learned through active participation in a series of meaningful experiences.

> One learns from others and through shared experiences, what it means to live democratically. It is perhaps in the school and the classroom, second to the family, that students learn their first and most enduring lessons in democracy, in particular the fundamental lessons of practiced democracy. When teachers enter the classroom prepared to teach with democratic ideals and ends in the foreground of pedagogical practices, the student benefits, as does society. (Jenlink 2009, p. 31)

Educational leadership requires engagement that goes beyond applying theories of administration and management to applying a balance of knowledge, experience, and inquiry. Because schools are both producers and transmitters of knowledge, educational leaders seek,

through democratic inquiry and practice, solutions that have local applications.

Freedom is a basic component of interaction in schools, where teachers, parents, and students all have important roles to play in establishing the aims and processes of the learning community. Students are engaged by having a measure of control over their learning. Parents are involved in a dialogue about how learning is going for their children, so they must have a sense of the purposes of learning from a societal perspective. Teachers must have a meaningful measure of professional autonomy to select the methods and materials that they believe will create the best learning experiences for their particular group of students. Dewey believes that democracy is a work in progress, and that work continues today. The need for discussion about the growth and evolution of democratic education is ongoing and is not without problems:

> Unfortunately missing from the various discourses that have fashioned the current political debates about education, and all too often absent among the practices of public school leaders and teachers, are concerted attempts at democratizing schools and providing the necessary learning experiences for students to become critical, active citizens. (Jenlink, 2009, p. 47)

Dewey and those who are revisiting Dewey's work are calling for a change in thinking by those in leadership positions. "The educational leader must learn to imagine schools as public democratic spheres and center activities on critical inquiry and meaningful dialogue" (Jenlink, 2009, p. 47).

Starratt (2009) writes extensively about leadership in education. Starratt suggests that, if Dewey were writing today, he would place even more emphasis on a balanced educational experience for youth, especially in the light of the current attachment to an academic curriculum measured by standardized testing. "I would want Dewey to emphasize even more, given the current exclusive academic emphasis in today's educational policy on cognitively mastering a

demanding curriculum, the need for a complementary emphasis on mastering the social and moral demands of citizenship" (p. 63).

Starratt joins other educational writers in contending that young learners should be considered as citizens now, rather than as citizens-in-waiting (Apple & Beane, 1995; Biesta, 2011). Democratic citizenship is learned through the experience of citizenship. Educational leaders and teachers structure learning experiences that are engaging and meaningful now and will continue to have meaning for their students in the future. Critical thinking is an important aspect in Dewey's vision for education. Starratt (2009) would have us take it further, by having schools embrace critical pedagogy imbued with ethical concerns. "And these ethical concerns would be tied to a more comprehensive ethical framework that includes the ethic of justice, the ethic of care, and the ethic of critique" (p. 65). In the current context of the neoliberal, capitalist, globalized, and diverse society, Starratt sees an even greater need for critical pedagogy. "In other words, I would want Dewey to bring to the contemporary enterprise of schooling a much more explicit linking of pragmatic intelligence and moral intelligence as the core requirements for preparing citizens of a democracy" (p. 65). The simultaneous development of individual identity and of a sense of the common good calls for a complex, nuanced pedagogy.

> The pedagogy for that agenda would cultivate the individual's developing capacity to work with others using a pragmatic and morally sensitive intelligence to deal with problems at work, within the family, within a variety of voluntary civil associations, and within that religious and cultural community, as well as with informal political institutions. (p. 68)

The setting of aims and standards for public education is as contentious now as it was in Dewey's time, perhaps even more so. Hlebowitsh (2009), in his discussion of Dewey's view of setting aims and standards, suggests that Dewey believed that aims ought to arise out of the

educational situation, be tentative and flexible, and allow for the exercise of professional judgment by teachers. Standards emerge out of aims of education and are equally flexible. Hlebowitsh takes care to explain that Dewey was not against the setting of standards. Rather, Dewey had

> ...a vision for standards that protects the discretionary space of teachers, appreciates the emergent condition of the educational situation, reconceives the role of testing in the school, and brings forth an instructional plan more attuned to the development of general modes of understanding and reaction than atomized skills and knowledge. (p. 95)

The kind of democracy we are educating for is not easily established because, as Horn (2009) points out, there are differing ideologies, at least in the United States and probably in Canada and Western Europe, as to what democracy ought to look like. Horn suggests three ideologies are at play:

> The conservative perspective primarily focuses on individuality within the context of a market-driven economy. The liberal perspective emphasizes the need for government intervention in a complex mass society to promote equity and the common good. The radical perspective adds recognition of the value of societal diversity and difference, and the importance of a critically aware and participatory citizenry. (p. 104)

Horn posits that when a particular ideology is dominant for an extended period of time, problems arise that harm democratic ideals. Democracy emerges out of associated living in community, wherein no one ideology holds ascendency and schools are the locale in which the young develop skills of associated living by living them. Students learn to act as individuals in a community. This then translates into future life as democratic citizens because “democracy and education as Dewey envisioned facilitate the development of a society in which the needs of an ideologically diverse society can be met” (Horn, 2009, p. 115).

Lambert (2009), like Dewey, regards social education as a central feature of a democracy. Lambert questions whether schools are intended to reinforce the status quo in society or are intended to be places of change. He proposes that, in a democracy, schools are places of possibility and change. He espouses five beliefs underlying social education: "(1) education is about more than test scores; (2) children are not citizens-in-waiting; (3) behavior in schools reflects community behavior; (4) democratic community must be the context of education; and (5) schools are arenas for change" (p. 134). Developing creativity and active intellect requires that we move away from our current dependency on standardized tests. Change emerges out of thoughtful engagement in real world problems. Learners are not merely receptors of knowledge; they are creators and innovators.

Sernak (2009) reflects upon Dewey's vision of democratic education, wherein diversity is to be embraced. Sernak contends that the increasing diversity in North American society means that there is an increasing need on the part of democratic citizens to understand each other. "The United States, always a land of immigrants, is now home to large populations of people from around the globe, bringing new ways of life, religious practices, and/or customs that influenced schooling simply by the students being there" (Sernak, 2009, p. 164). Canadian demographics are similar to those in the United States. Democratic education requires that we provide students with opportunities to learn about differences, thus making it possible to have conversations across these differences and arrive at consensus for the common good.

Democracy depends upon relationships among diverse peoples, wherein common experiences and differences are all part of the conversation. Contemporary society struggles with the idea of strengthening relationships for the betterment of humanity. Democratic dialogue

depends upon relationships that are equal and reciprocal (Sernak, 2009). Students must learn to know themselves and others through experiences. These experiences include encountering both the stories of classmates and the artistic expressions of diverse experiences. The arts provide another way of gaining self understanding and developing subjective thinking skills. Sernak (2009) contends that "working with the subjective, knowing oneself in order to open the door to understanding others, is as important as rational deliberation" (p. 179).

Struggling Democracy

Teachers in Canada are part of the complex, nuanced circumstances of our democratic way of life. In their effort to work with young learners in the development of democratic citizens, teachers require a measure of understanding of the forces that impact the workings of democracy. Developing critical thinking in the young requires that teachers themselves engage in critical thought about contemporary society. A number of social critics worry about the recent diminishing of the freedom to critique government and corporate actions, especially in the aftermath of the events of 9/11 (Giroux, 2005; Judt, 2010; Bauman, 2011). Hedges (2010), outspoken journalist and social commentator, takes a strong position on the condition of American democracy:

> Democracy, a system designed to challenge the status quo, has been corrupted to serve the status quo. The abject failure of activists and the liberal class to push corporate, industrialized states towards serious environmental reform, to thwart Imperial adventurism, or to build a humane policy toward the world's poor stems from an inability to face these new configurations of power. (p. 198)

Tony Judt (2010) expresses concern over the waning influence of social democracy in western governments in the face of materialism and runaway capitalism. The gap between rich

and poor has been steadily growing worldwide. Judt perceives declining moral sentiments, particularly in the west, and suggests that this allows many of the protections for health and welfare to come under attack in the interest of reducing government expenditure and increasing corporate profit. Of particular concern to him is the disengagement of citizens:

> But republics and democracies exist only by virtue of the engagement of their citizens in the management of public affairs. If active or concerned citizens forfeit politics, they thereby abandon their society to its most mediocre and venal public servants. (p. 164)

Bauman (2011) also cautions against a capitalist system that leaves many people as "collateral damage" as we dismantle the social safety net. There is an erosion of the communal value of looking after one another, a value that is an integral feature of democratic behaviour and social solidarity. Inasmuch as we are losing ground in western democracies, where some would still defend our existing "freedoms," Bauman argues that democracy can only be protected and advanced on the global stage. He contends that Europeans and Americans can no longer expect to carry on enriching themselves at the expense of disadvantaged others or protecting their way of life while others suffer. "The fate of freedom and democracy in each land is decided and settled on the global stage; and only on that stage can it be defended with a realistic chance of lasting success" (p. 23).

The Role of the Teacher

The teacher has a central role in developing democratic citizenship, not by merely delivering a curriculum but by engaging learners in a curriculum of life. Teachers organize experiences for learners (Dewey, 1938). For Dewey, learning depends not only on the experience but also on the quality of the experience, both in how well it engages the learner and in how well it prepares the learner for subsequent experiences. Dewey paraphrases Lincoln to express a

philosophy of education based on a philosophy of experience: "One of education of, by, and for experience" (p. 29). Dewey's theory of progressive education calls for experience based on democratic social arrangements. Experiences build upon each other, based on the principle of continuity of experience, and experiences foster continuing growth. Teachers have an important role in selecting the experiences and ordering them for the learners' growth. Teachers attempt to judge what is going on in the minds of learners and to shape both the environing conditions of the experiences and the experiences that lead to growth.

Mass education brings children to the relatively artificial circumstances of the classroom. This calls for more structured experiences. Learning occurs in students' interaction with experiences and in the relationship between teacher and learner (Dewey, 1938, p.28). Dewey talks about situation, interaction, and continuity and the role of the educator in shaping these experiences. Recent curriculum theorists who speak of story and the making of lived curriculum seem to be expressing ideas similar to those of Dewey (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992). The most important attitude that learners can have, according to Dewey, is the desire to go on learning. This desire is fostered through engaging experiences that have meaning and continuity in the lives of learners. By extracting meaning from the present interaction, the learner prepares for doing the same thing in the future. Dewey (1938) says that experience is an important aspect of learning and that democracy and humanity are important in the development of educational experiences. This means that learners experience a sense of agency, engaging in solving real problems, experiencing an ethic of care and having the opportunity to show care for others. Dewey believes that we become good democratic citizens through experiences of democracy and humanity.

Clandinin and Connelly (1992) present the case to change the metaphor of “teacher as conduit” to “teacher as curriculum maker.” They trace a long history of the separation of curriculum from instruction. In the traditional view, teachers are expected to transmit to learners the knowledge contained in established curriculum documents. Clandinin and Connelly challenge curriculum developers who have attempted to create “teacher-proof” curriculum (p. 374). Clandinin and Connelly contend that, when the teacher is curriculum maker, the teacher is very much part of the learners’ experience of curriculum. In their review of literature on the teacher as curriculum-maker, they suggest that a “curriculum might be viewed as an account of teachers’ and students’ lives together in schools and classrooms” (p. 392). Apple & Beane (2007) believe that teachers are key to democratic schools:

> When we link the democratic right of teachers to exercise meaningful control over their own work with the obligation of teachers and other adults to extend the democratic way of life to young people, we see the real possibility that democratic values might become a source of coherence for life in our schools—to become a whole school culture. (p. 21)

Overview of the Literature

The literature illustrates that democracy is a complex, nuanced concept and that it is a work in progress. Democracy emerges out of basic human dignity and is a form of associated living. Democracy is fragile and requires constant engagement by concerned and informed citizens. Democratic citizenship goes beyond allegiance to a nation state. Democratic citizens are citizens of the world and have responsibility to the common good beyond their own neighbourhoods and country.

A powerful theme in the literature is that schools and teachers play an important role in developing democratic citizens. Despite the fact that teachers are expected to teach democracy

and to teach democratically, there are pressures and obstacles that make it challenging to teach for democratic citizenship. Some of the obstacles include complexity regarding assessment, curriculum, and pedagogy. Critical thinking is seen as an important feature of democratic education. Much literature suggests that citizens, teachers, and learners all require the freedom to critique the circumstance in which they live and learn. Democracy functions best when citizens question the institutions, policies, and practices of governments with a spirit of ensuring justice and fairness. Critical thinking needs to be nurtured in the schools.

Two important themes emerge from the literature. One theme is that, despite the fact that educating for democratic citizenship is viewed by governments and society as an important goal of education, schools generally fall short of achieving that goal. The other theme is that educating for democratic citizenship goes beyond teaching about democracy to engaging students in the lived experience of democracy.

Chapter 3: Story as Method

> *Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.* (Freire, 1989, p. 58)

The search for a methodology for this study took me on a journey of discovery that had echoes with my work in my Master of Education program in the late 1980's. I had encountered the tension in research literature between quantitative and qualitative approaches back then and had settled upon action research in the qualitative camp as a methodology. Upon my return to university 20 years later for this doctoral program, I found the methods course still situating research in a similar dynamic but with developments new to me on the qualitative side. I explored literature about research methodology in post-modern, post-structural, and critical veins. This helped me realize that narrative inquiry best suited my research question. I have included some of my encounters with the literature that helped me refine my thinking. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007), in their discussion of narrative inquiry in relation to other research traditions, create "a map that positioned narrative inquiry alongside, but distinct from, post-positivist, Marxist, and post-structuralist forms of inquiry" (p. 69).

In my desire to understand and illuminate teaching for democratic citizenship, I chose to probe into my own narrative and my own thinking and that of several other individual practitioners. How we teach has a basis in how we story ourselves on the "professional knowledge landscape" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1995). This is a study of the life experiences and teaching experiences of four practitioners through their telling of these experiences. The study is situated in the Deweyan view of experience and education (Dewey, 1938). As described earlier, Dewey believes that learning occurs when students engage in meaningful experiences that have

them thinking deeply and creating understanding beyond mere rote learning. Teachers structure learning experiences that build upon previous experiences to encourage a continuity of learning. Democratic behaviour is learned through experience. This narrative inquiry is based on the work of Clandinin and Connelly (1992, 1995, 2000). In their writings, they explain the significance of teacher professional knowledge, the role of teachers in curriculum making, and what narrative inquirers do. I continually referred to their writings as I shaped this inquiry.

Ontology and Epistemology

Methodology is influenced by the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher (Burrrell & Morgan, 1979). I have chosen narrative inquiry as my approach to study educating for democratic citizenship because it emerges out of my beliefs about research. I believe that many forms of research are possible and valuable, but for me, situated firmly within the pragmatic educational philosophy of Dewey, narrative inquiry is a way to build knowledge about democratic education. Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) help me understand that "narrative inquiry is an approach to research that enacts many if not all of the principles of a Deweyan theory of inquiry" (p. 42).

For me, knowledge of how the universe works is mysterious, difficult to gain, and elusive. I believe that reality exists outside our knowing it. There seem to be patterns and laws of nature that govern the behaviour of the universe in more or less predictable ways. I believe in God as the creator and transcendent force behind creation. The work of empirical science is useful and important but not sufficient to explain everything. For me, scientific explanation falters in its attempts to explain why the universe exists and how it began. Science does not fully explain why the universe both contracts and expands simultaneously or why, even though

scientific laws help us predict some events, so much activity seems random and unpredictable.

There has been a shift in the research world of the social sciences from a search for absolute truth to a postmodern view that conceptions of reality are socially and culturally constructed (Tierney, 2002). Tierney regards this change as helpful. “The epistemological shifts that have taken place in light of our understandings of reality have helpfully brought about a questioning of the researcher and author’s roles” (p. 394).

In my belief that our knowing is influenced by our social circumstances, I am situated in the postmodern view of the world. For me, the best expression of the distinction between modernity and postmodernity comes from Usher and Richards (1994):

> Modernity is characterized by a hermeneutic search for an underlying and unifying truth and certainty that can render the world, experiences and events (including self and its experiences) coherent and meaningful. Postmodernity on the other hand “is marked by a view of the human world as irreducibly and irrevocably pluralistic, split into a multitude of sovereign units and sites of authority, with no horizontal or vertical order, either in actuality or potency.” (p. 12)

The postmodern perspective not only asks questions of the modern perspective but also always questions the language and the historical, cultural, and social frameworks in which we operate. The postmodern perspective even questions its own views through reflexivity. In my view, narrative inquiry fits under the postmodern umbrella, as does most qualitative research. At all stages of the research process, the researcher exercises reflectivity and reflexivity, engages in conversations with others, builds relationships, maintains self-awareness, and reassesses and changes goals as necessary.

I have settled on the belief that reality is both knowable and unknowable. Reality exists independent of knowing it. What we perceive as reality is a representation, one that is validated

to some extent in relationship with others when we compare perceptions and understandings. We approach apprehending reality through our senses, and we share our "knowing" through other levels of representation, such as language, images, symbols, and metaphor. When I share with someone that I see a beautiful sunset and that person agrees that it is a beautiful sunset, there is no way of knowing that what we see is exactly the same. However, we can compare what we see as we talk about the colours, feelings, and memories of other sunsets. I might take a photograph and share a copy with the other person so that we may remember the common experience at a later time. Even though a visually impaired person may not share the same impression—and it is possible that we are all visually impaired to some extent—we have come to some measure of common understanding of a beautiful sunset. I use this example of comparing views of a sunset to illustrate how we are able to come to some common understanding as humans.

Teachers who share their stories develop common understandings of what it means to teach. As humans, we share stories to come to common understandings that help us live together. Sharing our experiences and impressions with others builds a common knowledge base. This knowledge base is always tentative and relative; at the very least, knowledge is open to question. For Habermas (1987), it is communicative action that builds knowledge; this knowledge is shaped by the users and is not neutral. Communicative action is a form of consensus-building, where participants are free and equal, arriving at decisions and understandings together. Knowledge is socially constructed within the context of language, history, and social norms. I believe in progress, in the sense that we build new understandings based on previous understandings. New and creative configurations emerge because creative thinkers put existing ideas together in new ways. All humans are capable of putting things together in new ways.

Lived experience is the beginning of understanding the world, as Dewey (1938) helps us realize. Humans all have experiences and, as the old saying goes, "Experience is the best teacher." However, simply making that statement is not enough for the purpose of research. Narrative inquiry "privileges individual lived experience as a source of insights useful not only to the person himself or herself but also to the wider field of social science generally" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 49). Clandinin and Rosiek situate narrative inquiry among borderlands of post-positivist, Marxist, and post-structuralist forms of inquiry. The focus on lived experience and the three commonplaces of narrative inquiry—temporality, sociality, and place—provides me with an appropriate way to engage the landscape of schools as I attempt to understand educating for democratic citizenship.

> The first commonplace, temporality, attends to Dewey's notion of continuity in experience—that is, that every experience both takes up something from the present moment and carries it into future….The second commonplace, sociality, points toward a simultaneous concern with both personal and social conditions….The third commonplace, place or sequence of places, draws attention to the centrality of place, that is, to the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place. (pp. 69-70)

The stories about teachers working for democratic citizenship are somewhat countercultural in the climate of present day accountability structures. Lindemann Nelson (1995) calls for counterstories—narratives of resistance. Counterstories are the expression of chosen communities. Lindemann Nelson speaks about feminist groups forming communities of choice. I see the possibilities for other kinds of groups to form around issues of justice. Communities of choice exist within "found" communities that have communitarian narratives. Schools present opportunities for communities of choice that build narratives of democratic citizenship.

Democratic Research

The choice of narrative inquiry as a research method is partly because of my belief that it can be democratic in its approach. My intention was to level the playing field between researcher and researched, where knowledge is generated by both the participants and the researcher. Korth (2002) sought to democratize research when she conducted an ethnographic study of an alternative charter school. She entered into an arrangement with the school's teachers to be co-researchers. For her, reaching the goal of consciousness-raising requires the inclusion of both the participants and the researcher. Together, they tried to understand the hidden curriculum in a school where the teachers were implementing a program different from that offered in public schools. Participants and researcher dialogued about the methodology and findings throughout the research. Korth feels that "using dialogic forms of data, engaging in consciousness raising that is multidirectional, and opening one's self to researchees all result in democratizing the research process" (p.401). Narrative inquiry allows for the co-creation of knowledge by researcher and participants.

Other authors also explore the possibility of democratic research approaches. The position taken by Kivinen and Ristela (2002), based upon the pragmatism of Dewey and Rorty, strikes a chord for me. Kivinen and Ristela consider the place of higher learning in the production of knowledge and hold a pragmatic conception of inquiry. They recognize that knowledge generation occurs not only at the university but also in all public life. They go on to develop the Deweyan concept of learning by doing, even at the university level. For Kivinen and Ristela, "only a strong academic community can guarantee free research, debate and science" (p. 420). However, "knowledge is first and foremost a matter of doing" (p. 420). They explain

Dewey's views on learning, research, and knowledge; Dewey places the learner in the centre of the action. There is a world to learn about, but understanding is gleaned through interaction with the world and there is a continual renewal, reorganizing, and reconstructing of the understanding. According to the Kivenen and Ristela, Rorty goes beyond Dewey. They state that Rorty "thinks that everyone should be aware of the conditional nature of their beliefs and desires, and be able to sociologicise how one has become what one is" (p. 423).

I am a researcher investigating democratic education using narrative inquiry—which, in my view, is a democratic research method—working in partnership with willing participant teachers who wish to discover new understanding. We engaged in conversations based on the assumption that both an honest critique of what is and a dialogue about what could be are possible. "But now at the dawn of this new century we struggle to connect qualitative research to the hopes, needs, goals, and promises of a free democratic society" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 3).

Narrative Inquiry

I chose narrative inquiry as my method of research because of my desire to search deeper into the particular teachers' experiences of classroom reality and the lives of teachers. I realize there are many ways to conduct research that could generate useful knowledge.

> However, we become narrative inquirers only when we recognize and embrace the interactive quality of the researcher-researched relationship, primarily use stories as data and analysis, and understand the way in which what we know is embedded in a particular context, and finally that narrative knowing is essential to our inquiry. (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 7)

There is a substantial body of quantitative and qualitative research knowledge expressing

the need for educating for democracy. There is evidence that, despite the stated goals of education and curricular materials, there continues to be a gap between the rhetoric and the reality. Cook and Westheimer (2006) speak of a growing "democratic deficit." They suggest that "it is becoming increasingly clear that the decline in participation among youth constitutes a profound generational shift: young people are participating less in community, local, and national affairs associated with democracy than did their counterparts of previous generations" (p.349). Narrative inquiry may show us what happens when teachers consciously teach for democratic citizenship. "The difficulties faced by teachers in advancing the project of character and citizen education go far beyond mere procedural questions around instructional practice: they involve fundamental questions related to core identities and psychic life of teachers" (Couture, 2005, p. 2).

"Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 24). The purpose of this study is to examine the "personal practical knowledge" (p. 25) of several teachers regarding teaching for democratic citizenship. This kind of knowledge is subjective and carries with it emotional, moral, and aesthetic content (p. 26). The element of objectivity is the context or landscape of the stories. This enables readers to create links to their own experience.

For me, story and narrative have always been an important way of engaging with the world. From the minute I learned to read, I have been a voracious reader of stories. I was also enthralled by the stories of my immigrant parents and of their journey out of Poland and homesteading on a farm in Alberta. My love of story is probably why I gravitated to studies in

English literature and to teaching language arts and drama. The idea of the stories of elders instructing the young resonates for me.

Greene (1995) helps me understand the power of narrative in our lives. The search for narrative shapes our childhood and then continues to shape our identity. Our continued shaping of lived experience into narrative is how we create meaning. Imagination is a key in the creation of our narratives. Experiences in the present are infused with materials from the past, but Greene says an important source for imagination is provided in literature (p. 77). In a way, fiction allows us to live many lives and to learn from them. I think my own stance against injustice comes, in part, from my encounters with the misfortunes of fictional characters. I read Dickens at a young age, and I felt the impact of the unfairness of circumstances of poverty and misfortune. As I think back to some of the novels I have read, I realize that Greene gives me an insight into the development of my own identity. My B.A. in English probably had more impact on me than I previously realized. My years of teaching Drama, English, and Religious Studies have solidified my beliefs about what is important in the development of identity in our young.

The work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) in narrative inquiry is strongly influenced by Dewey. Dewey is an important presence in my own educational consciousness. Experience, interaction with experience, and the continuity of experience create us as human beings to some extent (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 2). Narrative inquiry focuses on the bedrock of experience, makes experience a legitimate aspect of research, and holds immense promise as I attempt to illuminate teacher practice.

I am always amazed at the power of Dewey’s thinking, in light of the era in which he lived and developed his theories. I imagine the early 20th century as a dark time in terms of how

humans were treated by the early capitalists. I imagine that social class and ethnic prejudice shaped education, which in turn perpetuated the inequalities for working class people. Dewey's enlightened views ran counter to the times. He did not have the benefit of being exposed to the emancipatory threads of human consciousness that emerged in the mid-20th century and thereafter. Even today, his ideas still run counter to much of the prevailing educational thought. Even if Dewey lost and Thorndike won (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxv), Dewey's spirit lives, and it is part of the work of education for democracy to bring his theories to fruition. It is remarkable that his influence remains in the face of the grand narrative.

How and Who

I sought out two teachers and a school administrator, all of whom are known for their attempts to teach and administer in ways that encourage learners to grow into democratic citizens. The literature review expresses many of the predispositions that I was looking for in participants. Apple and Beane (2007) provide a list of some of the values and principles underlying democratic teaching:

> Concern for the dignity and rights of individuals and minorities.
> Concern for the welfare of others and "the common good."
> Faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems.
> The open flow of ideas, regardless of their popularity, that enable people to be as fully informed as possible.
> The use of critical reflection and analysis to evaluate ideas, problems and policies.
> An understanding that democracy is not so much an "ideal" to be pursued as an "idealized" set of values that we must live and that must guide our life as a people.
> The organization of social institutions to promote and extend the democratic way of life. (p.7)

I found my participants by making contact with leaders and others in school districts and with university faculty. I looked for participants who would be willing to investigate their own practice and to contribute to knowledge in the area of educating for democratic citizenship. After preliminary discussions by telephone with a number of possible participants, the three I selected were, in my judgement, the strongest prospects for this study. Two participants are from Catholic schools and two are from public schools. As well as gender balance, there is experience and representation from all grade levels. I was pleased with the balanced representation, even though I did not feel that it was crucial to the study at the proposal stage.

I looked at Alberta Education's goals of learning, the Alberta Program of Studies, and some curricular materials. My main source of data was research conversations with the selected participants as well as my own story. I gathered data through research conversations with the participants during the 2009-2010 school year. My intention was to tell these four stories, not so much as recipes to be repeated by others but as models to be reflected upon by others. Barth (1990) tells us that the "work of particular principals and teachers is seldom visible to the public or even to other teachers and principals" (p. 101). The stories reported by these participants in this dissertation will enable others to think about their own practice in teaching for democratic citizenship. I am also a subject of my research, by telling my story of teaching and leading and how I came to this research.

Trustworthiness

The teachers I selected are exemplar teachers of democracy and are recognized by their peers, students, and community as such. Their stories carry credibility. I conducted my research in partnership with the participants. As part of using narrative inquiry as my research approach, I

shared the written narratives with the participants. The final versions were approved by the participants to ensure that my interpretation of our conversations was acceptable to each of them.

I was not expecting that the stories would provide a roadmap for others to emulate in educating for democratic citizenship. Transferability is in the resonance of the stories with the readers' own experiences. We learn from the stories of others. The narratives carefully describe the context /landscape of the participant's stories so that readers can draw connections to their own experience. Dependability is evident in the description of the research conversations, the contexts/landscapes, and in the verification with the participants. To some extent, the stories and contexts/landscapes stand on their own, to be interpreted by the readers. I do provide my reflections and learning in the two final chapters.

Our stories reveal our epistemological assumptions. I kept a journal throughout the research period. I transcribed portions of the conversations. Mostly, I composed the narratives as I repeatedly listened to the recordings. What emerged were the shared meanings from the recollection or recounting of experiences. "Narrative inquiry begins in experience as expressed in lived and told stories" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 3).

Validity in narrative inquiry comes from making meaning by reflecting upon experiences. Narrative inquiry brings a focus on the particular to the educational research community, and I believe this complements other forms of research. Narrative inquirers understand that knowledge generated through story is tentative. "They accept and value the way in which narrative inquiry allows wondering, tentativeness, and alternate views to exist as part of the research account" (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 25).

Limitations

The inquiry was limited to the stories, perceptions, and thoughts we brought to the conversations. I brought many of the ideas and concepts about democracy and teaching for democracy to the table. I was aware of the possibility that participants would be tempted to tell me what I wanted to hear, and I had a conversation with each of them about that. I am confidant that the research conversations reflected a genuine exploration by each participant of the meanings and connections to democratic education that emerged from their own stories and experiences.

Narrative inquirers are aware that memory is an important part of reconstructing the stories we live by. Memories are recalled from the present position, which may change in each retelling. Some may question the reliability of memory, but a key feature of narrative inquiry is temporality. “What we may be able to say now about a person or school or some other is given meaning in terms of a larger context, and this meaning will change as time passes” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Narrative inquirers pay attention to three dimensions; “studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in a place or a sequence of places” (p. 50). Travelling in all three dimensions is somewhat tentative and dependent on recalling and retelling. The tentativeness and fragility of story may be a limitation, but the study of story has strength because it is such a powerful way of making meaning.

Delimitations

This study explores the role of teachers and administrators in teaching democratic citizenship. The data in this study consists of the personal stories of two teachers, an

administrator, and me. Most of the data consist of participants' memories of experiences and their thinking about teaching for democratic citizenship. They share an interest in better understanding their practice and in illuminating the meanings of, obstacles in, and possibilities for teaching for democratic citizenship. The conversations were limited to me and three participants. The participants did not meet each other. Through one-on-one conversations with me, each participant shared what democratic citizenship education means to us. My own narrative is part of the study. The understandings are linked to the literature, but I did not expect them to provide knowledge with generalizeable findings.

Research Ethics

Participation was voluntary, and participants had knowledge of the intent of the conversations in the research process. We negotiated participation during every stage of the research. I maintained the strictest confidentiality. I carefully followed the ethical requirements of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and the Department of Educational Policy Studies.

The ethical issues, such as anonymity and reciprocity, raised by Clandinin and Murphy (2007) were helpful because they alerted me to the complexity of the research relationship. Participants were not there to be used, nor were there to be any surprises resulting from any lack of communication. I informed each of them that my data would come from the research conversations. I shared my research proposal with each of them, including the literature review, some of the story of how I came to this research, and some details about my methodology. I hoped that the participants would benefit from their own exploration of teaching. I was in a relationship with persons, not with schools and projects.

I hope that the benefits to the participants are an increased professional knowledge and a

sense of contributing to research in education. We do need to create a research climate where researchers and teachers reconstruct meaning to inform future practice (Sarbin, 2004). Stories of experience reveal when things go well and when things do not go so well, and it is important to share these stories. Narrative researchers in trusted relationships with teachers look at issues of common interest. I do not take the role of the researcher for granted, and I believe that the relationship has to be negotiated every step of the way. In my work, I hoped to find teachers with similar research purposes, and I knew that we would develop and grow the purposes together. As the university researcher, I wrote the final text, but the participants verified their own narratives.

Place

The participants determined the locations for our conversations, according to their own convenience. It was easier for me to travel to them rather than the reverse. Having the conversations on their own turf seemed to put them at ease. I was an invited guest into their space. I was the researcher, but participants had some control over time, space, and the shape of the conversations. The way each of the participants occupied their own space reflected to some extent who they were as teachers.

Research Conversations

I shared a written copy of my proposal with Angela and Sandra at initial meetings in person and, after a telephone conversation with Bill, I shared the proposal electronically. Angela and Sandra read the proposal in its entirety before our first full sessions, and Bill read the introductory part. The research conversations, to a large extent, were unstructured. I had in mind some questions that I hoped we would explore, and sometimes I did arrive at a session with a written list of questions. Even then, the conversations developed their own dynamic and

direction. There was continuity to the conversations; sometimes a theme that emerged in a session was pursued in subsequent conversations. Of course, my hope was that the narratives would emerge and uncover the significant elements that would inform this narrative inquiry into educating for democratic citizenship.

The research conversations were not interviews in the usual sense, where a structured list of questions was provided to all the participants in the same way. The research conversations were an attempt by both the researcher and participant to better understand what it means to educate for democratic citizenship. Each series of conversations developed into a unique narrative that emerged from our experiences, our thinking, and our memories.

Writing

An important part of the narrative approach to research is the writing of the stories. In Denzin and Lincoln (2005), Richardson traces the development of the two strands of writing—literary and scientific—from the 17th century onward. There has been a gradual blurring of genres since then. There is now the opportunity for a literary tone in writing in the social sciences. Richardson, like many others in postmodern research, reminds us that "language is not the result of one's individuality; rather, language constructs one's subjectivity in ways that are historically and locally specific" (p. 961). She points us to the need for deep awareness of language, as social scientists create knowledge that is ever-shifting and unstable. Specifically, poststructuralism suggests two important ideas to qualitative writers. First, it directs us to understand ourselves reflexively as persons writing from particular positions at specific times. Second, it frees us from trying to write a single text in which everything is said at once to everyone. Nurturing our own voices releases the censorious hold of "science writing" on our

consciousness along with the arrogance it fosters in our psyche; writing is validated as a way of knowing (p. 962).

In the same chapter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), St. Pierre describes her version of writing as a method of inquiry. She calls her approach “nomadic inquiry,” in which a great part of her research is accomplished through her writing (p. 967). For her, writing is a way of thought, analysis, and discovery. She credits Richardson for changing the concept of method in qualitative research to include writing. The telling, retelling, and reflecting upon the narratives through the written text in this study is my attempt to capture an understanding of educating for democratic citizenship at a moment in time in a longer journey.

My own narrative was the first one I composed. The memory work pieces were written at different times; some pieces were written prior to engaging the participants and some as the data gathering was in progress. I had created a list of past events that I hoped to write about, and from time to time I would write a memory piece because it was triggered by a reading or conversation. I also referred to journal entries I had made while in staff development and later while a principal. The composition of my narrative is chronological, with present reflections mixed in.

I composed the research texts of the three other participants while reviewing my field notes, rereading the portions of the audio recordings I had transcribed, and, mostly, while listening to the tapes. I used software that allowed me to pause the recordings or slow them down as I wrote. Occasionally, I used voice recognition software to compose first drafts. My first drafts followed the chronological order of the recordings. After the first draft, to avoid repetitive content, I reread and restructured the narratives by bringing together parts of a story or idea or theme told at different sessions. There is a chronological feel to the narratives in terms of the

sequence of experiences, with my observations and thoughts about democratic education embedded where they seemed most appropriate.

The stories we live by as teachers have an impact on how we teach. Narrative inquiry begins in experience and “embraces narrative as both the method and phenomena of study” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5). For teachers, exploring our stories through memory work, telling and retelling our stories, and making meaning through sharing stories are important ways to grow as professionals. Stories matter and, “increasingly, we are interested in knowing the stories that all people live and tell” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 71).

Chapter 4: My Story: A Journey to Conscious Citizenship

This narrative inquiry emerges out a lifelong concern for democracy and educating for democracy. I see my own narrative as an important part of exploring the work of teachers in developing democratic character in young learners. I am both researcher and participant in this inquiry. I focus my reflections using Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) "metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 50) to weave a narrative retold from a present perspective. The segments that appear in italic font below represent my personal memory work, and my reflections upon it appear in regular font. I realize that I move in the temporal space rather freely and that sometimes a current reflection blurs with what could be seen as memory work. In the here and now, I am trying to understand what educating for democratic education means to me. The experiences, my encounters with others and with places, continue to shape my thinking.

Early Beginnings

Family, community, and church values continue to play out in my life. My early beginnings have led me to wonder about the early beginnings of current youth.

I was born in St. Paul, Alberta in 1944. I grew up on a farm in a mostly-Polish rural community called Flat Lake. There were other ethic groupings nearby: Ukrainian in Glendon, French in St. Paul, and sprinklings of German and Norwegian on some neighbouring farms.

The family farm was a mixed farm, with milk cows and pigs and grain fields. We raised chickens, turkeys, and geese, and we had a large vegetable garden. After school and on Saturdays, farm chores were a big part of my life. Feed the chickens, slop the pigs, fetch the eggs, turn the milk separator, and wash the kitchen floor on Saturdays. When I was able, I would

sneak away and hide to read comics or any books that I could borrow or that relatives gave me. Mother always knew where to find me to put me back to work. On Sundays, we went to church, and after church, we would visit neighbours or relatives or have company.

The church was a Polish Catholic Church, which was a big part of the life of the farming community. Many of the traditions and values of the old country were part of the cultural landscape. I was an altar boy, and family prayer and religious observance were a big part of my upbringing. I had two older brothers, which gave me role models to follow, and a younger sister, which gave me someone to look after. My oldest brother joined the air force when I was seven years old, and this had a great impact on our family. I recall my mother's heartbreak and then the longing for his letters and occasional visits from such far off places as Trenton, Ontario and Bagotville, Quebec. His escape from the farm and my voracious appetite for reading created in me the impression that there really was a world outside of our little community.

My parents loved their children. Even though they were strict with our upbringing, my recollections of family life are warm and positive. Family meals were a sacred time. After a day of hard work, we spent the evening reading and talking. Bedtime came early. On Saturday nights, my brother and I would pull for the Toronto Maple Leafs as we listened to the battery-driven radio. Electricity came to the farm around 1952.

Why is it that summers seemed so long and hot and thunderstorms so violent that my mother would make a cross with pieces of firewood to protect the house? Why did winters seem so long and bitterly cold with huge amounts of snow? Is it my imagination, or has the climate actually changed? We played hockey with willow sticks and horse pucks on the slough in the winter and built a raft to explore for duck nests in the summer. Hard work was a natural

circumstance and play was vigorous, with nature as the playground.

In the summer, we went to church in the democrat buggy, but winters were fierce with deep snow, so we traveled to church in a horse-drawn caboose that had a little fire-burning stove in it. Things changed in 1951, when we bought a Pontiac car.

The influence of my parents on my values is evident to me. Their spirit of generosity, especially my mother's, stays with me to this day. Her values of polite deference and generosity, along with her work ethic, are part of my nature. My father had a fierce sense of justice and fairness and incredible persistence. My ethic of care begins with them and with the immigrant Polish farming community in Northern Alberta. Neighbours looked after each other, particularly in times of trouble. Life on a farm provided for me a wonderful curriculum of life, wherein we worked hard on the things we could do and understood what things were in the hands of God and divine natural order. We were both independent and dependant, both individual and communal. My own encounter with schools as a student, then as a teacher, and eventually as an administrator helped shape my concern for democracy and, thus, my research focus.

I attended the first three years of my schooling at the one-room Flat Lake School with a widowed teacher, Mrs. Howe, who lived in the adjoining teacherage. I remember her as being very strict. When I began Grade 1, I could not speak English very well, and I was the only boy in the primary grades.

I am not sure, but the whole student body may have consisted of only 30 students in Grades 1 to 8. I remember the reader, Dick and Jane, and being enthralled with it. I remember spelling bees and the older kids helping me with math and other studies. I remember Enterprise (an early version of Social Studies) and the Christmas concert. Right from the beginning, I loved

school, especially reading. Despite the early language barrier, I quickly caught on to English and found success in my early schooling. We often spent recess and lunch in the nearby treed area, playing games of adventure. We had swings on which we pushed each other. I remember getting pink eye from Roma, who was always trying to kiss me against my will. Remember, I was the only boy in primary. Despite being lovingly terrorized by the girls, I still remember many of them: Roma, Donna, Emily, Rosie.

Sometimes, the teacher would send me to sit on the front step of the school to watch for Mr. Racette, the school inspector, when she was expecting his visit. Everyone, including Mrs. Howe, lived in fear of the inspector. He would inspect our scribblers, ask questions from Enterprise, and send us to the blackboard to solve math problems and spell words. I have no idea what the consequences of his disapproval were. We never really knew if the teacher would suffer reprimands later if we answered incorrectly. I do not recall students being punished, but we all experienced a sense of threat.

I usually walked the one-mile distance to school with my brother, who was four grades ahead of me. Others who lived nearer the school would join us on our way. Once, the teacher sent me home when I got my clothes all wet in the water-filled ditch during recess. I was fine until I got to the treed section by the creek, where I imagined fierce creatures waiting for me in the shadows. I ran like the wind past there and the rest of the way home, without ever looking back.

Grades 2 and 3 were better for me because a few more boys came into Grade 1 and the pressure was off. Once, I joined four other older boys, including my brother, to play hooky. We spent the day flushing gophers near the creek. I escaped the inevitable trouble with parents,

mostly because I was so little.

Something very dramatic happened when I was in Grade 4. Schools were regionalized, and we had to begin travelling by yellow bus to the regional school in Glendon. There were so many kids there that I found it terrifying. Town kids were arrogant and condescending, and it took a long time to gain their approval. I was fortunate because I loved school and continued to be very successful.

Life on the farm is a powerful curriculum for life in general. My early school years were positive because learning came easily to me. Those early years may be what created in me a life-long love of schools.

The hardships of frost, hail, and meagre income from farming eventually forced my father to find jobs off the farm. Finally, in 1957, the family moved to the city of Edmonton. Once again, I was finding it necessary to gain the approval of sophisticated city kids. In junior high school, after my initial terror faded into routine, I found success in the schoolwork as it was required by the nuns and the increasing numbers of lay teachers. They disciplined us strictly and rigorously evaluated our academic learning.

High school was also a successful time for me, and not just academically. I was elected school president and found myself being a spokesman for causes from time to time. This may have been the beginning of the development of my confidence in asking questions that occasionally got me into trouble later.

School Story

My story of my early school experiences is a story of successful engagement because of a disposition for learning and some God-given abilities. Many of my peers struggled with school

and dropped out early or completed high school under duress. The nuns who ran the junior high school were very strict. Discipline was not always fair and due process was not a consideration. I managed to avoid most of this because I was a successful student and the teachers often chose me to take a leadership role. I was able to walk a line of compliance with teachers and still retain acceptance among my peers. I do remember feelings of resentment when students were treated unfairly. From very early in my life, injustice stung me deeply. Schools were not very democratic when I was a student, and I daresay they are not very democratic today.

Early Teaching Landscape

I began my teaching career as a high school English teacher. Upon current reflection, I see my early teaching experiences as interesting because they illustrate a restlessness I had, though I was unaware of it at the time. The modeling by my own grade-school teachers and later the socialization by teacher colleagues held me to the traditional approaches of teaching—lecture, required written responses, exercises, and questioning for rote understanding. I was on the verge of abandoning the teaching profession by Easter of that first year because of the overwhelming marking load and the feelings of isolation.

My rookie teacher assignment was three sections of English 10, four sections of Language 20, and a home room Religion class. In those days, Grade 11 Language Arts was split into Language 20 and Literature 20. Language 20 involved teaching grammar and writing skills separate from the study of literature—deadly! The veteran teachers taught the literature section and English 30.

Armed with Earl Buxton's Language Arts methods course, I spent many long evenings preparing lessons. I was newly married to Jan, and this new career seemed overwhelming at the

beginning. There was very little help from the staff veterans, who shared the belief that one needed to learn to teach the hard way. They carefully guarded their personally-developed materials. My fingers were permanently stained with the blue ink from the spirit duplicator, upon which I created a beginning teacher's best ally—worksheets.

Patti was also a beginning English teacher, and her classroom was just across the hall. We shared our stories of misery and formed a bond of shared anxiety. Sometimes it was enough to step into the hallway and wave or smile at each other in encouragement. Somehow we survived. There were at least a dozen beginning teachers among the staff of 130 teachers in our school that year.

For the most part, teaching was a lonely affair. Each of us was in charge of our own classroom, and there was virtually no guidance or monitoring of what was going on. I cannot recall ever having a visit from the principal or vice-principal. I did have a visit by a central office representative for a 15-minute evaluation, required prior to receiving a permanent teaching certificate.

I made an inadvertent error just before the Easter break, when I assigned all of my classes an essay, to be graded over the break. Unknown by me until the last minute, it was a school tradition to have all the Grade 1l students write an essay in the large gym before the break, and this essay had to be graded by the teachers during the Easter break. I arrived home for the break with boxes and boxes of grading, all of which had to be returned to the students after the break. I spent 16-hour days during the entire break to accomplish the task. Jan and I decided that this was not the career for me and that I should start looking for work elsewhere at the earliest opportunity!

The role of teacher was not working out for me as I had expected. Upon reflection now, I realize why so many young teachers leave the profession. Nor was my university preparation as helpful as I had expected. I was looking for a romanticized engagement with teaching literature. I had imagined that I would transport my learners to new worlds of adventure and knowledge. I loved literature and poetry and expected that my students would also, but I was not very well equipped, and I was receiving no support from veteran teachers. I was prepared to look for another line of work, but I stayed in teaching because of an intervening event.

My older brother, serving in the military, was stationed at an air force base in Northern Quebec. He invited me to apply for a teaching position he was aware of at the base elementary school. My wife and I packed up my 18-month-old son and a few belongings and traveled by car across the country to this remote radar site on the North Shore of the St. Lawrence River. My second year of teaching was a dramatic shift from being a high school English teacher in a large urban centre to becoming an upper elementary school teacher and vice-principal on an isolated air force base. Because the school was an English speaking school, it was using the Ontario Program of Studies.

Learning to teach elementary school children and serving as a vice principal was an exercise in self-discovery. The principal, who was suffering some medical issues and was somewhat disengaged, did not offer much mentorship. He was a kind and good person, but he was away for long periods of time, so a substantial portion of the responsibility for administration and leadership fell to me. I stayed in the position for only one year because my brother and his family moved away and family and home in Edmonton were drawing us back.

Thinking now about my first two years of teaching has me wondering about teachers

learning on the job. The experience back then was that, by and large, a beginning teacher was expected to learn what to do in the isolated circumstance of his or her own classroom. We were left alone to our own devices. Beginning teacher mentorship programs are much more common in schools today. There is a growing sense of the need of sharing teaching experiences with each other and collaborative work. If democracy emerges out of associated living in community, then teaching for democracy requires that teachers work in community as well.

Following the Québec experience, I returned to teaching high school English in Edmonton for two years at the same school where I had started my teaching career. My former high school principal, who was now a principal at this school, encountered me and insisted that I return. I must have forgotten about my difficult first year because I agreed to return. Part of my teaching assignment included some Drama classes, which became significant later.

In 1971, I was invited to study for a Religious Education degree at Newman Theological College. These studies had an impact on my awareness of social justice and the need for developing spirituality in learners. The many discussions among the members of our cohort and with the professors during this program broadened my view of the importance of educating the whole person. In that era, the College's Religious Studies Program operated in the context of change in the Catholic Church as a result of the recently completed Vatican Council II. The Council placed a new focus on social justice and the role of the laity, and even controversial issues were up for discussion.

Sadly, much of the early openness after Vatican II has gradually retrenched; nevertheless, my more liberal views are still shared by many. I am sure that many of my views as curriculum-maker (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) were shaped by the conversations and experiences at

Newman College, in particular my views about social justice, the human spirit, and the search for meaning. From that point on, my teaching included these dimensions as a part of every subject I taught.

After another brief stint teaching Social Studies and English in a junior/senior high school campus in Edmonton, I moved into teaching Drama for the next decade or so. I had finally found a teaching situation that satisfied my need for independence and creativity. There was not much administrative monitoring of Drama teaching, and materials were rarely prescribed. Because there was usually only one Drama teacher in a high school, we shared ideas and stories with Drama teachers from other schools. We were left pretty much alone, as long as we produced some plays and literary nights to give the school some profile.

In retrospect, I view this as the era during which, as a teacher, I most experienced the role of curriculum-maker. Learners had a powerful engagement with curriculum-making because of their personal choices to follow interests in performance, improvisation, production, and personal development. The freedom in teaching Drama offered me the opportunity for creativity and engagement, but the job was also so demanding that, after ten years, I moved back to academic subjects. I always managed to have some classes in Religious Studies among my subject load. These classes gave me the opportunity to explore deeper meaning in life with young learners. There was more opportunity to be a curriculum-maker in Religious Studies because of the absence of the testing regime required in the other subjects. Clandinin & Connelly (1992) developed the idea of teacher as curriculum-maker; I will explore this later.

My next landscape was a leadership role in the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA) in the mid-1970s. I served as a member of the negotiating committee in collective bargaining for

salaries and working conditions. This work tended to radicalize my thinking about the status of teachers. In my view, teachers were seriously underpaid, but it was the issue of working conditions that always struck a chord for me. We fought for better pay, for better conditions, and for increased professional recognition. I also served as president of the local ATA several times and in provincial policy development (Annual Representative Assembly) for many years. I also served on several other local and provincial ATA committees. My intense engagement lasted about ten years, but I remained an engaged ATA member throughout my career in teaching.

I believed then, and still do, that large class sizes, little preparation time, and inadequate professional development opportunities made it difficult for teachers to create more meaningful learning experiences and establish the relationships with learners where learning has a better chance to occur. My ATA involvement strengthened my belief in the importance of teachers in our society. Reflecting upon the experience helps me identify the importance that relational communities had in the growth of my teacher identity. Huber (2000) helps me recall that I was part of an intense relational community during the time that I was deeply engaged in those teacher union activities. As I remember and write about that time, it occurs to me that it had an impact upon my views of democratic engagement. Leadership in that union has been a foundation for my leadership activities ever since. However, much of the activity was adversarial, and I am no longer as keen on adversarial approaches as I was then. An adversarial approach often results in one party winning and the other losing. I would much rather explore the stories of participants and, if possible, come to an agreement on what is the right thing to do.

Staff Development: Story of Learning

In 1990, I left a high school teaching position to work as a staff development consultant

in the school district's central office. This five-year position in the Human Resources Department prepared me especially well for research in teaching and learning. I had the good fortune of engaging in many of the current issues in education. Along with my colleagues, I facilitated a Leadership Development Program for prospective administrators and leaders in our school district, as well as a variety of other programs for all staff. I worked with teachers and staff groups on issues such as teaching to learning styles, teaching thinking skills, cooperative learning, classroom management, and teaching pro-social skills. The position also entailed organizing a mentorship program for beginning teachers.

This period in my career had a significant impact on my thinking about teaching and learning. I was deeply engaged in the literature and attended many conferences that were probing the topic of school improvement. A number of key ideas that I encountered at that time are still with me today. The concept of principal as instructional leader rather than manager resonated for me then and does today. Understanding the role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning rather than a deliverer of knowledge had become very prominent in the literature at that time. Educational leaders had begun proposing democratic and collaborative approaches to shaping schools as communities of learners.

When the funding cuts occurred in 1995, the staff development unit was disbanded. The following is an entry I made in my journal in May, 1995.

The last session of our Leadership Development Program was held last night and my heart is hurting. This has been an important and powerful work, and to think we are discontinuing it is a shock. Staff development— it is the lifeblood of an organization. Our work has been to honour people, to help them grow, to build community. I suffer from a moral

dilemma because I should be speaking out loudly about the mistake being made, but it looks like self-interest, so I say nothing. Many people are shocked by the loss of staff development, but somehow we are unable to rally the voice to declare its importance.

After the demise of the staff development unit, I served for one year as consultant with the school district's implementation team for site-based decision making. I was called upon by the superintendent to facilitate workshops in leadership, team building, creating consensus, goal setting, and shared decision making. The literature we were using was encouraging more democratic approaches to leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Kouzes & Posner, 1987; Senge, 1990; Fullan, 1993). I carried with me the learning from my staff development work to the next phase in my career—school principalship.

Principalship: A Story of Leadership?

My first appointment as a principal was at an inner-city school. This was consistent with the pattern of first appointments. I surmise that the reason rookie principals were placed in inner city schools was because these schools tended to be smaller. After principals put in their service in these smaller schools, they became entitled to larger schools with increased pay. Even though I had a background in leadership development, nothing prepared me for the intensity of the experience of an inner city school that also housed a class of children coded as behaviourally disordered and several special needs classes. The majority of the students in the school came from challenging home circumstances with a variety of economic and social problems. The school participated in the school lunch program and provided a breakfast program and clothing bank. The following is a journal entry I made in September, 1996:

The principal role so far has little to do with direct educational issues. Mostly I have

been tied up with social, administrative, and organizational issues. I want to be an educational leader, not a manager. I depend upon the guidance counsellor for much of the home and behavioural occurrences. She is a godsend. The teachers are very supportive and have been very patient with my inexperience. There is no time in the day to catch up on the work because something new is always arriving, most of it unexpected. What is so surprising is that so many things arrive at once. I think I am holding up pretty well. I don't really know what the staff think. I know that I am stressed, but I don't think it is beyond what I can handle. I would like to be in the classrooms more—to be visible to all the children and teachers. I am in the office too much. The lunchroom adds an interesting dimension. We have a lot of work to do on the behaviour of the children. Being principal is lonely, and it would be nice to spread the decision-making around more.

And another entry at the end of October, 1996:

The time just flies. The past month has been a blur of crises, mostly behaviour problems, mainly with the Grade 6 problem boys—Russell, Jason, Chris, Cory, Glenn, and Michael. I am at a loss what to do next with Russell. We are running out of options. We are suspending him for the third or fourth time. While I was away at a meeting, Chris and Russell were in a fight. Russell was the instigator. Russell has many of the students afraid of him. I fear that, sooner or later, he will seriously hurt one of the other children. We need special help.

I was a long distance runner (and still am), so most mornings I would get up at 5:30 a.m., go for my run, arrive at the school in time to take a shower, and be at my desk by 7:30 a.m. This was a time for me to catch up on paperwork and prepare myself for the day. Even though I was at this school for only two years, it remains a pivotal time in my reflections about schools. The

experience confirmed my belief in establishing relationships with staff, children, parents, and the community. The experience keeps me mindful of the fact that learners arrive in school carrying a life experience that has a great impact on how they learn. The following is a story that I recorded near the end of my time at that school:

Marty. He was in Grade 1 and a behaviour problem. He spent a lot of time sitting with me in my office. He had difficulty in the classroom because he was constantly disrupting. He would often be in trouble on the playground at recess because he had practically no social skills. There was a sweet side to him that would occasionally show itself. He came from a troubled family, where drugs and alcohol and violence were common. Finally, through the school counsellor and other reports, it became necessary for social services to apprehend him while he was at school. A court order is necessary for an apprehension and the police and social services are then able to take a child to a safe place. In this case, there was a time lag to get the proper authorization before the end of the school day, so it became necessary to keep Marty in after school until the apprehension team would arrive. Marty was expecting to go home as usual, but he was deposited in my office by the counsellor at the end of the day. The apprehension team was expected any minute, but after reading all of my stash of stories and expending a variety of efforts to keep him engaged—still no authorities. So away we went to the gymnasium for a game of basketball, followed by taking shots in floor hockey. After a long hour of my distracting Marty, he was becoming increasingly suspicious of the personal attention he was getting from the principal. He began asking could he go home now. Where was his grandma? He knew something was afoot and my efforts to keep him engaged became ever more desperate. Finally, the apprehension team arrived and, despite the kindly intervention of the social worker, Marty

began to wail. They gently took him away but he looked back at me with eyes that communicated betrayal. After they left, I sat on the gym floor and let the tears roll. I'm not sure why. Perhaps the thought of the future for this sweet child, or my own duplicity, or a combination of both—just made me sad.

My next appointment as principal was to a small K-6 school in a lower-middle-class neighbourhood. This school also had special needs classes. The following is an entry I made in my journal on September 2, 1998.

After three days with students, the school is settling in. I am a little surprised that some of the issues that I faced at the inner-city school are also here. The enrolment crunch means we will be short of money, and I hope that I will not have to reduce staff. The same time pressures are here, but the staff gets on with the work. I have to hand it to them. The parents are much more visible in the school. Playground supervision is dramatically different because there is very little violence.

From the beginning of my time at this school, I had more opportunity for shared leadership. We were able to set up a leadership team for professional development, and there was enthusiasm on the part of many members of staff to engage in reflective practice. During the six years that I was there, we tried to implement some of the ideas presented by Howard Gardner (1993) around multiple intelligences. At the same time, the staff was garnering a fair measure of commitment for a district-wide implementation of a professional development initiative called Assessment for Learning (AFL). We spent many of our early-dismissal Thursdays engaged in professional discussions around pedagogy. The sessions were teacher-led, and staff mentored each other.

Teachers were interested in introducing novel approaches in pedagogy and assessment that would better engage students. With the financial help of the Parent Association, we invited artists in residence. One year this involved musicians and culminated in a concert; another year it was a visual artist and culminated in a mural for the front of the school. With the help of consultants from central office, we staged several "multiple intelligences days" that engaged students in performance activities, honouring the various intelligences proposed by Gardner (1993). The goal of all this innovative pedagogy was to pay attention to the diversity of learners in our school. We were determined to take small steps and to create personal ownership of whatever we implemented.

With that same application of collaboration in our staff discussions, we experimented around rubrics for language arts in an attempt to create a better sequence of learning activities from grade to grade. As principal, I conducted an hour-long assembly each week for our students so that teachers would have some time to meet with colleagues in small groups to discuss and to plan their classroom activities. In the assemblies, with the help of the vice-principal and some of the support staff, we engaged in activities with which we attempted to develop in students a better sense of individual responsibility and a better sense of the common good. We used many resources and presenters to try to illuminate the basic message of Jesus around the responsibility to care for each other. This was our opportunity to deal with the issues of bullying, caring for our school environment and beyond, and developing a sense of civic responsibility. We used video, guest speakers, and performers, as well as role-play and demonstrations. We took advice from staff and students regarding the issues that they felt were most important to be addressed at our assemblies. I have to confess that it was a challenge to keep the momentum going and to

effectively plan, week after week, for meaningful sessions.

After the tragic shootings in Littleton, Colorado and Taber, Alberta in 1999, I wrote the following in my journal:

The events in Colorado and Taber are heartbreaking because schools should be a safe place. I realize that schools are not entirely to blame for what happens. Society has a strong role to play in creating a culture that in some ways encourages violence. The larger society will have to engage in trying to prevent these kinds of events. There are some things, though, that we can do in schools, and those are to press on with Catholic values, teaching social skills, modeling good citizenship, and treating each other with dignity and respect. We can also pray and have conversations with one another—students, teachers, and parents—to try to make sense of the tragedies.

Along with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, we also engaged some of the ideas from Daniel Goleman (1995) around "emotional intelligence." It became clear to me then that the building of relationships is very important in the teaching process. Children learn what we care about as much as what they care about. Daniel Goleman believes that the rational brain depends on the emotional brain, that we cannot separate logic from emotion, and that schools should teach "emotional literacy." I found that we were especially fortunate in a Catholic school to be able to focus on the whole child, which includes the spiritual and social dimensions as well as the cognitive. We tried to build a community among parents, staff, and students, a community that would focus on individual responsibility and the common good. It was not always smooth sailing, as shown in my journal entries:

I would like to take more time to be with the students in the classrooms. I would like to

spend more time team teaching, looking at new pedagogy, and encouraging, empowering, and supporting teachers. I wish I could be more available to parents to help them understand what we are trying to do, especially in developing civil behaviour. (June, 2001)

Schools are not a business and building relationships is the most important—relationships with God and with each other. There is too much emphasis on the bottom line at the expense of what is essential. Too much of my work is routine and managerial. How can the school system leadership be serious about AFL (Assessment for Learning) and at the same time wish to reduce planning time and increase teaching time? (October, 2002)

During those last eight years of my career as an elementary school principal, I worked hard at self-improvement as a democratic instructional leader. Instructional leaders are expected to have a general knowledge of curriculum and pedagogy and often have expertise in at least one subject area. I was fortunate that I had spent many years as a classroom teacher because this helped my credibility as a principal among colleague teachers. I constantly thought about how to build trust and collegiality. Much of my work focused on relationship-building among staff, students, and the parent community. I believed that the principal as instructional leader helped the school understand what it is trying to accomplish. This meant engaging in a process that created a strong sense of what the learning would be like for all the children. The whole community continued to strengthen and refine the vision. The real work was moving the vision into action. We had a leadership team that planned our staff meetings and professional development because it was a community effort. I have no illusions that we achieved everything that a school can be, but we did achieve a fair measure of democratic collegial practice.

When I retired in 2004, it was with mixed feelings. I was leaving a school with a very

strong staff and I had been proud to be a part of a collaborative community of staff, students, and parents. Of course, there was work still to be done and I could easily have continued that work, but I was imagining continuing my work in a different way. I was hoping to do what has eventually come to pass—engaging in this kind of research.

Chapter 5: Angela's Story on the Learning Landscape: Democracy is About Voice

Angela was a principal of an urban K-9 school of approximately 400 students. My conversations with Angela took place in her office at 9:00 a.m., usually on Wednesdays once a month. I usually arrived at the school shortly after classes had begun, and I had a sense of the buzz of the school kicking into action as I sat in the waiting area in the main office. Angela would meet me after completing her morning announcements or attending to something elsewhere in the school.

I experienced her office as a busy place with many artefacts that communicated her warm relationships with staff and students. The room had large windows providing abundant light. We sat at a round table, which often had books, files, and materials on it, obviously part of the work in progress. To me, her office had the feeling of a warm and inviting place. The plants and objects in the room reflected a child-friendly place. The book shelves were full of many books, pictures, and artefacts.

During our conversations, her office door was always open. Occasionally, staff or students would interrupt with questions or information about operational activities. Angela easily shifted from our conversation to brief interactions with whomever approached and back to our conversation. Her exchanges with those who came by were always friendly and open, often with a touch of humour. It was evident to me that Angela kept herself accessible to colleagues and students. However, I cannot recall any telephone interruptions during our meeting times together, which implied that the front office was holding calls while Angela was in a face-to-face meeting. Angela had been at this school for four years and seemed very comfortable and in her element.

After the first couple of meetings, our conversations had an easy flow. I have drafted this

narrative summarizing our research conversations as well as occasionally including parts of the conversations verbatim. My voice appears in some of the verbatim conversations.

Give Student Voice a Chance

In our earliest conversations, Angela's concept of student voice as part of democratic citizenship emerged. Angela articulates a clear vision of teaching and learning. She believes that teaching has to change by becoming more professional and collaborative. Children cannot have a random education. School should not be a lottery. She cannot accept that one year a child may have a strong teacher and the next a weak one. She believes that most teachers wish to do a good job and need professional development and support. If teachers make teaching a collaborative, transparent process, children become the focus. Angela declares that schools are about learning rather than teaching. Angela believes that when student learning is the focus, schools are democratic.

For Angela, student engagement and voice are basic underpinnings for developing democratic citizenship. She believes that developing student voice changes the way we work in schools. In our conversations, she frequently returned to the idea of student voice.

Angela wonders whether schools are intended to perpetuate society or to create leaders. For her, there is a tension between asking students to conform and be compliant and creating thoughtful democratic citizens. Angela's goal is not to create kids who are necessarily always compliant; she is more interested in helping young learners become thoughtful and creative, able to think for themselves. As teachers, when we require students to comply, we have to ask ourselves the question—is it for our comfort or for their safety or learning?

Learners need a platform for thoughtful, mindful conversation. Angela regards a

teacher's role as more than merely delivering the curriculum from Alberta education. As a principal, her role is to think about education more broadly and deeply. She realizes that we need a certain amount of order, but not just for adult comfort. A stated goal of the Alberta Program of Studies is to teach citizenship, but Angela believes that teaching citizenship is complicated, particularly when she thinks about learners at the junior high level.

> *What is schooling at this moment in society? There is always that debate in my mind—does schooling as an institution reflect the ideals of society and therefore perpetuate those kinds of things or whether as an institution we need to be preparing students, preparing minds, preparing people to live, create, lead.* (October 5, 2009)

Angela finds it interesting that we speak of preparing learners for 2020 by perpetuating current practice. The world that exists today will be very different by 2020, so we should be preparing life-long learners, thinkers who can debate, discuss, and reflect. We should be preparing moral and ethical citizens who have voice and recognize the humanity in all of us.

> *So in my mind there's a whole bunch of messy conversation to be had in that whole area of what's our role. Where is the kids' voice? Many young people are not participating in democratic activities because they don't believe that they can affect something. For many, that attitude may have its beginnings in school.* (October 5, 2009)

Angela feels that we must rethink teaching to focus on learning with success as the mandate. There should never be a child who fails because we should not be judging learners on a percentage scale. We set up children for failure by using a deficit model because we believe that they are motivated by marks. Some may be, but most are not. There are many better ways of assessing learning. If we need to test, we should use a system of random sampling.

> *Many kids believe marks happen to them and they cannot do much to change them. If a student believes that, no matter what I do, I cannot get better than a C, they will take that as a personal definition. It makes sense then that, to some extent in life, there is much in*

> *my life that I cannot affect. Young people should be given the opportunity to affect their learning, to affect things in their experience. This is how they learn that they can affect the world—change things. Teachers need to be continually figuring out what is important to kids and finding ways to engage them in meaningful ways.* (October 5, 2009)

Dance: A Metaphor for Teaching

From a young age, Angela knew that she would be a teacher. It took her just three years to complete a four-year teaching degree in elementary physical education. She knew she wanted to work with the "little guys." She has spent her whole career in a large urban district, as a teacher at primary and upper elementary, as a central office consultant, and finally as a principal. Her early years as a primary teacher and briefly in upper elementary helped shape her beliefs about the purpose of teaching. She was there to make a difference and believed from the very beginning that she was working with persons who have hearts, minds, and souls. Her five years as a consultant continued to refine her thinking about instructional processes. She worked with elementary teachers using the research literature around effective teaching. She also had responsibility for providing support to beginning elementary teachers. Her work with pedagogy and teacher development provided some of the building blocks for her long career in school administration.

Angela is a middle child with two brothers, who are quite a bit older, and two younger sisters, for whom Angela has had something of a nurturing role. Her mother played a very important role in Angela's development. Angela learned about organization from her mother, who was able to schedule the daily lives of three daughters who were involved in music and many other activities. Angela remembers changing her clothes in the car to get ready for a dance class after her swimming lessons.

Her mother always encouraged Angela and her siblings to follow their passion. After a time, while her sisters continued with music, Angela chose to give up music lessons to focus on dance. She then spent years training as a dancer, to the extent that she was accepted into the National Ballet. She loved to dance and practiced eight hours a day, including most weekends.

The flow and rhythm of dance have become something of a metaphor for her life and work, and dancing has been an influence on her views about teaching and learning. Dancing helped her develop confidence in knowing how to practice, knowing how to pull together the steps and music and choreography, knowing that one had responsibility for individual effort and responsibility to the group. Learning dance was a continuous process of getting better to make the next performance better. A dancer gets over the fear of making mistakes because that is part of the learning. Angela experienced internal motivation as well as external push from a coach. This experience has had considerable transfer to her life as a teacher.

Dance is an interesting mixture of individual work and fitting into a group effort. Angela thinks that experience has influenced how she does her work as a teacher. She learned the value of practice and intrinsic motivation, even with the pain of stress on ankles and feet and occasional injuries. Dance became a passion and she learned how to work through the pain. She learned that she had to press on because the show must go on. She also learned that, at some point, you must perform even when you think you are not quite ready. The day never comes when you are perfectly ready. Angela believes this, too, influenced her teaching.

> *I learned from my dancing because there's a point at which the practicing stops and you have to do it. Otherwise you fall into the trap where you're always saying, "I'm not ready," but the audience is there and you've got to do it. Teaching is like that. I've read all the books I need to read and I have done my planning and maybe it isn't perfect but*

there they are. Let us enter into this conversation together. (November 5, 2009)

She also understands that, even when you dance solo, you are part of a team—there are the lighting and technical people and the other dancers waiting to come on. The solo piece is part of a larger whole. Schools are also like that. Dancing is a team activity, as is school.

> *Although dancing is a very much an individual effort, you are part of a group. And so part of it is being a strong individual but having to negotiate, have conversations, and be able to be flexible and adapt to the needs of what else is going on.* (November 5, 2009)

So the question is, does every child have a passion? Angela's answer is yes. Although she thinks that we do not set our students up for that, she believes that it is possible to do so. Every child needs to be successful.

> *Do we allow that to happen? No I don't think we do. We are not generally set up to allow for passionate curiosity and to allow ideas to be central in our classroom. I like to think it's possible for every human. There is lots we have to change institutionally, but I think we're on the cusp of doing some of that. Society is demanding that every kid be successful, and what's becoming more important is not compliance and rules and conformity but being able to do what you've got from learning.* (November 5, 2009)

Angela believes that we always need better-educated people in a democratic society. Education becomes important because we no longer can afford to carry the social network for those who have not been educated and are not able to find work or jobs or careers.

> *Fewer and fewer jobs are available for those without education. The social network is being increasingly squeezed because of underfunding, and so Canadian society is going to demand that all kids be successful. Capacity for learning is going to become more important than compliance and following the rules. We are into an era of creativity and innovation. So what is creativity except the ability and the capacity to choose to do something with what I have learned?* (November 5, 2009)

Angela wants schools to assess learners on their capacity to do something creative, not

necessarily on the knowledge that they have. The current testing regime does not accomplish this very well.

> *I experienced that even at the University when I studied creative dance. Before you can be creative and before you can be critical, you need a basis. It was easier for me to be creative and innovative in class because I had an experiential base and I had training and had feedback on how to put together a four-minute creative dance. I could do it blind. I didn't have to come to class and still had all the tools I needed. The professor needed different assessment tools for me. My background was much different than many of the other education students.* (November 5, 2009)

Angela says that we cannot expect children to be innovative or creative if we have not given them the tools. Part of what we do in schools is providing students with the tools, but along the way the tools have to be applied and used. The students have to receive effective feedback; otherwise, the tools do not matter. Practice is an important part of the learning, but it has to be meaningful practice. For instance, we may teach the conventions of writing without teaching the purpose of writing. Why do we want to write anyway? We do not give students the time to write, and we do not give them the time to read. We say literacy is a focus, but we limit actual reading time.

> *For instance, a number of years ago, I did a quick study of how much time we get kids to read. This was in a school with many immigrants and in a needy neighbourhood. This was a school that had, as one of its primary goals, reading. For a week, I asked teachers to record the minutes that they actually give kids in their classes to read. Lots of the kids do not have books in the background at home. In some grade levels, it was less than an hour a week that they were actually reading.* (November 5, 2009)

For Angela, there is foundational knowledge and, beyond that, a mix of giving people the ability, the experience, and the opportunity with help and feedback to use knowledge, apply it,

and be creative with what they have learned. This very engagement is part of living and learning in a democracy. She understands that it is difficult for teachers to make this shift from imparting knowledge to creating and using knowledge.

> *I describe teaching and, maybe, learning the same way. It's like when you're performing as a dancer. You're doing it wearing a headset and the choreographer's changing the next step so you're thinking about, oh okay, so I need to go to my left and not to the right, but I practiced going to the right, but I'm still performing. So if you think about teaching—we're giving teachers feedback, we're giving teachers ideas, we're giving teachers time to work on learning, but they're still performing everyday with kids. So it's like the choreographer's changing the steps while you're performing. That's pretty tough work to do and we do the same thing to kids.*
>
> *We're giving them* [the teachers] *feedback on the processes, we're giving them feedback on their performance, and whether it is classroom management or tasks that they are doing. At the same time, we are expecting them be engaged, passionate, on task, giving their best, being wide awake to the possibilities, and we are giving feedback and asking them to change patterns on the go. That's really hard work.* (November 5, 2009)

Angela wants us to be clear about what we are trying to do with our students. They need to know what we are asking them to do because they cannot possibly perform the steps without knowing what we are asking. What is expected should not be a mystery. Her example from dance is a choreographer looking for a mood and having to communicate that to the dancer. We often say to kids, "Learn something because it's good for you," without really helping them understand why it is good for them. Angela believes that the spirit of democracy is enhanced when learners are full partners in their learning.

Early Schools as Principal: Trial by Fire

Angela's first job as principal was in a school just outside of city centre in a large urban

setting. The school had many of the needs of an inner city school, without the supports. It was often difficult to secure the social services and other supports that were available to some inner city schools. Often children and families were as needy as those in the inner city, but they had no access to United Way, Hot Lunch, or other programs. Angela tells the story of going to the neighbourhood bar to engage some of the parents of the children in her school:

> *I would go to the hotel, and it got to the point where literally the bartender who knew me would shut the bar down and he said "The principal is here. I'm not serving any more beer or anymore drinks to those of you who are supposed to be picking up kids. You need to listen to this lady." And I would pull moms and dads out of the bar to attend conferences, to pick up kids, to come to the school to help solve problems. I certainly wouldn't do that now, but as a 29-year-old, walking into this hotel that had the reputation as a kind of biker, hardcore, scummy place to be. I would go in and pull people out of the bar to look after their kids and got to know the staff at the hotel quite well, and if they saw me come in they literally shut the bar until the problem was resolved.* (November 5, 2009)

The school was small, with six teachers, including Angela as principal. Many of the children came from difficult circumstances, but there were a few families who lived in a part of the neighbourhood that was better off. There were also some children from the women's shelter; these were transient and often troubled. The mixture of students was, in itself, challenging. Angela wonders about what the futurists might say about educating for creativity and the society of 2020, when some schools are just trying to meet basic human needs and cope with serious social problems. She also wonders what this means for their participation as democratic citizens.

> *I think that social engagement has as much a place as intellectual engagement in schools. Without those social needs being met, such as a sense of belonging and other social and human things such as food and safety, the intellectual engagement isn't clicking in. You have to pay attention to that. I think, from my experience at this school and, later, several*

> *other schools, the kids I worked with in those three schools are far more resilient than in more affluent schools.* (November 5, 2009)

Thinking about the first school in which she was a principal, Angela cannot say that she was mindful of what she wanted to accomplish, other than doing the job of principal. She was aware that the school did not have a sense of community. There was not an underlying sense of a school knowing what it was. She had been appointed to the position the day before the students arrived. It took some time to understand what some of the conflicts were, but it seemed to her as if the students were the enemy and the staff had to fight the enemy. That was the culture of the school. After the first year and a half, Angela began to understand the importance of relationships and the need for community. She helped to develop the concept of "team esteem" to facilitate breaking down the barriers and boundaries between staff and students. She was looking for ways in which students, staff, and parents would work together. If children were struggling to learn or behave properly, the teachers assumed that the parents were to blame, so Angela knew that the culture had to change. Looking back at it now, she realizes that was when she began to become more conscious of the fact that, as people, we need to work together to create relationships. After that, we can work together to accomplish mutually-developed goals. This cannot happen unless the relationships are established.

After three years in her first school as principal, Angela moved to an inner city school, where she worked as principal for two years. This school had a similar culture among staff, who believed the students were to blame and the parents were to blame for the kind of children they sent to school. The staff had little expectation that the children could achieve, given the circumstances from which they came. The job of the school was to feed them and clothe them. There were many sad stories and Angela remembers feeling overwhelmed. She questioned what

her job was. It took some time to change the staff's mindset about the job of the school from providing charity to educating children so that the children could change their lives. She did not know then that what she really wanted to do was bring about this change in children's lives, and certainly would not have seen it as "doing democracy," but now, looking back, she sees it as empowering learners, especially in circumstances of disadvantage. The school continued to provide supports for families, but the focus shifted to teaching the curriculum rather mainly focussing on charity work. Teachers had to let go of the idea that the students could not learn because they were disadvantaged.

> *Ted: It takes a special person to work in inner city schools. I was a principal in an inner city school and I remember my wife worrying that I was taking on too much emotional attachment and that the job would kill me. It takes someone who has compassion and cares but someone who...*
>
> *Angela: ...can step back.*
>
> *Ted: ...step back a lot more.*
>
> *Angela: With children I can't do that as easily because they do not have control. So I wondered, how do we give them control? You don't do it by punishing them. You don't do it by downplaying their abilities and intelligences. You don't do it by saying, "That's okay dear, you don't have to do that."* (November 18, 2009)

Often the parents of the children were having problems, so it was necessary to go back a generation to find support for the children. Angela engaged native elders to come into the school to help, long before that idea became a typical part of any program for native students. Some of the elders did not remember ever having been previously invited to the school. With the help of the elders, the students built a traditional tepee, which Angela thinks might still be there. They painted the outside of the tepee with stories of the people. For the aboriginal children, the

grandmas and the grandpas came to tell the stories of the people. Many of the activities she started then are now part of the approach in inner city schools. The engagement with the elders at this school continued to develop Angela's understanding of the need to build relationships with parents and guardians of children.

Ted: As a profession, do you think we struggle with how to engage parents effectively?

Angela: Yeah, I think we still struggle with that. I think we struggle with it. I think parents struggle a little bit with how to be meaningfully engaged, how to support their kids, how to support the school. I still don't think that, as an institution, we are very good at inviting parents into the conversation. Sometimes it could be time...

Ted: It could be time...

Angela: We invite them into the conversation when there is a problem. How often do we have conversations when there isn't a problem? Some of it is time and other expectations. Some of it is because, okay, they are in school...

Ted: They're in school. They are out of my hair. Do what you need to do with them. As long as there is no problem, we're okay.

Angela: They're yours now. Especially in junior high, there is the myth that the children do not want their parents around. I think we are getting better at engaging parents, but it still is something we don't do well.

Ted: I wonder, in teacher preparation at the university, is there much thinking about how we engage parents? Mostly, as a profession, we arrive at how we work with parents from the experience, mentorship of other teachers, and through collaboration, trying to discover what that is. There is little theoretical preparation for that.

(November 18, 2009)

Before the Bricks and Mortar: From the Ground Up

Angela's third administrative placement was to a new K-6 school that was in the process

of being built. The school opened with 220 students and then jumped to 350 in the second year. The third year the school was open, there were 500 students. That was at its height, and then it went down and stabilized at around 420 students. This school became a pivotal experience in Angela's career. She says that the practices they developed in that school were well ahead of the common practices at that time. The things that they were doing were strategies that people are returning to now.

> *Angela: We had multi-age grouping and flexible groupings, where teachers were able to teach areas of passion and doing that more than once with different groups of kids. We used portfolios, a goal setting reflective process with kids—focusing on what it is that we want you to learn and we want you to be able to do. Citizenship things: what can you contribute as a learner to society? Children learned to articulate responsibility for their own learning and were able to articulate that to anyone who would ask. We had no report cards and we didn't, therefore, have any A, B, C, D marking system.*
>
> *Ted: So how did you get away with it? No report cards? I can't imagine it. Didn't the community raise a fuss? And didn't central office object?*
>
> *Angela: No, initially they didn't and, because I involved the parents from the very beginning—the school had a School Council of about 50 people and it had in fact started in the February prior to opening in September—so by having parents on board and developing the philosophy of what we wanted to do, we shaped how we ended up doing it. We were well into the process of not having report cards before downtown figured out what we were doing, and by then it was too late.*
>
> *Ted: Did they raise a fuss after that?*
>
> *Angela: Yeah, well they did and they didn't to some extent. I was always able to articulate what we were trying to do and downtown seemed to buy into it. It wasn't until I left that they had to bow to having report cards.*
>
> *Ted: Would the school still be like that today?*

Angela: For about close to 10 years after I left, it stayed the same. And then, with subsequent changes of principals, I think it's a very different place now than it was. The culture that we started lasted about 15 years. (November 5, 2009)

Angela believes now that some of the things that were happening at that school were 20 years ahead of their time—such things as inquiry learning, the idea that kids need to be involved in self assessment, peer assessment, reflection, goal setting processes, and that they need to be able to understand what the exemplars are. Even though, at the time, she did not view the work through the lens of educating for democratic citizenship, she now sees how what they were doing was consistent with that model, not only for the students but also for the teachers.

Ted: So how did the teachers work in this? Were you able to organize teachers to work in more collaborative ways?

Angela: Yes. Yes. That was the only way we worked, including messing at times with the idea of not having a principal. We messed with that and we weren't terribly successful. Probably because I could be better at it now than I was then. Messing around with other people playing that role when it was appropriate. We messed around with planning, by taking desks out of the classrooms and placing them in a planning area where the teachers were together, so that they could plan together.

It was interesting the kinds of things we were doing then, and I occasionally hear about people trying to do now. We did that 20 years ago, and I still have people e-mailing me from the United States and elsewhere—people who had visited our school and saying they remember visiting with our kids and remembering how articulate they were about what they were learning, how they were doing with what they were learning and what they needed to do to get better as learners.

Ted: Did anyone do studies about that school—about what you were doing at that school?

Angela: Yes, there were three people who did their doctoral studies around the school,

and I did my Master's thesis about my experiences at that school.

Ted: That is interesting to hear, that it was ahead of its time, and isn't that often what happens—things are ahead of their time in some places, and it is only later that things catch up elsewhere, come into play in a fuller way. I'm hoping.

Angela: Sometimes that's my frustration because I know that we are able to do it, if we can get things moving in that way. I know, because I've had the experience and I lived it. And then I come to places like this one, which is much more traditional, and we aren't doing the best work we could do with kids because we are too traditional. We have to take some barriers down. (November 5, 2009)

Angela worries that, currently, teachers work too much in isolation and that the more we work in isolation, the less we do for students.

Parents Were Part of the Story

Angela was there for the opening of the school, selecting the staff, meeting the parent community, and then bringing everything together on opening day. The school was scheduled to open in September, but it did not actually happen. They were housed in a temporary site for about six months before they moved into the new school.

Parent involvement in that community preceded the opening of the school. The parents from the community had lobbied the school board for a new school. The parent group existed before the appointment of the principal and the approval of the blueprints. The group believed that they had some ownership of the process, right from the beginning. Angela decided to maintain and encourage their sense of ownership. She met with the group and developed a School Council in March of the year prior to the school's opening, so the School Council was in place even before the staff was hired.

The only staff that was hired at this time was the administrative assistant. The parents

really had a vested interest, and they invested time and energy before there was staff, before there was even a building. Part of what Angela did was to engage the parents in conversation about what they wanted the school to be. The School Council helped to interview staff, and they helped to develop and set the rules. The community played a part in developing some of the underlying philosophies of the school, but it was quickly established that, while the parents could have input, there were educational issues that must be left to the principal and staff to determine.

> *It was really interesting to work through that process because, as you know, parents will say this is what I want and they expect the staff to go, "Yes, this is what we will do." To negotiate that place of how to work together with parents, how do we honour and celebrate the different voices but where was the autonomy? There were places where I did work with parents to give them autonomy with what they wanted, but there were other places where I said let's work with those big ideas but I am the one who is responsible for putting it into action. We started that negotiation really early, and it was interesting to do that without walls, without kids, without staff. It was well-established as a process, and newly hired staff joined in the conversation.*
>
> *That first group of parents and that first group of staff created relationships that are still in place now, and I still hear from some of the parents. I hear from most of the staff at a variety of celebrations. There are number of parents in that first group who like to blame me over time for actually going back to school, some of them going back to University. Some of them became teachers from that parent group. Four of that parent group became teachers—because of some of the things that we did.*
>
> *Some of those relationships that were established became friendships over time and are more than just work relations but became friendships. A discussion of what it is that we want for our kids became the foundation that lasted through the time I was there, but even lasted 10 years beyond my time. Then it started to dissipate. And now it would be really interesting to go back and see, not being a part of that school story. It would be interesting go back now 20 years later and see what might be there as recognizable*

> *pieces of that time. There's only two or three staff that are still there from my time. Some of them have been there a long time.* (December 16, 2009)

Angela finds that parent voice is not part of the fabric these days. Too often, parent voice has been replaced by parents being involved merely in fundraising. In the school described above, where parent engagement was so high, sometimes there were 60 people attending the School Council. Parent engagement can happen, but these relationships need to be built over time.

Parents Are Part of the Story

For Angela, parents were part of democratic education in previous schools and continued to be important in her current setting. Angela opened our discussion on November 18, 2009, centred on parent/teacher interviews because they had just occurred several days prior to our conversation. The traditional parent/teacher interviews prior to her arrival had not included the students. It took Angela a couple of years to change the culture, after which the children came to the conference and presented their progress in learning to their parents through the use of portfolios. Angela wondered how we can talk about student learning if the student is not there to be part of that conversation. Meaningful participation of both parents and students in the reporting of student progress makes for a more democratic engagement in schools. Angela thinks that one of the most important things for learners to know is how they are doing, expressed in meaningful ways beyond a mere percentage mark.

> *What are the indicators of how they're doing, whether it's academic or social or physical or if it's extracurricular? They need indicators of how well they are doing. If we don't allow them chances to talk about this with significant others, being the parents and teachers, how do they learn to talk about ideas, especially when we get into those more*

> *nebulous ideas like citizenship and democracy?*
>
> *The parents I end up seeing are those that are concerned about something, or their kids are concerned about something. A number of conversations I had about how we needed to change the structure in order to meet the learning needs of individuals. It was a really interesting to observe conflicting needs in juxtaposition within this community. We have the rules and structures that are trying to put into place opportunities to come together to have conversations about what is our core purpose, and then, within that, there are those kids and families where the structure doesn't give them what they need.* (December 16, 2009)

Angela wonders whether the role of democracy in schools can balance individual needs, group needs, and societal needs. Schools do not traditionally do that. She thinks that, even though we have made great gains, schools are still stuck in the tradition of saying, "We are going to tell you where your child is at," leaving the child and parents wondering what to do with that information.

> *Angela: How does that interplay become a piece of that ideal of democracy? How does that play out in school as institutions? How do we model that in schools?*
>
> *Ted: The practice of that individual agency and the ability to somehow affect your place in the world. If you are not feeling empowered, how can you recognize what is important? It is mysterious.*
>
> *Angela: There's a societal understanding and there is a need in the society for some sort of order in the chaos. Otherwise it is difficult to function. But when does that order become detrimental?*
>
> *Ted: Right.*
>
> *Angela: And when do we change the order for a few, so that they can be cognizant of the good of the group, yet meet their needs? Those are the places on the edges that, in schools, we don't model that very well. That's the first taste of whether they can affect*

anything. That has got to be a piece of what democracy is all about. We have talked about that before. If you feel that what happens in school doesn't have anything to do with you and you can't affect it, things are going to happen to me in ways in which I have no say, so why bother. The place where we do the poorest job of democracy is in that whole place of learning, reporting of learning, and communicating about learning. When we don't allow for the flexibility and we don't allow for kids' voices and we don't allow for a different series of steps with kids' input into that.

Ted: Is it possible to be developing some of that voice right from Kindergarten on up?

Angela: Yes, it is possible and it is necessary, even if it's as simple as "I am proud of this piece of work because I have coloured in the lines" or "I can read this name," very simply, to the more complex conversations you can have with the Grade 9s: "I am very proud of this project because I learned about whatever." I think it has to start in Kindergarten. (November 18, 2009)

A School Transformation

After six years at the new school she had opened, Angela went to university to complete her master's degree in education. She returned to the school system as principal of a suburban school. That school had some of the features of inner city schools as well as a mix of students from various economic and ethnic backgrounds. Angela's first realization at this school was that she was the sixth principal in four years. The story for staff was that they could go into their classroom and work, and within a blink there would be a new principal. Thus, there was no need to be engaged, no need to listen, and no need to be part of the overall picture.

After Angela's first year there, two or three staff left the school, but after that, no staff left. So for eight years, the story was of building a cohesive group of people who were doing action research, who were engaged in inquiry into issues that were important to them, who were working in teams. The story gradually moved away from the isolation that had been present at

the beginning, where one teacher had said, “I don’t have to care about these kids. I didn’t birth them. I just have to teach them.” Nine years later, students were very much at the centre. The school slogan became “Where children are the heart.”

The change was accomplished with experienced teachers, who might be expected to be set in their ways. Angela recalls that, when she first arrived, 85% of her time was spent on discipline issues. When she left nine years later, only 5% of her time was devoted to discipline. The change came about by developing student voice in creating the atmosphere of the school. Parents, staff, and students worked together.

Ted: How did that change come about?

Angela: We worked through a process of restitution with kids, involved kids, gave kids that voice, right. We started with portfolios, involving kids and parents in that process. We reorganized groupings so that kids were in places where they could be successful. We developed a process of goal-setting, used peer assessment and self assessment.

Ted: At your previous school, you were able to get by without using the report cards. Was this the same at this school? Were you able to get by without report cards?

Angela: By the time I arrived at this school, the district had mandated a report card. We had a standardized report card across the district. The technology allowed for a standardized operating platform across the district. Everything now was on the computer, making it easier for people downtown to monitor—I suppose to be able to check up on what we were doing—because of the technology. I didn’t really have that problem at the previous school because the technology was just becoming a piece in education.

We did do report cards, but we didn’t put marks on them. They were all descriptive and descriptor kinds of things. We had portfolios and conferences, and I combined groupings that we brought in slowly over time. In one particular program at the Grade 5/6 level, instead of three report cards, we were messing with six report cards.

Ted: When you are talking about groupings, are you talking about the way of grouping kids instead of the usual grade levels?

Angela: Yes. Teachers as well. The way we organized kids was the way we grouped teachers as well. Initially teachers wouldn't let me in. They were so used to having their own space without the principal being involved. So I thought, they won't let me in, so I decided to just to throw in blue cushions into the orange room. The whole school was orange. It had been redone at the time when orange was a popular colour. Everything was orange. It's my least favourite colour in the world. Blue cushions became a symbol for throwing things in. Anyway, I started asking questions like, "What would happen if..." or "I wonder if..." or saying, "Let's try it this way and see," and then leave it. I would throw in another cushion somewhere else. By the time I finished doing that, people didn't know where the lines were. Instead of having a Grade 1 class, all of a sudden there were four Grade 1/2 classes. (November 18, 2009)

Angela and her staff incorporated combined-grade groupings, partly for financial reasons and partly because of declining enrolments. It started to make sense to the teachers for them to work together. Teachers were not told what to do, but when groupings changed, the teachers came to the conclusion that it would be better to work together. For Angela, democratic behaviour is encouraged by creating conditions wherein teachers freely choose how they will work. Teachers started doing things differently because it did not make sense to do them alone. Teachers started planning together and sharing their work. Groupings started at the Grade 1/2 level because the staff was not ready for different groupings all the way up. By the time Angela left the school, staff choice had resulted in combined groupings for all the grades. A culture of flexibility had developed, in which students could move easily among groups. Some groupings were in place for specific needs, and children could easily move in and out of them.

There were some objections from some parents initially, but this school was not far from

the school where Angela had previously been principal, so the story of Angela and of flexible groupings had travelled in the community. There were two groups of parents: those who expected it to happen, said they knew it was going to happen, and were angry; and those who said they had heard about this and had been expecting it and thought maybe it would not be too bad. During that first year, there were many conversations with parents about why the school was doing things this way. There were a few, initially—interestingly, dads—to whom Angela explained that the changes were for financial reasons. Those parents could accept that, even though it was not the most important reason. After three years, the school did not get those questions anymore. In Angela's opinion, it is better if the move toward combined groupings is a philosophical choice, democratically arrived at by discussion among staff and with parents.

With combined groupings, students stayed longer with the same teacher. The resulting stability was a benefit to students. When a number of students stayed for the second year with the same teacher, they became leaders and role models in the class. This created more learning time because less time was spent in September establishing rules and routines. Sometimes students encountered the same teacher for longer periods if the teacher changed levels at the same time as the students progressed to the next level grouping. Care had to be taken with some students if the relationship between the teacher and the student or parents was too challenging. On some rare occasions, after consultation among the principal, teacher, student, and parents, students moved to another classroom.

Growing a Culture of Learning

Angela stated that she was able to move the school's culture toward a greater focus on learning. She was able to create a professional learning community. One of the reasons she was

able to help change the culture was that she was there for ten years; it takes time to change the culture. The other reason was that she had teacher colleagues on staff who wanted to talk about the world of learning. She remembers the teachers becoming more intentional about the language they used. They did not talk about achievement and did not talk about numbers as being key indicators. They deliberately talked about a school that was doing phenomenal things with the students. They also talked about how they were going to share what they were doing with the community. They realized that they should not just talk about it—they also needed to be able to demonstrate it, represent it, and do the work in ways that became part of the culture of the community. Another initiative was the creation of teacher inquiry groups. On the basis of work done in the inquiry group, teachers changed structures of the school for the following year. If their research illuminated approaches that could make a difference to learning, then they adopted the approaches on a larger scale. Teachers were thinking about their practice and about how they described their practice to others. When Angela thinks back to those days, she realizes that the professional learning community was democracy in action. Teachers worked with each other, listened to each other, and implemented change together. Angela believes that democratic behaviours among staff translate into democratic classrooms.

For approximately five years, staff held planning discussions in the month of May. The discussions centred around what the inquiry groups had come up with and, based on the group's findings, what changes would be made for the next school year. Staff would monitor the impact of the implementation school-wide, or grade division-wide, and again talk about whether or not to keep an innovation going. They would consider new inquiry findings, continually layering and building upon their successes. As the principal, Angela facilitated the inquiry process, but it was

the teachers who worked with their students to help create the form and function of the school. Every inquiry had a student-learning connection.

The staff was able to create change that was not driven purely by the principal or by a strong teacher. It was a collaborative effort that focussed on what they thought was good for the students. Teachers, students, and the community all had ownership of the changes. For Angela, democratic engagement means meaningful involvement of all those who have a stake in the endeavour. Depending upon what the inquiry was, staff structured their time to allow for conversation and planning. They organized staff meetings and professional development days around the learning needs of staff. From time to time, Angela would take Division 1 or Division 2 student groups for an hour-long assembly in the library, to allow for collaboration time for teachers. To avoid contrived collaboration, meeting time was driven by staff request, and they used supply teachers if necessary.

Angela was always careful and intentional around the language the staff used to describe educational activity. As a staff, they rewrote documents to reflect intention. For instance, instead of referring to multi-grade groupings as split classes, they used the words “combined grades” and explained the difference. They used the word “learning” instead of “achievement.” They used “ing” words to illustrate that the work was in process, that there were no final answers but rather they were always looking to improve.

> *Ted: Was it a problem for parents though?*
>
> *Angela: There was always a willingness on my part to spend a lot of my time talking to parents individually about their kids. I would be saying, “Here is what we’re doing to help your child. Here’s how your child is being accommodated. Here’s what your child needs.” Over time, parents knew that, if they had questions or concerns, it was not a hard thing to come and talk to me.* (January 20, 2010)

Education is About Change: Current School Landscape

Angela's current school does not have the same kind of engagement with parents that her previous two schools had. The school houses 400 Kindergarten to Grade 9 students, and the junior high portion of the school is a magnet school; that is, students come from outside the neighbourhood. The elementary portion of the school is local, and parents are upper middle class, many with university educations and professional jobs.

Angela's current school is nothing like her previous schools in approach and philosophy. She wonders whether higher administration had any idea who she was as an educator before moving her to this school. It was never a part of their conversation with her, so she wonders whether she is expected to bring about changes in the direction of her previous work. For Angela, democratic education means democratic conversations at all levels. She wonders whether central administration is aware of the kind of school this is and what the needs are. In her more cynical moments, she believes that the leadership did not consider either of those realities. She believes that, given enough time, she could transform this school using democratic approaches similar to what she used in her previous two schools: by engaging parents, staff, and students in relationships that would lead to a more democratic style of education.

Angela believes that education is about change.

> *Angela: Learning is about moving somewhere. At the very best, we could be classed as stewards. At the very worst, we stagnate and the world changes around us. Those people who are able to think about voice, think about the democratic ideal of what it is and what it ought to be, what it might be in the world of possibilities. They have to take what is and start to shift it. As soon as you take what is and shift it in whatever way, however small, you're probably going against tradition. Then you get into the whole idea of what is tradition. You need a certain amount of ritual, ceremony, tradition that follows through*

> *any kind of change, but selecting and choosing and then knowing which of those you keep going and which are "we have always done it that way" notions. You have to say yeah but no more and to let them go. The question is, how do you let them go, and do you let them go before you have something to replace them? Do you let them go and see what replaces them? You always work against the notion that we think we know what we have right now.*
>
> *Ted: It's complicated.*
>
> *Angela: It is complicated.*
>
> *Angela: It is sort of that unsung hero business because, 20 years later, much of what we did at* [at her previous school] *is being talked about, being thought about, being put into the fabric of other places. There are moments when I am really frustrated with that because of not being able to continue and what it might have been, had I continued.* (December 16, 2009)

Despite the fact that some of the ideas she incorporated in previous schools are now being considered in other locations, Angela worries that some of the history and knowledge is being lost as educators age and retire. She wishes that there were a way to honour the advances that were made. She wishes that there were a way to preserve the stories of those educators who made such a difference for their students. There are not many principals who have the experience that she has, and she wonders about how to capture the knowledge and experience to serve future generations.

> *Angela: There are too many beginning teachers who entered the profession believing that they're going to teach the way they were taught. Unless there is something that intentionally changes that notion, they perpetuate an old paradigm. We have that old paradigm that is that foundational piece. Teachers by and large are small-c conservative people, and so it is very difficult for them to walk on the edge of chaos. It is very difficult to be creative and innovative because that's not how we have attracted people into the*

profession. That is not the way people generally see teaching, particularly in the care-giving piece of the profession. As a whole, we don't know what to do with those people who are innovative and creative and we allow them to work in small pockets. We don't know what to do with what they find out. And it comes back to the stories we tell. Those people tell their stories, but their sphere of influence is very small because we don't have the place, a way, the structure for their stories in a systemic way to influence beyond their classroom.

Angela: The parameters need to shift around our collaborative work, and we are doing more collaboration now than most schools did, say 15 years ago. Some of it because there's been some money through AISI [Alberta Initiative for School Improvement]*, which has freed up some of the structure. Perhaps we need an action research model, initially, collaborating about not what is but what might be. If we came to some new conclusions about learning and teaching, there should be a process where we take those conclusions and to try them in slightly bigger ripple, and then in the slightly bigger ripple to see if they have systemic application. We now have research that we have conducted about learning, about success, about the engagement that goes beyond strictly PAT* [Provincial Achievement Tests] *results. We are measuring the wrong things if we continue to use as a sole indicator of success, PAT results.*

Sure, I know that Alberta Education has those fancy report card charts on accountability about programs and safety and those things, but that is still measuring things on the scale of what is measurable. It's not measuring those things that we maybe need to start paying attention to if want to change the outcome. Who was it that said, "If you continue to do what you always did, you'll continue to get what you always got." If we always measure the tangibles in what you and I have come to know is a very intangible work that we do, then we will always get a profile that fits into the conservative nature of perpetuating a longitudinal thing about what teaching is. We need to be having more discussions about teacher identity. What does it mean to teach?

Ted: I dare say that there is not much conversation in pre-service education, that I know of around the faculty, about what we are talking about today. The faculty is revamping

> *the undergraduate program at the moment, but I'm not hearing much about the issues we are talking about today.*
>
> *Angela: Are they talking to people like me? Are they using the voices of our beginning teachers? Are they looking for voices like mine to say, "Where are we?"* (January 20, 2010)

Angela believes that the age-old tension between schools reflecting society and schools leading society is still in place. Where the emphasis lies decides the role of the teacher. She contends that the schools have a hand in shaping the future and, therefore, the identity of the teacher may need to change because the needs of society and the needs of children are changing. Angela still encounters teachers who are concerned that they have not covered the curriculum. Her response is that it is not the job of teachers to cover the curriculum; the job is student learning. She would prefer that there were more conversation about the difference between the stances. She is concerned that the idea still very much in the minds of teachers is that they must cover the curriculum rather than teach essential elements. She thinks teachers too often are carrying out curriculum management activities, as opposed to helping students learn. For Angela, there is a difference between surface knowledge for the purpose of success on a test and deeper understanding of concepts and ideas arrived at through critical thinking and problem solving.

Angela wonders which teacher identity we tend to support in our education system—teachers as managers of the curriculum or teachers as guides to learning. Teachers would like to teach, despite the complexity and barriers, despite the overcrowded agenda, but what is missing is the ability of our leadership to think differently. She says that, as a society in Alberta, we tend to denigrate teachers for not covering everything they are called to cover, and we do not afford them respect as professionals. Angela points out that Finnish society gives respect to teachers.

She has heard that the Finnish education system recognizes the professionalism of teachers and accords them a greater measure of autonomy than we do. Angela wonders how we might expand the influence of teachers who are implementing change in their teaching practice. Some teachers work on the edge, and their creativity and experience are pushed aside; or, if they come to someone's attention, they are often taken out of the classroom and placed in a consultancy position or appointed to an assistant principalship. She would like to see an increase in the influence of creative teachers without taking them away from the classroom. Creative teachers are problem solvers who are aware of new developments in pedagogy and approach their work with student learning in mind.

> *Ted: How should we approach problem solving in education? How do we approach issues such as differentiated instruction, assessment approaches, and other educational issues?*
>
> *Angela: I even wonder about taking out the word* "*problem*" *because we have such a negative connotation to that word. We don't recognize them as problems—instead, as issues that we just have not yet worked through—and I wish there was a different word that comes as easily as problem. Teachers don't like to have problems. They become more defensive. How about saying, "I wonder if...." It becomes something to think about rather than a problem. It's the language we use.* (January 20, 2010)

At Angela's current school, the clientele is very different from some of her other schools; this means change has to be introduced carefully. The staff has been trying some different things, particularly at the junior high level, and Angela wonders about the response from parents. Teachers are now introducing some of the changes that had occurred at her previous schools. It has taken a long time to get to the point of trust wherein these changes could be put forward. Angela says staff, students, parents, and community will be more accepting of change if we

make it an expected part of the philosophy of the school; that is how change eventually came about at her two previous schools. Angela and her staff are trying to make change part of the norm of this school as well. Once change becomes part of the culture, then it becomes acceptable, especially if parents and teachers know that there is room for conversation. A new culture of change could introduce the notion that we can think about what we are doing. Then we can more easily know what we want kids to learn and how they are doing.

Angela and her staff at the junior high level are trying an innovation called academic extension. It is becoming an inquiry learning project, in which students identify a passion area in their learning, either in the humanities or in math/science. Angela sees this project as enhancing democratic engagement of learners and teachers. Seventy-five students are using digital media to represent their interpretation of a choice of seven stories, and 65 students are doing what Angela calls a variation of science fair projects. Time has been provided in their school-day timetable for students to pursue their own projects. Teachers are trying to understand how this inquiry work spills into other curriculum areas. They are paying attention to what this work does to engagement, motivation, and completion. They are exploring whether this will become a way to differentiate learning. The projects are not being graded in the usual way. Instead, the students will invite two peers, a parent, a teacher of their choice, and, for some of them, someone from outside the community to ask reflective questions and to listen to the learning journey. Teachers will briefly describe the project on the report cards, with descriptive comments of how the students did. Teachers are evaluating the initiative to see whether it could become a way of teaching the regular curriculum. Angela finds it challenging to develop teacher leadership around this and other innovations, but she sees it slowly making progress. In the spirit of democracy, she

is hoping for more initiative to come from teacher leaders rather than from her.

Angela's preferred approach to grouping students is combined grades; this is the approach she encouraged for almost 16 years in her two previous schools. She has not been able to implement the approach at her current school, for several reasons. One is that the school does not have the necessary space. Another is that the current community is very different from those in which she previously worked. For some reason, combined groupings have a bad reputation in this area. A considerable sales job would be necessary before she could make grade-groupings an organization of choice in this community. Staff have experimented with it at the junior high level in the options classes and in the academic extension classes. They have also tried homerooms that combine Grades 7, 8, and 9. Student Council includes Grades 4 to 9, enabling students from a range of grades to do things together. These are places where, without using the label of combined grades, they are experimenting with the concept.

The Story Concludes

Angela has decided to retire at the end of this school year, so our conversation became a reflection on how this final year had gone. Angela contemplates her retirement with mixed feelings. She does not feel that she can continue the work at her present school, for a number of reasons. She wonders whether she has the stamina to put in the time and energy required to continue the change process. She thinks that it would take another two or three years to develop a learning culture like what she has experienced in previous schools. She also feels that the district is not moving in a direction that supports her thoughts and beliefs about learning. There is going to be a significant staff turnover at the school, and Angela thinks this might be an opportunity for someone new to create a new team. She is concerned that the progress they have made in

changing the fabric of the school will become unravelled if someone tugs on some of the delicate threads she has managed to weave into place.

Angela feels that progress has been made in the junior high school in identifying individual student needs and diversifying instruction to meet the needs. She feels that they have moved toward a program that meets student needs and can differentiate curriculum, while still maintaining a program that extends, deepens, and broadens the student learning experience. She believes that, at the elementary level, staff have come to understand that, despite single-grade groups, teachers can work within a team to create the learning experience. The school has made gains in getting parents to see how the school has a place in the community and the community has a place in the school. All of that activity has been, in her opinion, movement toward a more democratic school.

If she has regret, it is that leadership in the staff has not emerged to the extent that had been evident in her previous two schools. In the previous settings, teachers had come forth with ideas to try, whereas, in her current school, the ideas mostly seem to be coming from her. This may be because she is a strong leader, even though she has been trying to step back to allow others to take the lead. Even where they have made progress with a new approach, teachers have left it to Angela to talk to parents and the community about the changes. She has become the "weaver of words." Angela wonders whether she could have created better opportunities for staff to take more initiative for growth and change. Despite the anticipated changeover of staff next year, Angela says it takes a minimum of three years to develop a team, and she thinks it may be better for someone else to take up the challenge.

Angela is also wonders about the school district rhetoric, which speaks about future

learners being quite different because of a changing world. She is aware of the talk at various levels in the education system about the change needed to accommodate learners in the 21st century. She questions the commitment to change, when she sees that the structures and methods used to organize the district remain the same. In fact, she sees the system becoming more centralized, and she believes this will limit possibilities. Succession planning is lacking, and knowledge resident in the system is being lost. She finds it interesting to hear talk about innovations that were part of the work in her schools 20 years ago. Rather than drawing upon those experiences to inform present initiatives, the system is, for the most, part ignoring them.

Angela also finds that the staffing process in a large urban district prevents movement of teachers and principals, and she feels that this hinders change. In her opinion, the criteria for what is needed in the principalship are murky. The principalship continues to be a lonely job. It creates individual silos instead of creating community.

> *Ted: That loneliness persists amongst the teaching ranks. Not as much, perhaps. It's breaking down slowly, but still, the classroom is the classroom, which is a lonely job. There are signs of hope. One of my other participants is a Grade 1 teacher. She has been in the same school for 27 years and she has taught Grade 1 for 27 years and yet, as far as being a thinker and doer and a leader of pedagogy, she's awesome.*
>
> *Angela: She is probably an anomaly. I've come across a few people in my career who are like that. And you go, "Wow! This is absolutely amazing!" I think in my experience, those people are anomalies, rather than the rule.*
>
> *Ted: Absolutely. She is an anomaly. In fact, her struggle is trying to get her colleagues...*
>
> *Angela: To come with her...*
>
> *Ted: To come with her to the places where she's going because she knows she's working with Grade 1s and that the things that she has got going need to be carried on in Grade 2 and 3. Her struggle is trying to get...*

Angela: Those bridges...

Ted: Yeah, and to get other buy in. The AISI projects have been helpful for her in that sense.

Angela: I think they are one of the things that have changed the culture of the district. The whole AISI... The availability of money to get teachers talking to teachers, teachers into other schools, teachers learning together on different topics, and it's been wonderful.

Ted: And that's where the future is. Something along those lines.

(May, 2010)

Some of the changes that occurred at Angela's current school are a result of some of the AISI projects. The culture is slowly changing; teachers are talking to teachers.

Ted: When I talk about democracy, that is partly where we have to go. We have talked about this before—that is, the professionalization of teaching. Teachers take initiative.

Angela: In the democracy sense. We have talked about this too. Not all voices are equal. All voices need to be a part of the creation, even though they're not equal at all points. We need to get better at being able to pay attention to that diversity and how that diversity plays out in the community. And to honour that diversity, so that if you ask me about learning, my voice should have more weight than a beginning teacher who is just figuring it out. But if the conversation is around technology that can support what we're doing, then my voice isn't the one that should hold the weight compared to some of the young teachers were growing up with that. We have to be able to decide when it is appropriate to listen to which voices. That is where experience and place on the landscape has to be part of it. Voting and consensus building is not the same for everyone. That's what makes democracy and voice and engagement so fascinating. It is not just a question of voting. Democracy is not just a formula. (May, 2010)

Angela and Democracy

Prior to beginning our journey together, Angela had read my research proposal, which included the literature review of educating for democratic citizenship. Our conversations occurred in that context, and it became abundantly clear that her thoughts and ideas were either directly or indirectly about what makes schools democratic places. She told me that fostering democracy in schools is not always straightforward, but that a key for her is in the building of relationships and creating space for conversations, whether it is among staff or with parents. As well as creating relationships with children, an important feature of democratic education for children is that their voices be heard. She also believes that democratic attitudes are developed when learning is engaging and meaningful.

As Angela nears retirement, she wonders what she could do to continue her contribution in a different way. She is playing with the idea of somehow finding a way to engage leaders in schools to work in different ways. She would like to work with experienced school administrators who know how to do the management part, and she would like to help them do the thinking that is needed to make shifts. She would like to help them put in place the processes with students, staff, and parents that create success around learning. She sees the need for something like executive coaching to help with the thinking and planning and then actualizing the plan.

She continues to think about how we get the schools we want, schools like what Nel Noddings (2005) and Elliot Eisner (1998) talk about. How do we make the changes required to fit the 21st century? We talk about this need for change, but what are we doing to create it? Angela believes that too much of what we are doing in schools is still trapped in a traditional

content-oriented vision of education. She sees a need for systemic thinking that would provide support to schools that are making shifts to more democratic, learning-centred approaches. She is concerned that, in difficult financial times, we will let go of some of the advances that we are slowly making and that we will not move in the directions we need to move.

Chapter 6: Bill's Story on the Learning Landscape: Go to their Place

The Story of Bill's Sense of Democracy

Bill was a social studies teacher, but during the period of this study he was working as a part-time counsellor at a high school and part-time aboriginal education consultant for the school district. Meetings with Bill took place in his small office, which was part of the student services complex in the large high school, where he works part of the time. Most of our meetings were in the morning on Thursdays because that was the day he was at the high school. He said that he had more flexibility on those days. Sometimes Bill would arrive after me, and sometimes he would come from a meeting with a student or other staff.

The small office had a computer and a table in the corner, where we sat during our conversations. The room had a window but was pretty basic and functional. There were some pictures painted by students and some aboriginal art objects. He talked about the art pieces as being an important way for youth to express themselves. He wants to find ways to encourage aboriginal youth to produce art. There was a small window in the office door, and occasionally student faces would appear just to wave to Bill. When I asked him whether it was someone he should be meeting with, he said no, that they were just coming by to say hi.

On my first visit, Bill took me on a walking tour through parts of the school, which is so large that I had no sense of the geography of the building. Bill seemed very comfortable there and introduced me as a university colleague to some of the staff and students in the building. Bill had been at this school for nine years, and he seemed to have a high level of comfort and familiarity. Our conversations were open and wide-ranging but always came back to his care and enthusiasm for students. His narrative is an intriguing mix of time and place, then and now. In

later conversations, he explained his story in light of the elder's medicine wheel teachings, which look at time and place as circular rather than linear.

Our first conversation opened with an exchange on what democracy means to each of us. Bill had read part of my paper describing this project. He responded to my story about how I came to this exploration of democracy and how we teach for it. My rural roots and upbringing resonated for him because of his own background. My school story and my leadership story created for him an image of where I came from. The place people come from is important to Bill.

> *Bill: When I think of democracy, immediately I think of social studies, which is just so undemocratic. You know, in terms of how we teach that. In some ways, in many ways actually, it is ironic that we talk about democracy in social studies in the way we teach it. I'm not being democratic in the way I go about bringing out that information.*
>
> *Ted: Part of my point is that in social studies we can study democracy, but that is not the same thing as being democratic, living a life of democracy. Social studies teachers are not the only teachers of democracy. Every teacher, every secretary, every principal, every human being associated with the school is a teacher of democracy—or not.*
>
> *Bill: Yeah.*
>
> *Ted: You know what I mean? The way people are treated creates in them either a propensity or a habit of mind that makes them democratic citizens or else thwarts that to some extent.*
>
> *Bill: I got that from your paper. How you look at democracy. It shifted for me how we think about democracy. Oh, he's talking about the spirit in people. That's what he's talking about.*
>
> *Ted: Right. I am talking about the spirit in people.*
>
> *Bill: When I think about democracy, I immediately think about politics. I think injustice. I think about what I hate about that part of life. And then, when I read your work, you're talking about the spirit of the person. Where does it come from? It comes from a place.*

Where does it come from in teachers? That's what you're talking about too.

Ted: Yes.

Bill: I love that. I can see you in that. (October 22, 2009)

Bill completely enjoys teaching high school; he says it is easy to teach. He believes that the harder work is teaching elementary and junior high school. The most important thing in teaching, for Bill, is building relationships and engaging students. He worries that sometimes there is not enough time or space for that because of the pressure to cover the curriculum. He works hard to make space for conversation because he believes the relationships are more important. He says, "We will get to the academics when we need to because that is the easy part." He says it is easy to regurgitate things. He prefers to teach non-academic social studies because there is less pressure to generate marks and reach an end result.

> *We have more time to have a buffet in class, to have a coffee and talk about the issues. I don't have to be so robotic because I feel sometimes when I teach those other classes that I feel like I'm teaching to parental expectations or the expectations of the end result. I am already thinking about the end instead of thinking about the process. You should not be thinking about the end. That's what the elders say. You should be engaging in the process all along. I think, in social studies, when I teach the more academic classes, I'm thinking about what the end result is going to be. What are my marks going to be? This is reinforced when we have a meeting and we have to put marks out side by side. Then we compare whose marks had the highest average. Then we are rewarded with better classes. We get to teach the more academic class or honours class, which I could really care less about.* (October 22, 2009)

Bill's work as counsellor involves paperwork, which he abhors because it takes time away from being with students. He wishes there were ways to reduce the administrivia. Students often come looking for him to chat, but he does not have the time and he feels badly about that.

In his job as consultant, Bill works with district principals. He establishes relationships with the aboriginal chiefs in the area because a number of students from the reserves attend city schools. He believes that it is important to understand what life is like on the reserves. He wants to take school board trustees and district leaders out to the communities so that they might get a better understanding of living on the reserves. Each reserve is different; each nation is different from the others. He believes his work is fostering relationships by talking to the elders and the chiefs.

Bill also works with another school in his consultant role. The school has a high aboriginal population. The school and community are trying to get a Cree language program going. He appreciates being in a school instead of an office because he believes that consulting means establishing relationships. Even though his expected role is to work with aboriginal children, he works with all the children to show that we are all here for the same reason. He prefers to forget about race and just work with students.

Identity Comes From a Place

Bill was a foster child until he was two and half years old. Then he was adopted and was raised in a rural family in Saskatchewan. He was adopted because, at the time, his adoptive parents did not think they would be able to have a boy. Nevertheless, Bill has two younger brothers. Bill had a close relationship with his father, closer than with his mother. He grew up on a farm, and he believes that gives him a sense of place. That is one of the reasons why my rural beginnings resonated with him. For Bill, there is a different spirit nurtured through growing up on a farm, one that is hard to teach. This spirit is connected to family closeness as well as appreciation of nature and the land. As an aboriginal person adopted by a Caucasian family, he

says that environment is everything. He says that he is not sure what that means anymore, but:

> *My father is my father. That is beyond blood relation. In that way, environment is everything. There's way more to it now that I think about it. I think about it more now because I have a daughter. She's a little girl, age two and a half years, and we have another one on the way. I think about things of how will I show her that place is important, such as growing up on a farm? How do I help her see that important part of life?* (October 22, 2009)

Bill thinks about the nurture/nature aspects of growing up. He has discussions with his wife about raising a child because his daughter is the age at which he was adopted. He does not remember much about what happened when he was two and a half years old, but he is amazed at how much his daughter already knows. He thinks that, although we might not remember things from such a young age, some of our attitudes are shaped from the earliest times. It is only later that we realize the impact of our early upbringing.

> *Bill: I think about all those things. I think about those things now. It was probably around age 18 or 19 that I started understanding. See, I hated being Indian when I was growing up. I couldn't stand it.*
>
> *Ted: Why?*
>
> *Bill: For a lot of reasons. Like, I think, one, I was different.*
>
> *Ted: In the school you were in, because you were...*
>
> *Bill: I'm light-skinned so I could walk in both worlds. I played hockey so my friends got along with me. We got along well because, where I lived, it is surrounded by a lot of reserves and there was a lot of white versus native mentality. And so it is bad, you know.*
>
> *Ted: So when you were growing up the tension was there. You knew...*
>
> *Bill: I knew that I was native but I hated it. I hated it for a lot of reasons because my family... Like my grandma on one side, on my mom's side, is real racist. They say "dirty*

> *Indian." They say bad stuff, but that's just the way they are. You become conditioned. You hear that all the time but they never looked at me as Indian. It's really messed up, eh? Only when I was really young my mom says... I never had a haircut for two years. I really had long hair and then they made fun of me. So I got my hair cut. So my mom still says when my hair gets too long that I look like a dirty Indian. Mom would still say that, eh. She's old-school that way. It's troubling because you don't know... I don't know what her story is. On the other hand, she is one of my biggest advocates. She is one of the ones who really encouraged me to get my treaty card.* (October 22, 2009)

Bill started figure skating when he was three or four years old. He says that his two older sisters were taking figure skating lessons, and his mom and dad thought that he needed to be involved in something because they were worried about him.

Bill recalls that in his high school years his behaviour was selfish. He enjoyed sports and moved with a hockey crowd, with their hockey jackets and the selfish identity that usually goes along with that package. He did not like who he was in high school. He says he was suspended from school for fighting, even though that really was not his way. He thinks it was a stage he was going through in high school. He was part of a group mentality, but he feels that it hid who he really was. Fighting was not and is not part of his makeup. He remembers a time when his dad, who always came to watch Bill's hockey games, said that if Bill ever engaged in fighting in hockey, he would no longer be allowed to participate in the sport.

Bill was a good athlete. As well as hockey, he played volleyball. Later, when he had a chance to play on the volleyball team at Lakeland College, he chose a program that would get him into the school. Bill says that his marks were not great in high school—he had just barely managed to graduate—so he chose this as the easiest way into the college.

He was not a highly motivated learner in school and had no relationships with his

teachers. He stayed in school because dropping out was not an option in his family. He remembers that he enjoyed the social aspect of school and did not like missing school, even on snow days. He never established relationships with teachers, so now, as a teacher, he is very conscious of how he wants to be for his students. Even though he had a lot of friends in high school, he describes it as an empty space because of the lack of a relationship with any of the teachers. He does not place all the blame on the teachers; he says it was partly his own fault.

He thinks about his own high school experience when he thinks about teaching now. He tries to get to know the students. He always talks about place and asks, “Where are you from?” He says that to almost every aboriginal student he works with. He wants to know what community they come from and has discovered that they often resist admitting to coming from a reservation.

Bill’s mother wanted him to attend a native college. He strenuously objected. He questioned her reasons because, until that point, he had had no contact with aboriginal culture or history. His mother encouraged him to explore those roots. He wonders why she walked in the two worlds, because that side of his family is “really redneck.” Bill recalls that his dad, on the other hand, respected Indian culture.

Bill rejected the idea of attending a native college and chose Lakeland College, where he registered in Rehabilitative Services. At the time, he did not really know why he picked this program. He does recall that he liked the idea of working with children. Part of the reason that he registered in Rehabilitative Services was because his mother knew someone who had taken the program and now worked with handicapped persons. At that point, Bill was not particularly enthusiastic about the idea. His first assignment in the program was to explore reasons why a

person might take up this line of work. He went to a shelter workshop near the college and worked in that shelter for two days. He remembers watching a blind person and having his first inklings that he might enjoy helping handicapped people.

He made the college volleyball team, which helped pay his college tuition. He also received some funding from his paternal grandmother. His mother questioned why he should be paying for his own schooling because he could receive funding from his reservation. Bill, however, preferred to do it on his own. He was not prepared to accept funding from aboriginal sources, even though technically he was eligible.

As part of the program, Bill took a part-time job working with a boy who had spina bifida. Bill's job was to get the boy ready for school every day and at night get him ready for bed. He continued this work for two years while he attended college. He developed a close relationship with the boy and the family. Caring for somebody changed his views.

> *Even though I was still playing sports and I still had a jacket and that group mentality which is selfish. I'm not anti-sports. I love sports, but when you hide behind a jacket, it's sad. I was still hiding behind a jacket and I was living these dual lives where I was doing this and integrating it and I was getting to a better place. A less selfish place.* (October 22, 2009)

Bill in a "New Place"

After he graduated from Lakeland College at age 19, Bill continued to take contracts working with disabled persons. After a while, he moved to the city of Saskatoon, where he applied to be a teacher assistant. He got a job working in a school with a behaviourally challenged boy. He developed rapport with the staff, especially with an aboriginal teacher, who helped motivate his exploration of both education and his aboriginal roots. He says that working

with the behaviourally challenged boy was good for him because it made him aware of the needs of at-risk youth.

Bill's aboriginal teacher friend also started taking him to powwows and giving him books to read about aboriginal history. Even though he had previously started the process of getting his treaty card, it was this aboriginal friend who provided support for him to complete the task. He discovered which reserve was his home reserve and received his treaty number. At that time, he had no understanding of what it meant, but his friend slowly introduced him to elders and his comfort level grew.

After spending a summer in Victoria, Bill returned to Saskatoon to work as a teacher assistant. The person who hired him has become a lifelong friend and mentor. Through her encouragement and support, she has become a centrepiece in his life. He says that she taught him to believe in himself. After Bill worked for her for two years, she suggested that he go back to school and become a teacher. She also taught him to "look sideways."

> *All during this time, I was also doing contract work with agencies throughout the city to make a little bit of extra coin. I would do contract work for social services. I would do suicide watch. I was learning all these things while I was a teacher assistant. She also taught me about choice theory. She helped me study choice theory by William Glasser. She helped me learn about the importance of getting into people's quality world. If someone tells you to F off, don't look at the language but look at the reason why this behaviour is happening. "Don't look at things this way," she would say. "Look this way—look sideways." She was telling me that a long time ago. She taught me since I was 20 or 21. I was dealing with kids who were prostitutes, boys and girls, kids who are on the street, that's the kind of place it was. I would counsel a kid and she's a chartered psychologist and she would walk me through what I could have said. How I could've asked better questions or how I could just use silence. I couldn't understand all of those*

things but I'm starting to understand better, now that I'm 34. (October 22, 2009)

Bill went back into the University of Saskatchewan's Indian Teacher Education Program (ITEP) and would eventually graduate from the University of Alberta with a teaching degree. All of the students in the Saskatoon program were aboriginal, including Bill, who was just learning about his roots. He felt that many of the students in the program hated "whites," so he learned to be silent because his family is white. He counselled himself not to be angry. He read extensively. He learned about his culture through friends and thought deeply about the complexity at the intersection of cultures. When he would go home to the farm during school breaks, he would have conversations with his father, who was supportive because of his interest in the history of treaty rights. Bill's mother, on the other hand, would express resentment around treaty rights. She thought that too much money was going to fund obligations dictated by treaty rights.

> *Even in life now, she will help out all my brothers and sisters, but she never helps me. She won't help me out because she says the Indians help me out. It's really a different way of looking at life. My wife would never believe it when I told her before we were married. My wife would say, "Oh Bill, it's not like that." I love my mom. I love her, but she's just that way, and there's nothing I can do to change her. My mom gave everyone of my brothers and sisters money for a down payment on a house. My mom says the Indians take care of you. And I guess they do—they helped me with education.* (October 22, 2009)

Place: When Cultures Intersect

When Bill received his treaty card and learned about the reservation that he was connected to, he decided to seek out his birth family. In early discussions with relatives, he discovered that his birth family had also been looking for him since the time he had been given up for adoption. They had placed ads in the paper and had taken other initiatives to find him. Bill

eventually found his way to the reservation to make contact with his birth family.

> *First time I met them, I go down there and I'm going to meet my mom. When I think of family, I think of my white family. My immediate family. That's one way of looking at family. Maybe in your family in the Polish culture, extended family is part of it. Usually I think of Mom and Dad, my sisters and brothers. Okay, so I'm going to go meet family. I drive up to Prince Albert and I say, "So where do you guys want to meet?" I was talking to my older sister, and she says, "We will meet at bingo." I'm like, what the hell! Like this is still where my mind is. Everyone back at home would have laughed because this is the stereotypical native story that I have heard. The bingo. All Indians go to bingo. I'm like, here I am. I'm meeting these guys at bingo. It's unbelievable. I can't believe this! I have never been to bingo in my life. So I'm still a white Indian. I go there, and now I understand it differently. You know, you go to bingo not so much to play bingo but you go to bingo to visit everybody. And all my family is there. And when I talk family, I'm talking about uncles from different places and aunts came. My mom is there. All my aunties, cousins, everybody is there. Like there's probably 30, 40 people there. The idea of family is different. It's way different. It's so weird, eh? It was so awkward being there, but it was so nice, so peaceful. The next day I met my grandpa. He's an elder there.* (October 22, 2009)

Bill talks about his two homes and how they shaped his identity. He grew up on a farm with his adoptive white family and now has found his birth family, who resides on a reservation. He has two brothers and two sisters in his adoptive family and three sisters and a brother in his birth family. He remains connected with both families. Bill feels the difference between the two worlds. In the one world, he has lived a privileged life; in the other world, there is poverty. He's never seen the kind of poverty in which his newly discovered family live.

> *I have all my teeth. And it's a real shock to my system. A real shock to my system to see that. Talking to my mom, she got sober to talk to me. She struggles with alcoholism big time. She's a cook in a camp and I feel sorry for her when I see her. She is so small and*

when I hug her I just feel, "Man, I feel bad for you." She feels bad for me that she gave me up. But I feel bad for her. It's really weird. But I don't want her to feel bad or to worry. It's all good. I'm now connected to all those guys. (October 22, 2009)

Even though Bill is now connected to this new world, intervening events had prevented him from engaging in it as much as he would have liked. The death of his white father, his marriage to his wife, who is from Texas, the completion of his degree at the University of Alberta, and his work have all kept him busy. After his adoptive father died, for a long while, Bill lost the spirit to talk about aboriginal issues. He was content to just teach because talking about some of these issues was too closely interconnected with his own life. He feels better about talking about these issues again, especially now that he has been working on his university writing for his Master's degree.

Bill continues to enjoy playing hockey for aboriginal teams. He feels comfortable in the dressing rooms of aboriginal teams because they remind him of farmers. He feels it helps him stay healthy in his life. He likes to be in a place in his life that is comfortable. The death of his father was hard on him. The farm where he grew up is gone, and Bill feels the loss of history and place that had so much influence on his formation.

Bill believes that the stories of the two worlds in which he dwells put him in a good place because he can walk comfortably in both worlds. He can talk to the elders, he can walk with the people and sit with them and learn about his life, yet he can also try to walk with the mostly non-aboriginal teachers at his school. He took his social studies department colleagues out to the reserve to learn about the smudging ceremony to give them some understanding of the culture of some of their students.

They said it was the best PD they've had because we talked and people shared their

stories. I've taught with these guys for 10 years and I never knew any of that stuff. I learned more in an afternoon with them than I had in 10 years. (October 22, 2009)

Entering Into Conversations: Building Relationships

Bill works as a counsellor in student services, which he had expected would be more service oriented. He had not realized how much paperwork, instead of direct contact, was involved in this work. He understands that the coding, the paperwork, and the documentation for accountability purposes is driven by funding. He realizes that, if everyone in student services were like him, no paperwork would be done. Bill feels that so much paper shuffling leaves too little time for conversation with kids. He thinks a better balance should be struck between the amount of documentation and amount of time for students. He finds it ironic that, because of the need for all of the documentation, there is little time left for actually engaging student needs. He also wonders about the students who actually come into student services, many of whom are already self-actualized and confident enough to come in seeking service. Many students who could use the support lack the skills or confidence to come in.

Part of his job involves providing support for teachers in a high-needs school with a high aboriginal population. He has been involved with the Cree language Kindergarten class and was surprised to hear the little ones using rude language. He was also disappointed to observe their uncivil treatment of each other. Because the teacher has some problems dealing with this difficult behaviour, Bill has been taking some of these kids out of the classroom to work with them. The first thing he tries to do is to establish a relationship with them. His experience has taught him that bad behaviour diminishes when children experience positive relationships. However, part of the problem for him is that he is only there half days, twice a week. He knows what is needed but is not there enough to make a real difference. The other roadblock for him is

that he does not have the experience and pedagogical background to teach this age group. He is there to support the teacher as a consultant, but she is under stress and her solution is to remove the kids with whom she has a struggle. He realizes that he is providing Band-Aid support and that behaviour is the responsibility of a whole school and a whole community.

The advantage for Bill is that his first-hand engagement with these young children helps him understand their situation better. When he plays sports with them after class, they just light up, he says. He is concerned that, at such a young age, they are faced with complicated problems. Some of them come from difficult home circumstances and have seen violence because of the involvement of their parents in unsavoury social groups. Some parents lack parenting skills, and their children come to school carrying the resulting baggage. Bill says that, even at their *Kindergarten* age, he can spot children who are at risk for leaving school later. He wishes that he could write about this and document this amazing journey.

Everyone in the Circle Should Have a Say

Bill's work as a consultant takes him to several junior high schools. He believes his consultant work to be capacity building. He wants to impact the teachers by developing relationships with them. In the classrooms, he spends the time just being a classroom support. When he works with students, he works with all the students, not just the aboriginal students. His conversations with teachers help him understand the issues they are faced with. He is able to share with teachers his knowledge of the families of children who come from reservations and of other problematic family circumstances. He helps teachers deal with students as persons rather than as behaviour problems. He always goes back to the importance of building relationships. He also works with staff other than teachers because any adult can provide a meaningful relationship

for a student. Bill believes that building democracy is not explicit; it is implicit in day to day interactions that build support for each other and that build community.

Bill says that he supports the underdog. He believes that, whether you are a custodian or teacher assistant or teacher, you deserve recognition for the work you do. It is important to recognize the need for teamwork. He remembers his experience as a teacher assistant and is not a fan of a top-down approach. He is an advocate for people who do support work.

Before his present position, Bill taught mostly Grade 10 Social Studies and did not find the textbook very helpful. The textbook speaks of the aboriginal view of the world and the European view of the world, but he finds it misleading because of the complexity and variety in each of those categories. Bill believes that it is futile to teach a point of view as though it captures reality. In fact, he says, doing so is probably damaging. It is almost impossible to teach the residential school experience if you have not experienced it. He suggests watching the video *Muffins for Granny*, which helps in developing an understanding of the impact of residential schools on specific lives.

To help his colleagues in the Social Studies Department to better understand the culture of aboriginal peoples, Bill worked with a teaching elder to facilitate a workshop on a nearby reservation. The elder taught about the medicine wheel and the circle of life, but he explained that there are different worldviews in different Indian nations. He also explained that the reserve system upsets the circle of life and that reserves are, in themselves, a cause of dysfunction.

For Bill, teaching social studies means going beyond the textbook and entering into conversations that build relationships and help understanding.

Ted: What is the best skill a teacher should have?

Bill: Make space, every single day. Make space for conversation. Make space to ask, just

like our kids at supper. That's what he [the elder] *talked about. Give them some time. Sometimes as teachers we talk too much because we want to get our point across from our lesson. We just teach our lesson, but we forget about all the other things. The elder says that, if your spirit is broken, how can you possibly learn? If you are in turmoil inside, how do you learn? And that's for all kids, not just aboriginal kids. That's what he says. As teachers, we have the podium. We can do whatever we want within that place. And we'll learn better. We could still learn the traditional way to help us get to university because we still need to learn the system. Besides, university is only one story.*

Ted: It's true. We structure our system as though everyone was going to university. But they're not. (November 12, 2009)

Bill says that everybody in the circle should have a say. Democracy is not only for the smartest people. Bill worries that, if we put so much pressure on kids to graduate, we forget what is going on in their lives at that time. He does not want kids to drop out of school, and he believes that education is very important. Sometimes, for some children, there are other things to attend to and they are not ready, but Bill hopes that they will come back to school someday. He says that we should make it possible for them to come back because we should realize that school is only part of the story.

Bill believes that he needs to take his time with the students, even though a colleague in student services says that he "takes too much time with kids." Bill introduces every aboriginal family that comes in to all of their teachers because he believes that, if he is able to establish connections for them with teachers, the teachers become part of the circle. Every small connection helps because he knows he cannot create the circle alone. He knows how difficult it is for many parents and students to establish connections in a large high school. Adolescents, in his opinion, find it especially difficult to find ways to fit in; yet we teachers expect it. If students seem to be doing well in the eyes of the teacher, school life might be all right for the moment,

but if students run into difficulties either at home or at school, teachers and the school institution take actions that may not be helpful to the student, without understanding the story. Bill believes building relationships remains the key.

> *Bill: If I know in relationship with students that the words they use actually mean something rather than just something to say. I know what it's like...*
>
> *Ted: Takes a lot of skill on the part of the teacher to be able to discern what is going on because kids will also play games with us.*
>
> *Bill: But if you are in relation, you know those games.*
>
> *Ted: We do know those games. We all know them. As teachers we know them.*
>
> *Bill: Yeah. It's just that we don't pay enough attention to the games. The games tell me everything. If you want to play games with me and stuff, making up excuses for every single thing, that tells more about you than me. But it also tells about how you value the relationship. I always try to put that back. I know about playing games. I remember telling my teacher that I was late because of this or that. I didn't hear the bell or whatever. You guys can tell me anything and I've already used those lines, so let's get to a place of respect in here. Maybe you're going to need me some time. We are all here for the same reason, so let's get through this collectively. I know we can do it.* (November 12, 2009)

Find the Story

Bill believes it is possible to establish relationships with students who have been streamed into lower level social studies and that doing so can make them reach for more. He does not like the streaming but realizes that it is part of the system. He tells his students that their opportunities are limited by being streamed into Social Studies 10-2, which is a lower level stream. He does not want their being streamed into classes with lower expectations to dictate their life path.

Bill: My principal says I can't believe you tell them that. I say I'm not telling them that. The system is telling them that. I'm trying to get them to... I'm trying to create as many opportunities. I would've been one of the kids that you have put into Social Studies 10–2. I said I don't understand that. That's another piece that I don't get, but I'm going to work within the system. I'm not going to fight the system; it's too exhausting. I don't want to be "anti-"... Because then you become a naysayer and you become negative and it's not... So I say, this is the way it is and now let's try to do something about it.

Ted: I remember when I came to that kind of conclusion as well. It took me a long time to understand that. Of course, I was young and, as an ATA union activist, I always wanted to change the system immediately by confronting it, and then I realized that it doesn't work. Everybody just turns you off and nothing's happening. So somehow you have got be able to work within the system.

Bill: That's what I'm trying to do.

Ted: At the same time you have to be able to name it without knocking people down.

Bill: That's what I'm trying to do in those classes where I work as a consultant. I try to work sideways because you know what? If they see that I am actually a person and they see that I can actually be helpful to them, then the questions will flow about the aboriginal piece. They may start thinking about kids differently instead of as aboriginal students because it is more than aboriginal students.

Even my job description is dumb. Because it's like, "An aboriginal consultant? What the hell is that? What is that?" I can help you understand maybe a little bit more about what their life might look like. Maybe some of the traditions. Actually there are a lot of proud traditions. That's what I want them to understand. And, like some of these kids, they are lost. They don't even know where they fit. Plus, in some cultures it is easier to be a certain colour than it is to be aboriginal. A lot of the kids, just by talking to them, it really bothers them to be native because we're not looked upon as a desirable culture. That's media driven and how we live our lives. You learn that it is something more to be ashamed about. You know it's really weird and it is societal. It's also what we see when

> *we drive downtown and we see an old native man pushing bottles or something like that. You get pictures in your mind of what it is and you don't look at the past of that person when he was a kid.* (November 12, 2009)

Bill believes that a part of his job is to break down stereotypes, and the way to do that is to go beyond the stereotype and find the story. There is a story beyond the old native man pushing a grocery cart or the story beyond the bingo being the meeting place where he first met his birth family. People do not know the stories of some of the grandmas in the communities and how thoughtful they are, or how much it hurts when an elder dies in the community because a piece of the community dies with the elder. Many of the families do not have family pictures because of fires or transition from community to community, so the children do not have pictures of themselves. Bill grew up in a stable family and so does not have the unstable history that many aboriginal children have experienced, and his background and experience with his birth family has given him a different understanding than non-native teachers might have. In his consultant work, he tries to get teachers to think differently, to not make excuses for the kids but to look at students' lives differently. A new awareness on the part of teachers might enable them to try different teaching approaches or, perhaps, realize that what a student needs at the moment is a relationship.

Bill describes a situation where one elementary school child he works with was devastated when Bill had to miss a reading session. It made Bill realize how important a relationship can be to a child. He was meeting with the child only once a week, but obviously, the child looked forward to that weekly encounter.

Bill does not think we need to know every single thing about every culture to work with students effectively. People are all just people, and the difference between the circle and the

triangle as a metaphor is not as important as we may think. Every human experiences childhood. The teaching elder reminds the teacher participants at his workshops to “think of one child in your heart before we start our conversation.”

Bill thinks back to that session when his social studies colleagues met with the teaching elder, and how, for the first time, the department built some sense of community. He felt that they had taken an opportunity to share some stories as a staff, and he wishes that those kinds of opportunities would happen more often.

> *If we’re supposed to be a community as a school and I don’t share with my own department, ever, for eight years, then how do we really inspire others? We could talk about assessment for learning and we could talk about standardizing all of our stuff, but we haven’t even... We might as well get a robot to teach the class. Right? Because we’re doing it to ourselves anyway, and that’s why teachers become disengaged from the practice—because we don’t attend to the details of teachers’ lives either when they’re having a difficult time. It’s sad and it’s not easy to do that, not easy to see that, but we don’t take the conversational spaces because it’s protectionist.* (November 12, 2009)

Aboriginal Queens and Kings

Bill helped form an aboriginal advisory group, composed of 40 randomly-selected aboriginal students at the high school. His intention was to have them come up with ideas to make the school a better place. Bill spoke of this with pride and saw this as creating democracy. The advisory group engaged with the principal in a sharing circle to talk about what was working in the school and what was not. The sharing circle was established as a protected place where the students could safely say what was on their minds. One of the ground rules was that students could not attack teachers personally but could share good stories as well as things that needed to be worked on. Since the dropout rate among aboriginal youth in the school is around 50%, the

hope was to gain a better understanding that would lead to better student engagement. The first session lasted for two hours. They had a smudging ceremony at the beginning and shared a meal at the end. Bill insisted that the meeting be held in the best meeting room in the school. The students talked about many things, including a Cree language program. The group now meets once a month. They call themselves the aboriginal queens and kings because the room where they meet has a big conference table with big chairs. It is the room where the faculty council meets and where decisions are made, so the students see the symbolism.

Bill understands the philosophy that all children should be given the same opportunities to learn and to succeed. He says he adhered to that philosophy for a long time as a social studies teacher but found that nothing ever changed. There is no specific aboriginal studies program, such as a language program, in the high school and, because a language like Latin is offered in the school, Bill suggests that the Cree language be offered in the school as well.

Bill worries that many of the things he is attempting to establish at the high school for aboriginal students will disappear after he leaves because too much depends upon him. He hopes to establish a culture that is self-sustaining and not dependent upon any one individual. It is important to start with the Grade 10s and it is equally important that the students drive the process. Bill has the support of the principal, who encourages him to do what he thinks is necessary. Bill has been able to bring elders to speak to the students about their culture, even though he knows that there is a variety of aboriginal backgrounds. The students asked for this, and Bill sees it as his role to give the students their voice.

> *All these kids come from different nations and we talked about education. How do we help each other stay in school? That was our thing. That's my whole idea behind it. How do I help you with identity? Eriksson tells me that identity is the most important piece in*

adolescence. So I use this European philosophy of identity and adolescence to support the programming now. I just reverse it. The principal says, "Bill, based on what?" And I say, "Based on psychosocial development model." I say, "Adolescence is a time of identity in order to get the next formative stage. We really need to look at that piece of identity. This is what the kids are telling us." The principal says, "Sure Bill, that's ridiculous." I say, "It's right here. He wrote it. Schools are built based on this psychological model. Eriksson is huge, so why can't I use Eriksson for my own purposes?" I'm kind of twisting what he said. (March 4, 2010)

In his studies, Bill has encountered child developmental models and believes that our schools are designed on the basis of developmental stages. However, the elder with whom he has conversations advises him to think of the circle as he thinks about these models. Developmental stages tend to be described in a linear fashion, whereas the circle metaphor allows for cycles.

A Culture of Possibility

Bill believes that relationship does not just happen; it is something that develops over time. Although it is an important part of teaching, teacher training focuses on a more technical approach. Relationship building does not seem to be enough of an academic approach to be included in teacher preparation. He says he has learned a great deal from the aboriginal queens and kings about the importance of conversation and relationship building, which is a significant part of identity development. He also knows that identity development includes acquiring self-confidence and comfort wherever students find themselves, whether it is in the high school or later in life. With the help of a colleague, Bill has arranged for groups of aboriginal students to visit the university. They have engaged in six visits this year, to various faculties, where they sit in classes to become familiar and comfortable. They shadow current students and then afterwards discuss their experiences with Bill and each other.

Bill is encouraging the development of a culture of possibility among aboriginal students, something that is taken for granted by most non-aboriginal middle-class families. Among aboriginal families, high school graduation is often unusual and hopes for post secondary education are not part of the norm. He wants to change that attitude and sees many signs of hope. He thinks that this year his high school will achieve a new high in the number of aboriginal students who will go on to attend post-secondary institutions.

Bill uses technology to stay in touch with students. He uses his cell phone to text students and to have them text him. He uses a listserv to encourage, maintain contact, and cheerlead. He believes that it is a crucial part of his work to develop student voice. The aboriginal queens and kings want to name their group “Voice,” an idea that came directly from them.

It is important for Bill that he goes to their place of understanding and tries to get to know every single one of the students. However, he understands that it is impossible for one person to do it all. He enlists the support of colleagues who have similar hopes and dreams for their students. These are the colleagues who have worked with elders and have sensitivity to student needs.

Bill says that he does not really have an interest in being a counsellor under the present circumstances because of the coding and the paperwork. He spends too much time on the computer typing up reports, when he feels he should be talking to real people about real issues. He is more action-oriented. Although he is thankful for those who are willing to do the paperwork, he knows it is not what he wants to do.

Bill talked about the transition program that he created with the junior high school, where students are in the attendance area for the high school. Even though his mandate is to work with

aboriginal students in the junior high school, he works with all the students in that school. He expects to have all the Grade 9 students visit the high school at least four times this year. He has them visit classrooms so that they get an idea of the culture. He also brings the junior high teachers in to have a staff meeting at the high school because he believes that teachers need to transition as well as students. High school teachers often blame junior high teachers for not doing their jobs, and junior high teachers are intimidated by the high school. He tries to bring the two worlds together by matching teachers from the two schools to share understandings. The junior high teachers team teach for a half-day with their partner high school teachers. Bill wants to form relationships wherein teachers can share ideas. Bill's view is that the students are a shared responsibility of the teachers of both schools. Teachers at the high school become acquainted with the junior high students who will be coming their way, and the students become familiar with the high school teachers.

Even though Bill accepts that education has a part in developing skills and knowledge for careers and participation in economic life, democratic education for Bill goes beyond preparing students for a successful financial life. For him, a successful life includes strong relationships, a spiritual life, and a sense of contributing to one's community. Sometimes he feels he has to nudge students toward engaging in their education and encourage them to express their voices. He tries not to impose his dream for a student on any child, but knows how important education is and how important it is that there be someone cheerleading for each child. He remembers that he was happy being a teacher assistant, but a mentor encouraged him to get his teaching degree. Her encouragement has been an inspiration for him and continues to be so as he nears completion of his Master's degree and plans for his doctoral work. He feels that it is his

responsibility to be a mentor to others. The kings and queens group continues to meet regularly. They talk about what is working for them and what is not, and they discuss what might be helpful for incoming Grade 9 students. Bill is a strong believer in mentorship. Mentors can be adults and they can be fellow students. He works hard at creating pathways and opening doors for students. Many things that are taken for granted by non-aboriginal families are seen as barriers for aboriginal youth, so he tries to make the unfamiliar familiar.

Next year, Bill will be engaged in consulting work at central office. He has been asked to help build policy around aboriginal education, and this means he will have less time in schools. He will also be a doctoral student at the university part of the time. Policy work may be a good opportunity because he believes that policy emerges out of story. He may be able to provide a voice for change. He does not want to be on committees just because he is aboriginal, especially if they are not prepared to listen. He is familiar with all the literature around the topic and has been asked to become familiar with the findings of the Alberta Commission on Learning (2003). His concern is that the policy-making is already done and he will become merely a token representative. He says he will look at it as an opportunity for networking, and he is willing to do all the necessary reading.

Chapter 7: Sandra's Story: Everyone Has a Chance

Meetings with Sandra took place in her classroom after school hours. We sat on child-sized chairs at a round, child-height table. Her classroom was a visually appealing setting, obviously catering to a Grade 1 audience. There were many posters, pictures, and student work adorning the walls and the bulletin board outside her classroom. There were many children's books and learning objects, such as math manipulatives and materials for science and social studies. I experienced the classroom as inviting, warm, and friendly. It was set up with learning centres and groupings of round tables and chairs. The classroom was equipped with a computer and a smart board, both of which Sandra seemed very comfortable using. On occasion, she would use the whiteboard to demonstrate something that she was doing or would play me a video clip. Sandra has been in this classroom for a long time and has personally accumulated many resources. It was easy to see that Sandra was at home in this space and that it reflected who she is as a teacher. Conversations with Sandra were somewhat different from those with the other two participants because she had shaped some of her classroom activities in light of this inquiry's focus on democratic citizenship.

Destined to be a Teacher

Sandra is a Grade 1 teacher in a suburban Catholic school district near a large urban centre in Alberta. She has taught Grade 1 her entire career and has been at her current location for over 20 years. She believes that our childhood experiences shape us as teachers. From a very young age, Sandra knew she was going to be a teacher. Her philosophy of teaching has been shaped by her life experiences as much as by her teacher education and teaching experience.

Ted: So why did you become a teacher?

Sandra: I think... You know, it's pretty basic. From the time I was five, when I walked into my first little school setting, which was actually a Playskool because we didn't have Kindergarten at that time. I walked in there, and I felt like I was walking into a second home. I was never nervous or felt that this is strange or foreign to me. I felt that I belonged. I don't know what brought that on, other than I loved to listen. I wanted to learn, and this was the place it was going to happen. When I carried on to Grade 1, I knew. I told my mother I wanted to be a nun teacher when I grow up. It never changed as far as being a teacher. I never changed my career aspiration. It got stronger and stronger as I went through school. I enjoyed... I enjoyed the project and the challenge, if something was difficult, especially math. It wasn't ever the case that I didn't want to go to school. I never had that feeling, even as a teacher. I've never been, "Thank goodness it's Friday." It's always, "Thank goodness it's Monday because I get to go in." I don't know what will happen when I have to leave this setting some day, because I feel so comfortable here. Just like a second home. (December 16, 2009)

There is no tradition of teachers in Sandra's family. Her mother had wished she could have been a teacher but had left school early to earn money for the family. Sandra is the only one of seven children who attended university. Sandra says that her brothers had some learning difficulties. Her husband is a retired teacher and her son is a teacher. One daughter passed away and her other daughter is with the police service.

Ted: Teaching comes to you naturally. Somehow that captured your imagination right from the very beginning.

Sandra: It did. I don't know if it was because of the handicaps that were in my family. I was constantly helping my younger brother learn something—do something—and it became a challenge because it was overwhelming for my mother. So I would step in quite often just to do what I could do in my own little way. To teach him something simple.

Ted: So it was natural for you to step in.

Sandra: I think so. Quite often, because I have four younger brothers and helped mother

raise all of them because she had seven children. She was tired, and then there were the handicaps, which were a real big burden for her. I could see how she was always on edge about that. I quite often stepped in to cool things down. I guess... troubleshoot.

Ted: Part of what I'm looking at in my study is about democratic citizenship and how do we develop habits of mind. Not merely voting. I'm talking about living in a democratic society and some sense of the common good. Part of that puzzle is empathy. The ability to understand other people's needs. I don't think we can be democratic unless we have empathy.

Sandra: No you can't. In some people, when you see that's missing, what happened in their life that caused them not to have that empathy? We had that so much when we were growing up. Not just so much with the boys, but we had other handicaps throughout the family. There was something called Fragile X syndrome, and lots of the cousins had this same disability, so I grew up with it and it wasn't odd to me. You know, "retarded" was never in our family. The word was in common use but never in our family. (December 16, 2009)

Sandra attended three years of teacher education before she started teaching in a large urban district. She began her teaching career in the school in which she had been a student. She taught there for six years before she stepped out of teaching to raise her family. She completed her fourth year of teacher education during this time. She feels that this was beneficial because it helped her stay current with pedagogy while she was away from teaching. She re-entered teaching soon after having completed her degree. She joined her current school district as a substitute teacher at first and eventually became a full time Grade 1 teacher. When I asked her why she has stayed in the same grade and the same school for so long, she said she has been willing to move but the opportunity has never come up. She admits that moving would be a major chore, now that she has acquired so many materials and achieved a comfort level.

Ted: There is a philosophy in some districts that movement is good, especially for

principals, but for teachers as well. That you ought to move.

Sandra: I don't think there's anything wrong with that. I certainly would have if it had ever come up, but I guess I have so many materials. It would be a major chore to move. Even though my husband has said he would come and help me move in the summer. It always seemed like this was my spot. I've been happy here.

Ted: And you have always taught Grade 1?

Sandra: Yes. When I subbed and I had temporary assignments, I did do some different grades, but it has been my niche.

Ted: So how did you end up in Grade 1? Was that what you chose?

Sandra: My faculty advisor, after observing me in both terms, suggested that I should be a Grade 6 teacher.

Ted: Why did he say that?

Sandra: Probably because I was talking at that level and maybe even a little above. Then when I applied with [her previous district]*, they said there was a Grade 1 position. I said I would teach at any grade. Honestly, I would still do that today. When they offered me Grade 1, I said I would try it. It has been a good fit.* (December 16, 2009)

Reading Opens Windows

Sandra loves teaching Grade 1 because it is so unique. Learners come with such a variety of needs, and they are starting school without many experiences around social rules and routines. She says that the first four months of Grade 1 are difficult for the little ones because it is the first time they are in school all day. She loves it when the students suddenly get it; when they discover that they can read, a window opens. She believes that reading is an extremely important skill because it has an impact on learning for the rest of their lives in all subject areas. She wonders how it is possible that some students can even complete high school without being able to read.

Sandra: I don't know how they can cope. I think, first of all you have to develop an inquisitive child who wants to learn how to read, and that takes some effort in Grade 1. They don't all come as inquisitive.

Ted: So what do you do?

Sandra: Lots of questioning to get them on board. You can just see every day there are a couple more that are looking. They look for answers and they are curious.

Ted: It develops an inquisitive child?

Sandra: Even to really read a book. You ask those questions before you even open that cover and you get them. What is your "I wonder" question, and I want them all to be able to tell me their "I wonder" question from the cover of the book because some children haven't done that before. Some of them go right to the inside of the book and look at the words. That should be the last thing they do. They should be looking at the cover and thinking about what's happening in that picture. Every picture on the page. That's part of my philosophy. We're learning how to read here, but that gets them started—I want your "I wonder" questions. And we use that in every subject. I will put something on the table to introduce a new unit such as measurement and I'll have a metre stick, a measuring tape, a glass, a scale. I won't say anything. What are your "I wonder" questions? They just study those things and it is to awaken that curiosity. No matter what the subject is.

Ted: Does every child have that?

Sandra: Not at the beginning, that's for sure. You see some people do it with the little ones at home before they ever get to school. But you have to work at that. I don't think they're all born with that curiosity. That is something you have to develop. They get so excited when they have an "I wonder" question, and when we get to the end of the unit their "I wonder" question has been answered. (December 16, 2009)

Sandra believes that the sense of curiosity can be nurtured in children. She thinks that teachers can cultivate it in children by modeling it, and then some students develop it and others learn from that. She also believes that every teacher needs good questioning skills. The goal is to

develop deeper thinkers. It does not happen easily and requires a lot of practice. She thinks about her own experience as a learner and remembers that, even though she was a very successful student, she struggled when it came to applying her learning to new situations. She does not remember having teachers model that or show her how to do that.

> *Sandra: It comes from lots of suggesting and discussion and oral conversation.*
>
> *Ted: So how did you develop those skills as a teacher? What tipped you off that was important.*
>
> *Sandra: You know, that is something that I came to by studying about it. About good questioning. After hearing about it and learning about it, it becomes a habit in the classroom. Every teacher needs to have that habit. Good questioning skills. Encouraging that deeper thinking. Some teachers ask the basic questions—the easy questions. So the kids can only go this far. They will never raise the bar to think outside the box. If they don't do that, they're not going to be there. I know it won't happen. I know they won't raise the bar if they can't answer questions like that.* (December 16, 2009)

Sandra reflects on her teacher training and realizes that there was not enough preparation for this basic skill of questioning because, she says, it takes a lot of practice. She understands that university courses focus more on the theoretical aspects of teaching, but she says it was later in her career that she realized the importance of good questioning. She reflects on her earlier approach to teaching, when she tended to ask the lower level questions. Those were easier, and children came up with the answers. It felt like successful teaching, but she does not think she started developing the habits of good questioning until she returned to teaching after being home raising children. She continues to work on the skill. It is not something that happens overnight for a teacher; it takes effort and practice. A teacher has to be conscious all the time. As a young teacher, she did not know how important it was. Like any new teacher, she was more concerned

with finding her way, getting used to curriculum, timetables and schedules, and children's personalities. She does not think questioning was on her mind and says that she did not know the value of questioning until later.

Good questioning became part of her practice as a result of professional reading and in-service training. Sandra believes that one's personal growth as a teacher is a professional responsibility. She believes that a teacher should be reflective about her practice on a daily, lesson-by-lesson basis. She continually needs to know what is working and what is not.

Sandra is concerned about the lives of the many children who do not engage very often in meaningful conversation. In working families and with the distractions of television, video games, sports programs, and other activities, there is scarce opportunity for conversation. Many children may not be fully developing the learning and social skills that help them as learners in school.

Sandra remembers some of her own junior high school teachers, who may have been somewhat ahead of their time when it came to teaching approaches. She remembers their enthusiasm and their use of the inquiry method to get students engaged. The inquiry approach was new then, and now Sandra sees it as a basic approach, even though some teachers may still be tied to texts and worksheets. It takes planning and more work than "spoon feeding" students if a teacher wants to create learning opportunities that draw the child in to discover. These learning opportunities lead to the development of thinking skills. A combination of experiences and good questions leads to learning. Sandra likes to use books to create the learning events that lead to deeper thinking. Through stories and asking questions, she leads children to be reflective. That is how the Grade 1 level becomes the start of engagement and internal learning.

Sandra likes to use story because she says it leads the young learners to develop imagination. Sandra's belief is that imagination is necessary for critical thinking. She wonders whether children are missing the opportunity to use their imagination in modern society. She is concerned that the Provincial Achievement Tests cause teachers to focus on getting students to give the answer rather than thinking how to get there. She wants young learners to be able to explain how they got to the answer. Sandra likes the approach of the new math curriculum because it encourages thinking. Flash cards are no longer good enough. There is also conversation and an invitation to think. Students are asked, "What did your brain do to get that answer?"

> *Sandra: Again, it's a lot of modeling and discussing. We talk and talk and talk. "I used my 10 frame." "I used my dot patterns." "I counted back." It's always, "Show me how you got that answer." It's always show, show, show.* (January 20, 2010)

Sandra's district is engaged in an Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI) project called Assessment for Learning (AFL). For her, the value of the approach is in letting students clearly know what the expectations are. She thinks back to her own school experience and remembers that trying to figure out what the teacher wanted was a puzzle. She does not remember the use of the word "criteria." She believes that AFL is about sharing criteria with the students so that they know ahead of time what it means to be successful. Presenting students with exemplars supports the process. She likes the fact that the playing field is even when all students know the criteria. If something is missing when they hand in the work, having pre-established the criteria for the work makes it easier to give feedback on what they need to do to improve. She thinks that has a lot to do with democracy in the classroom. There are no blind spots and students all have an equal opportunity to be successful. She reduces competition by assuring students that,

if they focus on the criteria, they can be successful. They are able to self-assess and peer-assess. She hopes that the approach will continue for the students as they move on to the following grades. This assessment approach works for all the disciplines, and Sandra wonders what it would be like if governments were to use the same approach to evaluate their policies and programs. Sandra referred to my research proposal, where she read that democratic education provides for "faith in the individual and collective capacity of people to create possibilities for resolving problems." (Apple & Beane, 2007)

> *Ted: So you have been in the same school and the same grade for 20 years. So what do you do to make yourself new? What is it?*
>
> *Sandra: I think it is looking for change. And when I see a suggestion that comes across, like this Assessment for Learning, I take a real good look at that and read about it and research about it. This is good for kids. I want to learn all that I can. I want to understand better my performance tasks, my rubrics, my self assessment for the kids—all the Assessment for Learning strategies that go on in the classroom. Now that's developing democracy in the classroom because kids know they have a chance. They know, when there is a task assigned, that we discuss the criteria. They know the word criteria. They can tell you what it is. They have seen exemplars.* (January 20, 2010)

Sandra worked her way through reading my research proposal and found much that resonated with her own thinking. She agrees that democratic education requires critical thinking, open-mindedness, and a sense of the common good. She likes the idea that learners be engaged in guided discussions of disadvantaged fellow human beings and issues of care for the planet. These are activities that are ongoing in her classroom. An important word for her is "engaged." Citizens are engaged in the democratic process. She wondered what six-year-old children can do. After reading about it and thinking about it, she became confident that there are things that they can do toward developing a global consciousness and also address injustices, starting right here

in the school.

Together, Sandra and I wondered whether society today has lost some of the sense of the common good because of a focus on individualism. There is some evidence that citizen engagement is waning. She wonders why that is, given that children can learn now as well as they did previously. She remembered her own experience as a child, when her parents helped others generously. She now realizes that they were poor back then, but she did not know it at the time.

Sandra was excited by the coincidence of the focus on global citizenship in the winter issue of the ATA Magazine. She found many of the articles connecting with this research and with her own thinking. She focused on a statement by Carol Henderson, President of the ATA, who says, "It is imperative that all of us work together to ensure that young people are equipped to participate fully in our world" (Henderson, 2009).

> *Sandra: So I went through a few examples of things that I thought we were doing that kind of fit with what she was saying here. These day-to-day experiences. Some of our social studies performance tasks that I've been able to develop. For example, our first one in term one is developing a class creed for how we want to see our class as it appears to others. The children had to come up with that themselves.*
>
> *Ted: You developed this prior to our conversation?*
>
> *Sandra: That's right. This was done in the fall. They had to think about it themselves and then participate in a think-pair-share. And then they shared it with a square, where they talked about everybody's ideas, and then they came up with their own little creed, which they wrote up. So I thought, that's all part of that global citizenship. This little room and then we work outward. Right now, they're working on a performance task on how we make our school a better place. So they had to come up with a good deed today. They were working in groups. They just did the first part, where they got with their group and*

brainstormed. They had seven or eight things that they were coming up with in the group. Then we went through this. I call this my democratic lion and we had to decide. They have to choose one thing from all the ideas. They listed their choices. "We could pick up our backpacks in the hallway to make sure the hallways are neat and clean." "We could pick up litter outside to make the playground attractive and to keep everyone safe on the playground." So they made this list of choices, and then they had to choose one. The group had to pick one, and they are going to act on that. So on Friday, they have to go out and carry out this task and then get back together and talk about how did you feel about what your group did to make the school a better place. They have to evaluate it all and take pictures.

Ted: And they are able to do this? Grade 1s?

Sandra: Yes. I helped a little bit with stories at the beginning—stories about helping, little books about things that we'd read—but they have to sit down and think about it. (January 20, 2010)

Sandra keeps the students engaged in various charities, but she tries to help them understand what is behind the needs. She wants them to know why some people might need clothing and the reason for the food bank. She wants them to move from the emotional level to an intellectual level of understanding. This was also something that she got from the Carol Henderson quote in the ATA Magazine.

This was at the time when the earthquake in Haiti was in the news. Sandra wanted her students to go beyond the emotional response and think about what they could do. One of the things they talked about was that they could pray for the people in Haiti. Sandra brought in the Beatitudes and they talked about what it means to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. Caring for others is part of the religion curriculum, so Sandra blends it in with part of the social studies curriculum. Sandra makes the connection between the faith dimension and democratic

citizenship and how bible stories teach us to care for one another. She helps students make connections between those stories and what is happening now in their own world. She does not want anyone, including her students, to be stopped by thinking, “What can I do? The problem is too big.” She wants her students to understand that, by each individual taking little steps, together we can make a big difference.

Sandra described a prayer project, which she came across in the Edmonton Journal; she is going to try with her students. The article suggested praying for someone for whom we might not normally pray. It is easier to pray for someone we care about. Sandra is going to have each student pray for someone who is not their favourite person. She is hoping that praying for a person like that may increase the possibility of forgiving that person. That person may be eventually seen as a good person and worthy of one’s prayers. She is hoping that this activity will change the relationship, creating a more positive attitude toward the person. She wants to engender better relationships and friendships by having her students look at humanity as a whole. Prayer may lead to positive action. Prayer is becoming a focus in the religion program, especially as Lent approaches.

Story Shapes Story: The Use of Children’s Literature

Sandra likes to use literature in her teaching. She found references to the value of literature in my proposal, where I drew on the work of Maxine Greene (1995). Sandra connected with the writings of Carol Henderson, who was a primary level teacher before being elected president of the ATA. Henderson discusses the use of stories in her classroom (Henderson, 2009). Sandra already had some of the books Henderson refers to, but also went on a search for other Henderson books.

Sandra has developed an activity around the fable *The Quiltmaker's Gift* by Jeff Brumbeau and Gail De Marken (2000). She says it is a beautiful book for children of all ages and that everyone should own it. I acquired a copy for myself. It is a story of generous quiltmaker, with magic in her fingers, who sews the most beautiful quilts in the world and then gives them away. When the quiltmaker finally agrees to make a quilt for a greedy king, but only under certain conditions, she causes him to undergo a change of heart from greed to kindness. Sandra's class were touched by the story, and the children decided that they would make their own quilt. Each student created a cloth square using a fabric marker to illustrate an act of kindness that they have done or someone has done for them. One of the students' mothers volunteered to sew the quilt together. The children wanted to give the quilt away and suggested the children's hospital or maybe a homeless person. Then they considered a raffle to raise money for Haiti. The children were excited to do something for someone. When we met on March 8, 2010, Sandra showed me the wonderful quilt that the students had made. The quilt had been raffled to raise money for Haiti, but the young boy who won the raffle wanted the quilt to be displayed in the school to remind them of the need for kindness.

Sandra has engaged her students in a project related to Martin Luther King Day, a federal holiday in the United States. She read parts of his story and described some of the circumstances of being black in America, such as being forced to ride at the back of the bus, or having limited access to restaurants, or being able to enter certain establishments only via entrances reserved for blacks. Her young learners were shocked by this. She explained to them that Martin Luther King is the only American other than George Washington to have a holiday named after him in the United Sates. She talked to them about Martin Luther King's goals of peace and equality. She

posted a poem based on King's famous "I Have a Dream" speech. Students brainstormed and created their own "I Have a Dream" statements about what they could do to make the world peaceful, equal, and fair. Each student selected one that they would work on and then later used their journals to share how it was going. Sandra found that they were able identify concrete actions that they had taken to help their dream come true.

Sandra shared the Treasured Behaviour Box with me. It provides an opportunity for students to write about an observation of an act of kindness done to either themselves or someone else. When they come in from recess, or on other occasions, they briefly describe what they saw or experienced. For example, one student wrote, "Kyle played with me when I was lonely." Another wrote, "Jason played safe on the playground." Sandra says that they have become quite good at observing kindnesses and, without fanfare, writing down what they saw and putting it in the Treasured Behaviour Box. At the end of the week, she reads out the statements, making sure everyone is included. She observed that it was especially meaningful for one child, who has been struggling with behaviour, when other children acknowledged his behaviour successes.

Sandra credits me with being an impetus for her to think about more activities that create a spirit of shared responsibility, and the coincidence of the ATA magazine issue around global citizenship has her energized.

Schools Provide More Than Book Knowledge

When asked about her mentors, Sandra credits Jesus and the teachings of the gospel. She also realizes that her mother was a powerful role model for her because her mother was always concerned for others, even when things were difficult. In the same way, Sandra hopes that her

students will develop values that will last them a lifetime. She wants them to have a sense of caring for fellow human beings, like Jesus had. Sandra is optimistic about the world. She feels that there is a shift occurring and that education has a huge role to play in making the world a better place. She acknowledges that family is very important in instilling values and that the school's role is to support the family. Schools provide more than book knowledge.

Sandra wonders about the current provincial testing regime. She prefers learners to be able to think creatively, to be able to explain why they know something. She believes in the new math curriculum, but objects to the timed math operations test. She says that it does not fit within the curriculum outcomes. To prepare students for the test, teachers must take time out of teaching to get the students to demonstrate math operations they have learned by rote. Nor does Sandra believe in multiple choice tests. To her, multiple choice testing is not good assessment. Assessment practices that enable children to know whether they can perform the task themselves are more powerful learning tools.

> *Sandra: "And now you have a chance. This is what you did well. You need to work on this and this is how. Go and practice again and do your changes. Bring it back." Isn't that the way it should be for the child, saying, "I now know that concept," not, "I only got 50%." We're onto something else tomorrow. We're here as teachers to teach them. To cover that concept and have them master it. At least as close as you can. You may not get everyone to excellent, but you want to get them to proficient, where they have mastered it to some degree. They practice and they practice. That is exactly what this theory is on Assessment for Learning. You practice until you are proficient.*
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> *Ted: And you have coaches because coaches are helpful.*
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> *Sandra: In the Olympics, when you get to the final rounds, you're not judged on your practices. Not your speed times a month ago. It's what you can do for your end product. It's the same thing with a hockey game. You don't penalize them because they were three*

goals behind in the first period. It is the same thing in Assessment for Learning—you evaluate the performance. Why would you keep a marks book of how they were doing in this particular outcome two weeks ago. And then a week ago. And now—"Oh, he's got it now. But he didn't get it two weeks ago so now I'll average all that together and now his mark is down here somewhere." Well no! Now he knows it. (February 8, 2010)

We talked about how Sandra's school year is going. She has fourteen boys and three girls in her class, and she says that it makes it an interesting dynamic. She once again referred to her relationship with me and this research and how it makes her think about activities that help her students grow as citizens. She comments again on her continuing project of the Treasured Behaviour Box. She hopes her students are learning how to be better problem solvers because of some of the strategies she is using. In the past, she has worked on lessons about good citizenship but is now more focused on it because of my research. She believes that, even if a teacher has taught as many years as she has, it is still possible to try new things. She wishes that there were more time for the teaching community to be more of a professional learning community. She would like more opportunities to share ideas and support with colleagues. We talked about how we might support struggling teachers. The professional association provides protection to ensure due process, but, perhaps, some teachers should be counselled out of teaching if they find it impossible to relate to children.

I asked Sandra what she thinks is the best part of teaching. For her, it is the "aha" moments that students experience when they get something. She says there are a lot of those moments teaching Grade 1. She described observing a student, who was a struggling reader, when she reached a new level of confidence in her reading skill.

Sandra: We're just studying penguins at the moment. They are so engaged in that topic, they don't realize that they are learning or working hard at something. She sat with the

little book today. I was doing something else with some other student, and I saw her reading along, and she was so interested in this little penguin. I think hers was the Little Rock Hopper, who is a really interesting little penguin. Anyway, she was reading along. She was doing so well, and I thought, this is awesome because next week we will be doing a different topic, but now she will have that confidence that grew from just this little study of her little penguins. We had been studying other books and on the computer. It was all going in there. That just turned her around. That's so neat. For me, that's the best part.

Ted: One of the things is that you have the eye to see it. Maybe some other teacher would not see what you just described. That takes a perceptive eye to see the subtle change that occurred. There is no measure, but yet you saw it. (February 8, 2010)

Parents Are Part of the Puzzle

When I asked her what she thinks of as the most difficult part of teaching, she hesitated and then talked about her encounters with some parents. She wishes that there was more opportunity to bring those parents along with her in what she is trying to accomplish.

Sandra: Occasionally there are parents that are discontented. You just want to sit down and parent them. "It's in your parenting..." I want to say, but lots of times it's in the politics. I'm only here for the good of everybody and I'm up 'til midnight. I'm not bragging, but this is my life—this is my career. I'm on the Internet. I'm looking for stories and ideas. Like when you came to me, I got excited because it was something I could put into practice a little bit better in my classroom, and so on. But I'll get a parent who will e-mail me and say, "Johnny has been coming home crying and saying that he is bored in the classroom." (February 8, 2010)

Sandra wonders whether it is television, video games, and the need for parents to continually entertain children that causes some children to look for the same kind of stimulation in the classroom.

Maybe as a first-year teacher, I would think I have to do something more to excite this

child. No. That's not the problem. You don't know how to say it to the parent exactly. I haven't got the right words. Some children confuse boredom with the need to make an effort. They tune out, they start to fidget. They are not engaged, where most other children are raising their hands, giving answers. There are some of these little guys that I've had over the years who do not stay engaged. They stay interested in a topic if it's something they like, but if it's another topic... For instance, we are studying maps of the world right now. If that's something that they're not immediately interested in, they're going to go home and say it was boring. It is not something they're interested in. I've had a few parents like that this year, and it's always been the same thing. (February 8, 2010)

Sandra would like parents of a child who struggles with attention to talk to her to offer suggestions of what might help engage the child. She would like the parents to support her by not so easily buying into the boredom comment. The conversation at home might be to encourage the importance of learning about maps and participating with the child in a discussion of the topic of learning that is being explored in the classroom.

Sandra: We change activities every five minutes. We have the smart board on. We have good literature going and group work and projects and Assessment for Learning. All kinds of neat things that I hope are fun for kids. I wonder how you can be bored. I feel sorry for some children. That's what they're saying now because, imagine as they go through the years and it becomes more of a lecture style of classroom where you sit and take notes and you listen to a teacher rather than how we engage them in primary. Usually it's a first-time parent. They don't know what school is really all about. (February 8, 2010)

Sandra has created a website for the parents and children. They can look at it every night, and she always has something different for them to do. She has links to activities. The math homework is posted with a list of all the criteria and outcomes so that parents know how it is connected to the curriculum. She publishes student work, so they can see whether their work was

posted. Sandra worries that sometimes parents support their children's claims of boredom before they have really understood what is happening in the classroom and what the children's responsibilities are. Eventually, some parents develop an understanding and admit that their child exhibits similar behaviour at home.

> *Well, these parents have said now, "We don't know what's happened in your class but things have completely changed around for him." I said, "I haven't changed anything I'm doing. It's how you're approaching the conversation at home."* (February 8, 2010)

Sandra accepts that relationships with the parents are part of the process of teaching and learning. There is often a communication gap and understanding between parent expectations and how teachers see teaching and learning. Work has to be done to bridge this gap because the interests of both teachers and parents are the children. Sandra continues to think about how she will work with parents to improve the level of understanding.

From Story to Action

Sandra has continued a number of projects with her students to address citizenship building beyond the quilt making project. After watching some videos, listening to a guest speakers, and reading articles in newspapers about initiatives others have taken to make the world a better place, her students are keen to take on projects of their own.

Sandra believes in using a hands-on learning style for children in this age group. After her students had read about a community that had cleaned up a neighbourhood park, Sandra created, during a noon-hour recess, a very messy mock-up of a playground on the class math table. When the children came in after recess, they were shocked by the mess on their math table. After their surprised questions, Sandra invited them into a problem-solving discussion on improving the neighbourhood. They created recycling bins, a walking trail with trees and

flowers, even a fish pond. They constructed little wooden benches and picnic tables out of scrap pieces of wood and made signs to keep the park safe. They worked in small groups to accomplish the tasks. They took before and after photographs and then wrote reflective pieces about what they had learned from the project. They remarked that, through problem-solving and working together, they can make a difference. Sandra hopes that the learning will carry over into their lives. She thinks such learning is long lasting and wishes that she could come up with projects like that more often.

Sandra continues to use literature, such as *Somebody Loves You, Mr. Hatch* by Eileen Spinelli, illustrated by Paul Yalowitz (1991). It revolves around a misplaced act of kindness that changes a lonely old man into a happy and generous person. Mr. Hatch receives a gift in the mail, a big box of chocolates. He cannot believe that there is anybody who admires him. He does not think anybody loves him. He has no friends; he is a recluse. After he receives this act of kindness, he becomes a changed person. He is so happy that there must be somebody who loves him that he starts showing kindness to everybody. He pays it forward by doing thoughtful acts of kindness to people whom he had previously ignored. Near the end of the story, however, the postman comes back and tells Mr. Hatch that the gift was given to him by mistake— it was intended for someone else and the postman had delivered it to the wrong house. Mr. Hatch reverts to his old self because he is so heartbroken, again thinking that he is not worthy, that no one loves him. However, by then, he had done many acts of kindness and had reached out into the community. He had revealed who he really is deep inside. People rally around him and throw him a party. He is loved after all. Sandra’s students love the story. She hopes that the story helps her students understand the changes that can come about when we treat people kindly.

> *We can change people by the way we treat them. They may have lots of things that have happened in their lives that have scarred them and put them in this little box. The more times you smile at that person, the more times you say, "How are you today," the more times you just do those little things for them, they're going to peel off those layers. You know that the goodness is going to come forth from them too.* (February 8, 2010)

Sandra is continually looking for good literature, including material that she finds online. One website, Storyline Online, is a site that has actors reading stories for children. She engages her students in conversations and written responses about the stories.

She is also preparing for the Lenten season, during which acts of kindness are a part of the religion curriculum. She will be using material suggested by the Religion Consultant to help build a mindset of forgiveness in her students. She wants to go deeper into the concept of forgiveness, beyond a quick "I'm sorry." She will be exploring what forgiveness is, why it is desirable, and what it might look like from a student's point of view. She will be using fiction stories to start them thinking. She is planning a project for which they will create little burlap crosses. On the back of their crosses, each student will put a sticky-note naming someone with whom they have had an unresolved conflict. Every day during Lent, they will pray for that person. She wants students to realize that everyone makes mistakes and wants them to accept people without judgment and criticism. She hopes that they will be able to make amends with those who have hurt them or whom they have hurt. Sandra hopes that, after praying for a person for 40 days, the students will experience a change of heart regarding that relationship.

Each day, they will also focus on one act of kindness that they can perform at home or at school to make life better for others. Sandra has created footsteps on the wall that form a path of the Lenten journey leading to Easter. On each footstep, she has written a suggestion for an act of kindness modeled on Jesus, each act being something that would change our hearts as we

symbolically walk in the desert during the 40 days of Lent. Students record their commitments to actions on little sunflower images, which they put in their binders every Monday. After 40 days, they will observe how they have changed their hearts in preparation for Easter. Sandra hopes that these small steps will add up to their becoming better people who care for others.

In groups, students are preparing win-win skits that demonstrate how to solve problems in a democratic way. They will be talking about making good choices that can make both parties to a conflict happy. Sandra has a couple of student teachers coming, and she hopes they will take on the project. She thinks that role play is a powerful way of enhancing learning.

Make the World a Better Place

Other stories that Sandra is working with are *Be Good to Eddie Lee* by Virginia Fleming (1993) and *Old Turtle* by Douglas Wood (1992). Sandra made a strong connection between *The Three Questions* by Jon Muth (2002) and my study of educating for democratic citizenship. She insisted that I read the book. This children's book is based on a story by Leo Tolstoy. I have since acquired my own copy. She will be using the book with her students. The three questions posed in the book are: When is the best time to do things? Who is the most important one? And What is the right thing to do?

Sandra uses the *Old Turtle* book (Wood, 1992), along with *The Three Questions* (Muth, 2002), to create activities that engage students in understanding the common good and what they can do towards it. *Old Turtle* celebrates the sacredness of life and the glory of God. The message promotes a deeper understanding of ourselves, the earth, and our relationship with all beings. In *The Three Questions*, the main character, Nikolai, discovers that the best time to do things is now, that the most important person is the one you are with, and the most important thing is to

do good for the one who is standing at your side.

Sandra finds that using the three questions is helpful in our day to day behaviour. It answers the question, “How I should be living my life?” She says that the questions are all you need and finds that her students relate well to these ideas. She engages in conversations with her students about how they can use their time, talents, and treasures for the common good. She says that, even at their young age, they understand the concept of the common good because they recognize what it means to help others get what they need. Living life may be complex, but these three questions are simple and very helpful. She thinks that every new teacher ought to have the book *The Three Questions.*

Sandra’s students know the words ”responsible citizen” and ”responsibility,” and they offer ideas like praying for someone, while also knowing that it takes action to back up their prayer. Many of them articulate simple actions of kindness, such as visiting someone who is sick, helping mom around the house, talking to someone who is sad, or showing someone how to draw a picture. As a class, they created an alphabetic poster of good actions that express good citizenship and right living. Using a camera, they are documenting acts of kindness and will use the photos to create a collage. With the help of their parents, students are searching newspapers for stories of altruistic behaviour and bringing them to class to be shared. Sandra feels that it is good that they are involving their parents in this project.

Sandra asks the students to write about what else they might be able to do to make the world a better place. She finds that they are able to generate a surprising number of ideas. The goal is to affect their ability to make choices in actual behaviour. Sandra knows that this is early in their development as good citizens, but she is a firm believer in starting young. Sandra uses an

Assessment for Learning tool called ”Exit Pass” to check on understanding of the concepts she has explored with them. This teaching tool asks students to write a short statement about their experience or understanding regarding their learning. She says that when she reads their statements she gets an indication of how their learning is progressing. She uses Exit Passes often in all the subjects that she teaches.

For Sandra, the Beatitudes are an important and powerful way to make a better democratic world. Sandra has reworded some of the ideas from the Beatitudes into simpler language and has used the rhythm of the Beatitudes to create statements that the children can relate to. The children work in pairs to draw images that represent these statements, and the artwork is displayed next to the statements. For example: “Give mercy to those who are happy, mercy will be given to them. When others are unkind in what they say or do, help me to forgive them before the day is through.” She reminds her students that the words and spirit of Jesus come from within each person and are reflected in how they treat each other. Sandra believes that the Beatitudes promote the common good.

Sandra conducts an Earth Club, which is open to all the students at the school. Her students are involved in an activity where they conduct surveys on energy conservation and water conservation. Students are involved in reading and writing about the environment and about how they can contribute to conservation and sustainability. They are creating pledge cards, on which they make a commitment to reduce their environmental footprint. As part of the Earth Club, the students wrote letters to the mayor expressing their appreciation of the purchase of hybrid buses that create less pollution. Sandra wants the students to understand that their opinion counts because they care about their future. She wants her students to be engaged in real issues

and to develop the habit of community involvement. Sandra is always looking for ways that students can participate in real life issues, not only reactively but also proactively. She wants them to learn how to express their voices. Earth Club meets once a week and, despite the fact that it is difficult to stay on top of issues, she would like to continue.

Sandra often repeats her belief that we have to start developing democratic citizenship at a young age, when the seeds are best planted. She says these attitudes are developed in everyday activities. Sandra believes that young children are able to internalize important concepts about why we are here on earth as human beings. She wants children to be able to use a value system right here, right now, in the way they behave at recess, in the school, and generally with each other and not wait until later when they have left school to take their places in the world. That is why the three questions proposed by Tolstoy (Muth, 2002) are important in the here and now. She had owned the book even before it was recommended by Carol Henderson of the ATA and before we entered into our conversation, but had not used it with her students. She had thought it might have been too philosophical and beyond the abilities of Grade 1 students to understand, but now she uses it every day.

> *Sandra: It's so perfect. I use it every day. I say, what's the right time? Oh, right now. Then their eyes go back on me and... And who's the important person? The one who is standing at my side. You know. If we could just remember that.*
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> *Ted: It is interesting, the insight you have now. Like that word philanthropy, or when you think about philosophy. It takes some effort on your part to be able to translate these ideas and engage students at their level. I think you've done a wonderful job. That is what we have to be doing in our education system—precisely what you're doing.*
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> *Sandra: You get tied into your resources and your curriculum. Of course you have to teach curriculum, but at some point you have to teach being a good person, and it doesn't*

have to come only through religion. It doesn't even have to come through being a Catholic school. These books aren't Catholic books that I use. (March 8, 2010)

Sandra realizes that the responsibility for educating for the common good must be part of education in all schools, but she feels fortunate to be in a Catholic school, where she is able to make links to gospel teachings and a faith experience. Sandra says that ideas about the common good are not grade specific; they are relevant to any grade. The literature she uses is about life skills that she wishes more adults would be in contact with.

Sandra believes that the curriculum is too extensive, that we have too much to teach in too little time, and that our school year is too fragmented. Although she is concerned about spending time away from her classroom, she realizes the necessity of professional development days and some of the other activities. However, she wishes that she could just teach. She says we could do with one less science unit, but she appreciates the new math curriculum, which focuses on developing understanding. She would like the social studies curriculum to allow for more emphasis on developing global citizenship. She also sees the need to move even further away from content-oriented curriculum to one with a focus on enabling students to think.

Student engagement is much more than keeping students busy. Sandra says it is putting the learning into the student's hands. A teacher might provide some tools, but it is really up to the student to use them. A learner's role is to be part of the learning process, not to just sit and absorb it from the teacher. The students must have input.

Assessment for Learning

Sandra's commitment to the AISI project in her district is evidenced by her enthusiasm when she talks about Assessment for Learning. She provided me with a written statement as well

as conversation articulating her practices in detail, supported by examples. Our conversation on April 14, 2010 focused almost entirely on what this innovation has meant to her teaching. Sandra makes a strong connection between AFL and democratic education. She wrote the following reflection, which she shared with me:

> *Historically, our Western education system has been very teacher-centred. Traditional approaches to instruction and assessment involve teaching some given material, and then, at the end of the teaching, evaluating who has and has not learned it. This summative form of assessment often evaluates virtually everything a student does and is done at the convenience of the teacher. There is no opportunity for improvement and it is more of "quality control" approach to learning.*
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> *There is an evident shift occurring now in our worldview of educating the child, involving the role of the teacher, and the relationship between and teacher and student. This shift places the attention on learning rather than teaching. The emphasis is on what the students are getting out of the process rather than on what teachers are putting into it.*
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> *We, as educators, are focusing on the idea that children are ready for learning at different rates, that children learn in different ways, and that children should be able to demonstrate their learning in many ways. Every child has the right to do well and deserves every opportunity to do so. Just as democracy offers freedom and choice, so do the best practices of Assessment for Learning.*
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> *Assessment for Learning is the process of seeking and interpreting evidence of learning by the students themselves and their teachers to decide where the learners are in their journey, where they need to go, and how best to get there. What learners say and do is observed and interpreted and judgments made about how the learning can be improved.* (April 14, 2010)

Sandra believes that it is important to share the learning outcomes of the lesson with students. She has been coaching some student teachers in her classroom. She tells them that teachers must always begin their lessons with an explanation to the students about the purpose of

the lesson. She posts the learning outcomes so that the students can see what they are focusing on today. She thinks that, if all teachers did that, it would help them to stay with the Program of Studies rather than with the resource they are using. Sandra likes to have a conversation with students, not only about what they learned but also about how they learned. Sandra requires that the students do frequent self-assessment. She shares the criteria required for success and then gives extensive feedback that supports, motivates, and enables students to improve.

> *With Assessment for Learning, there is nothing hidden from the students—no mysteries to their learning or of the pathways to success. Their targets are clear and visible. Their teacher and fellow students are along on the journey, pausing at appropriate check stops to assess their progress through effective feedback and to make adjustments, if necessary. It is democratic because it works for all children and especially helps those children who performed poorly in the traditional classrooms, where all learning was teacher-directed. We now expect all of our students to reach their own level of competence, and we endeavour to ensure that "doors remain open" for all students.* (April 14, 2010)

Sandra believes that this view of a student-centred system is the democratization of the classroom. Teacher and students are learning together. All contribute to the learning that is taking place, and all benefit from the learning. Teachers no longer see students for what they cannot do, but rather for what they can do. She is pleased that this is the new view of inclusive education. Its link to democracy is the value that we place on every individual child, along with the contribution that they make to the classroom and will make to society. Her district believes in the inclusive model of education; integrating this model with Assessment for Learning practices makes the learning even more powerful.

Sandra explains that, for effective learning to occur, learners must understand what they are trying to achieve—and they must want to achieve it. Learners are more committed to a task if

they have had some input into setting the criteria for assessing progress. Co-creating criteria with her students makes them part of the teaching/learning process. She helps students learn to use the language of assessment and become comfortable with putting it into practice. She wants students to know what the target is, through a given rubric based on the criteria set and through exemplars of the performance tasks. Throughout the task, the students pause to reflect on their work, having been given time to self-assess and peer-assess their work until they meet the criteria.

> *You don't stop the task when the period is over. You stop the task when you have completed all the criteria. If you haven't, you get it back and you practice and you try again and you improve your work. So yesterday we were doing some writing, so we co-created the criteria. Now the teacher has to make sure that what they want in the criteria goes in this list, but you give the children some opportunity for input as well. So the first thing that they came up with was capital letters and periods, which would be my last choice. So I say, "Okay that's good, that's important. What does it look like?" "A capital letter at the beginning and a period at the end." Then someone said "lively writing" because we've been talking a lot about putting in details. "What does that look like?" "Juicy words, million-dollar words, details that make pictures in my head, and we need a topic." Someone said, "Well, you should be an expert." "Don't pick something you don't know anything about because you won't get very far." Then I added a couple of things, like you need a good beginning and you need a good ending*. (April 14, 2010)

Before she expects the students to begin the task, Sandra gives them an example by modeling the exercise for them. They go through a sample piece and apply their criteria by having a conversation about how well the criteria have been met. Then they do their own writing. Sandra finds that they have become pretty skilful at being able to assess their own writing in light of the criteria, even though they are only Grade 1 level students. Completed performance tasks are collected in an Evidence of Learning portfolio and serve as a valuable document to demonstrate the child's progress. The portfolio binders are shared with parents from time to time.

Sandra is encouraged that more and more colleagues are becoming involved in the AFL initiative. She realizes that this approach is a big leap for many teachers, in that it takes more time because of the need for constant feedback. It may be easier just to mark things and put marks in the ledger and create an average for the report card. For a while, she felt that teachers were slow in getting on board, but this year she feels that there is a new momentum. Most of her colleagues are gathering Evidence of Learning portfolios, and children are learning how to create pieces of work to put into those portfolios. She is excited to see this development because she believes it is going to be much better for children. She says that, even though it might be more work for the teachers, support is available through the Alberta Assessment Consortium and in different places.

> *Yeah, it takes more because you have to sit with that child and give them the feedback, but that's where the fairness comes in. Why should they get a piece back where it says, "I'm sorry honey but you failed. And we're going on tomorrow to study something new. But you know, you tried your best." Well maybe not! Maybe he didn't. Maybe he needed more direction so that he could try again.* (April 14, 2010)

Student Engagement

Sandra has noticed that engagement is becoming the new "catch word" in education. There is an increasing awareness that we want to engage all of our learners. AFL involves pupils being active, which improves this engagement. She believes that attempting to take our students' needs for engagement into consideration is a true example of the democratization of education. The encouragement of life-long learning requires that students be skilled at applying what they know about their current learning to future events.

Sandra says that a classroom that encourages democratic behaviour should allow students

to demonstrate their learning in a variety of ways. All children do not learn in the same way, so they should not be required to show what they have learned in the same way. She has also noticed that “differentiated learning” is currently a buzz phrase in her district. The concept is not new. She says that, in fact, constructivist education has its roots as far back as John Dewey’s progressive education philosophy, and she recalls that Dewey espoused the link between education and democracy.

From her recent readings, Sandra is reminded that the basic tenet of constructivism is that students learn through doing rather than by observing. She explains her understanding of constructivism:

> *Students bring prior knowledge into a learning situation in which they must critique and re-evaluate their understanding of it. This process of interpretation, articulation, and re-evaluation is repeated until they can demonstrate their comprehension of the subject. Constructivism often utilizes collaboration and peer criticism as a way of provoking students to reach a new level of understanding. Active practice is the key of any constructivist lesson. To make an analogy, if you want to learn how to ride a bike, you don’t pick a book on bicycle theory—you get on the bike and practice it until you get it right. It is this repetition of practice and review that leads to the greatest retention of knowledge. This is the exact premise behind Assessment for Learning.* (April 14, 2010)

Sandra thinks that John Dewey would be amazed to see that, after almost a century, his philosophy of constructivism is finally being put into classrooms with the use of these contemporary assessment practices.

Sandra was recently invited by her district to an AISI conference to make a presentation about her work with Assessment for Learning. This was an indication that she is regarded as a quiet leader in her district. Even though she expressed her discomfort with speaking in front of her peers, she did so willingly because she believes in this kind of work so strongly. She is also

enthusiastic about another district professional development initiative, which is the exploration of differentiated instruction. She recognizes the direct link between Assessment for Learning and differentiated instruction. She applauds her district's longer-term support of this initiative, comparing it to the previous approach of new-flavour-of-the-moment professional development. She sees the benefit of this long-term commitment, along with the signs of change within this school year, because she knows that change of this magnitude does not happen overnight. She acknowledges the importance of central office consultants in keeping the momentum going. She worries about what will happen if budget cuts become a reality.

Sandra sees change occurring in education, even though the pace is very slow. She is disappointed that some teachers have not moved forward.

> *It's too bad because, when you learn those new things, you just practice a little bit and you see the benefits of it. Yeah, it takes a little bit of work at first to wrap your head around some of these things, but once you see the results from the kids, there is no question. You wonder how could we have done that 20 years ago. All rote learning, here's your test. That's it. Done. Next unit.* (May 17, 2010)

Sandra questions the current testing regime. She understands the need for accountability and that teachers should teach the Program of Studies, but she feels that focus on testing has gone too far. She wonders what we use the test results for and whether the children are really learning. Teaching students to be thinkers is important to her because our society needs more critical thinkers and creative thinkers. She wonders whether the children are engaged in the kind of at-home activities that help them become responsible citizens.

Sandra seems to be a teacher who is always looking for ways to improve. I questioned Sandra further about what continues to make her open to changing her practice.

> *I guess part of it has to do with personality. From the time I was little, I had to be ready*

> *to think on my feet, stand on my feet. We weren't a well-off family at all. My dad was out of work a lot, and there were nine of us, and I guess I just learned to be a survivor. You're always trying new things and trying different ways to figure out, because we didn't have money to buy new things. If something snapped on me, I had to figure out a way to get around that. So I was always ready to look at a new idea. And I think, too, that from the time I was five, I wanted to be a teacher, so it was teaching, and that still is what consumes me. It's not just that I stop at four o'clock. I love to do what I can at night to better what I do in the classroom. That has been a habit right from the beginning because I enjoy it so much. I couldn't believe you got paid for it at the beginning because I was having so much fun in that classroom. So maybe it was a bit of a selfish thing. In order to make it fun and interesting for the kids. That's what I thrived on as well, and that always kept me trying to change it up. Not just for the sake of change, either, because I was able to look at it critically as well.* (May 17, 2010)

When the "Whole Language" approach came along, Sandra adapted some of its principles into her teaching. Now, the Assessment for Learning approach has really resonated for her. There was a particular consultant who ignited the flame in her and in many others because the consultant modeled the approach. Sandra could not wait to try some of the methods in her own classroom.

Sandra believes that it is a combination of a predisposition and outside influence that enables teacher change, but she also thinks that teaching cannot just be a career; it has to be a passion. She is convinced that, for people to adopt change, they have to have passion for the job. She has often heard teachers say, "Oh, that's too much work." She encourages others to think that, if you do a little bit each day, eventually it blossoms, just like anything that grows. Change does not just happen.

The Year In Retrospect

Sandra says that this year has been a very interesting year of teaching. It started out as challenging because of the makeup of her class—a large number of boys, some special-needs children, and no support from a teacher assistant.

> *It's all here. It's been a challenge to try and teach because I have to stop and reword for this little guy because he has processing difficulties, and then I have to know what this little guy understands because his speech problems are so severe that when he writes something he writes the way he talks, so I have to know when I am reading his piece that this is what it means. I have to be kind of an interpreter for this little one. They are so individualized it's unbelievable, and behaviour on top of all that.* (May 17, 2010)

Sandra acknowledges that working on this project with me has made her realize what democracy means in her classroom. It has helped her think about incorporating activities that encourage cooperation and others that build citizenship. Thinking about educating for democratic citizenship has added another layer to her teaching, one that she says she has enjoyed. She has always had her students working on projects for the common good, but our conversations about my research have caused her to expand her thinking and introduce additional activities. She finds that even six- and seven-year-olds are capable of learning and communicating about how we can make a difference.

Her involvement in AFL has been rewarding, and she is getting much more deeply involved in differentiated instruction. She has done more professional reading. She uses activity centres more, especially literacy centres, for which she asked financial support from the parent association. Sandra speaks highly of the new math curriculum and the social studies curriculum, both of which are inquiry-based. Inquiry-based teaching presents some background and some skills, then lets students spend time thinking through problems with partners and small groups.

She thinks that the new science will also focus more on an inquiry-based approach. Sandra has been reading a book by John P. Miller (2010) about engaging the whole child.. Miller calls for more integrated approaches to learning that build community and foster relationships between school subjects and various forms of thinking.

Sandra often uses an approach called “mind mapping” and “think-pair-share, find a square.” She asks her students to record ideas they already have about a topic, then meet with a partner to add ideas, then do the same within a group of four. They may create a poster or some other expression of what they know. Sometimes she uses the activity at the beginning of the study of a topic and again at the end. This gives her information about how the learning is going for each student. Students often ask her, “Are we going to do mind mapping?” She finds this cooperative learning approach effective and believes that it can be used with any topic in any grade. Sandra says there are many teachers in the classroom. By this she means that students teach themselves and others through a cooperative learning setting.

Sandra has encouraged her students to engage in social justice issues around poverty and the environment. As a result of one of their projects being reported in the local paper, the class received a letter of congratulation from their Member of Parliament. She tries to develop awareness in the students that there are struggling families locally as well as far away. She believes that young children have the ability to empathize and have a keen interest in fairness. She feels that most children have a natural inclination to feel deeply and thinks that it is important to build on that, even when they are young, because they may gradually lose some of that enthusiasm. She hopes that some of the skills and attitudes they develop at this age will persist when they are adults. Sandra believes that democracy emerges out of a sense of

responsibility and feels that schools have a role to play. Some of that sense of responsibility emerges out of the curriculum, but some of it is the result of experiencing nurturing communities of care.

Sandra's hope is that the students will continue developing their sense of the common good in subsequent grades. She thinks it might be interesting to observe a class cohort all the way to Grade 12 to see how these habits grow over time. She believes that religious studies play an important part in developing the attitudes needed for a caring society, a democratic society. When I asked her whether she feels hopeful about how society is progressing, she said that we are on the cusp and that it could go either way. She is encouraged that the AISI projects are helping teachers move in a positive direction and, as far as she understands, every district in the province is engaged in teacher development. She finds it remarkable that the government has persisted in promoting teacher development for almost ten years, and she hopes that this will continue.

Chapter 8: Threads in the Stories

The narratives presented in this study are intended to stand alone, with the expectation that the reader will draw personal meaning from reading and reflecting upon them. In this chapter, I present my thoughts and reflections, with the help of some of the literature, as I interpret the stories of the participants through the particular lens of educating for democratic citizenship.

Eisner (1998), while acknowledging the value of theoretical knowledge, suggests that tacit knowledge is equally important in guiding teaching and learning.

> This new realization in education concerning the importance of tacit knowledge—new being a quarter of a century in length—has increasingly turned the attention of educational researchers to the use of narrative, such as teachers stories about teaching, as a way of understanding what teachers know when they act. (p. 208)

The threads woven in this inquiry create a loosely strung tapestry of the tacit knowledge of four practitioners who are creating humane and democratic classrooms.

There are stories of teachers in popular literature and some that have been made into movies and television presentations. These are interesting but seem to be beyond the life of most teachers in ordinary classrooms. My intention in this narrative inquiry is to present narratives, not by any means complete, but sufficient to allow teachers and policy makers to think about changes that are possible, even under the circumstances in which we find ourselves. My hope is that these narratives will invite us into a new discussion about the role of education in a democratic society. The work of Dewey is an important foundation in this conversation. “The challenges to democracy, education, and leadership in schools in today’s society present an important rationale for revisiting John Dewey’s philosophy of Democratic education” (Jenlink,

2009, p. xi).

What Shapes Us As Teachers?

The ideas that emerge in this chapter are not intended to be a recipe for what it takes to be a good teacher of democratic citizenship. Perhaps the most useful approach is for teachers to be self-aware of what it was like to be a learner, of how their own life experiences impacted their learning, of their own strengths and blind spots, and of how they position themselves as teachers. There are a number of theorists who link identity to teaching and learning. “Overall, we can say that identity is increasingly being seen as a crucial component in determining how teaching and learning are played out in schools and classrooms” (Clarke, 2009, p. 186). It may not be possible to be aware of everything that shapes us, but all four of us in this narrative inquiry acknowledged the impact of our life narratives upon our work as teachers. Clarke suggests that, “as socially oriented professionals whose work shapes the identities of our students, the case can be made that we all have an ethical obligation to reflect on our identities and engage to some degree in ‘identity work’” (p. 187).

Early Beginnings. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) remind us that, “in narrative thinking, temporality is a central feature” (p. 29). Thinking about our early beginnings from the present perspective helps us understand some things about ourselves as teachers and may help us enter into the world of young learners. Growing up on a farm in a Polish Catholic farming community in Alberta, attending a one-room rural school, later being bussed to a regionalized town school and, finally, attending a school in a large urban centre gave me a sense of inclusion and exclusion at different points in my early life.

Angela recalled the impact of her training to be a dancer at a young age and commented

on how that influenced her as a teacher later on. She knew from a young age that she was going to be a teacher and credits her mother with being a role model who encouraged a passion for learning. Sandra also saw her mother as a role model who also knew at a young age that she wanted to be a teacher. Both Angela and Sandra had nurturing roles with siblings during their years of growing up. Today, they see that as being part of what shaped them as teachers.

Bill and I shared the stories of our rural upbringings and discussed how that may have impacted us as teachers. We acknowledged how the sense of place, especially, shapes identity. Bill believed that his growing up as an adopted aboriginal child in a white family shaped how he thinks about identity when he works with his students. Greene (1995) helps us understand how thinking about our early beginnings and imagining our life narratives influences our work as teachers. In her view, "it is on that primordial ground that we recognize each other, that ground on which we are in direct touch with things and not separated from them by the conceptual lenses of constructs and theories" (p.75).

I do not believe that there are categories of life narratives that are necessary for effective teaching, but the stories we live by have impact. Self-awareness helps us see ourselves in relation with students and to see students in relation with us. "Social commentary and research are increasingly pointing to the narrative quality of lives, showing how the storying of the self is constantly being constructed" (Zembylas, 2003, p. 215).

Experiences as Learners. How we story ourselves as learners also shapes us to some degree as teachers. In this narrative inquiry, we participants story ourselves as successful learners—except for Bill, when he reflects upon the fact that he did not have relationships with teachers. I was a successful learner because I was able to memorize and succeed on the

examinations. Achieving honours standing was important to me. Looking back at my early teaching career, I was able to see that I bought into the traditional focus of teaching at the time—teaching subject matter and maintaining discipline. In time, I discovered that I was more comfortable as a teacher when I moved into teaching drama and religion. These subjects allowed for more interaction and relationship building.

Bill said that he wants to be a teacher who reaches out to learners. He attributed this to his negative high school experience. He wants to be more relational with his own students than he perceived his teachers to be when he was a high school student. Sandra was a successful learner, mostly because she was able to deliver what teachers asked of her. She was very comfortable in school and said that she believes she was able to meet requirements but cannot remember being challenged to be creative. She did mention some junior high school teachers who used the inquiry method in science. Sandra now believes that they were somewhat ahead of their time because now inquiry approaches are much more in vogue. Angela was a successful student in grade school but did not speak about her success as being remarkable. She spoke much more about her experiences of learning to dance and how those shaped her as a person and as a teacher.

University Education. It is interesting that the participants in this inquiry mentioned pre-service university experience, but we did not seem to find it as influential on our teaching approaches as might have been predicted. Many hold the view that teacher preparation programs should provide new teachers with all the skills and attributes that they will ever need to be effective. Eisner (1998) observes that “there are few subjects in the educational literature that have received more attention than the preparation of teachers” (p. 206). We view our life

experiences and teaching experiences as the most significant influences upon how we think about teaching and learning. Eisner (1998) also sees the schools as the most significant locale for teacher growth and development. “Universities provide the initiating conditions, but it is the school that can and ought to provide the long-term context for the development of teaching competence and the intellectual climate for teachers to grow as reflective professionals” (p. 212).

Angela completed a four-year degree in education in three years and was critical of the assessment tools used by one of her professors. Later, after a number of years in the principalship, she returned to university to complete her Master’s degree. Her thesis was a look back at her experiences as a principal.

Sandra started her teaching career after three years of university, taught for six years, was a stay-at-home mother for a number of years, completed her fourth year of her Education degree while at home, and re-entered teaching when her own children were of school age. She found the fourth year of university useful in re-introducing her to pedagogy but remarks that one of her most important skills, using questioning as pedagogy, came to her later in her career.

Bill did not speak of his undergraduate years as remarkable. He returned to university to complete his Master’s degree and, like Angela, his thesis emerged out of his teaching experiences.

My own teacher preparation did not feel very useful at the beginning of my career, but I intuitively understood that reconnecting with theory was important. I returned to university to complete a combined Arts and Education degree. Then, after four years of teaching, I took time out to complete a degree in Religious Education. I returned to classroom teaching for almost fifteen years before returning to university to achieve a Master’s degree in education. I used

action research to complete my thesis. I investigated my own experience of a change in pedagogy, wherein I introduced the use of computers into teaching English language Arts at the high school level.

Teaching Experiences. For all four of us, knowledge gained through teaching experience has shaped us as thinking practitioners. The tacit knowledge we have thus gained is influenced by theory encountered in professional development and at university, but it is the narratives of our experiences as teachers that seem to lead us into greater self-awareness of our professional practice. I think we know that "it must be recognized that learning to teach is a lifelong professional activity, not something that one completes in a teacher training program; teacher training programs provide an initiation into teaching, but not a culmination" (Eisner, 1998, p. 210).

My experience of isolation as a beginning teacher influenced my thinking about the need for better support systems for new teachers and the need for more collaborative experiences for all teachers. Teaching drama helped me appreciate how creativity and student engagement are an important part of teaching and learning. My years as a staff developer influenced my thinking about pedagogy and instructional leadership. My experiences as a principal reinforced my belief in the importance of building relationships with staff, parents, and students and how shared leadership helps nurture democracy in a school.

Angela's early teaching and role as consultant were building blocks of her practice as an administrator. Her experiences in inner city schools helped her understand the importance of building community and engaging parents in the school life of their children. It was also in inner city schools that she saw the need to involve elders and grandparents in supporting the mission of

the school. In the school she opened, where she had the freedom to experiment, Angela and her staff tried new things and learned from them. Among other things, children learned to articulate responsibility for their own learning and were able to articulate that to anyone who would ask. In her subsequent school, Angela and her staff investigated alternative student groupings, assessment approaches, and democratic pedagogies.

Bill's experience as a social studies teacher had him thinking about engaging students in learning that took them beyond the use of textbooks and beyond teaching to the test. He saw that building relationships was more significant to him as a teacher. He preferred teaching non-academic courses because they provided him with more opportunities to explore learning while in relation to each other rather than to content.

Sandra developed her questioning skills later in her practice. Earlier in her career, she tended to ask the lower level questions in Bloom's taxonomy, but she said that she now practices asking higher level questions that help students develop critical thinking skills. Her engagement in Assessment for Learning has her implementing a variety of assessment tools and investigating differentiated instructional approaches.

Clearly, teaching is more than a job for the four study participants. We were drawn to the work because there was something compelling about working with young learners. Our teaching became a life's work, shaped by a philosophy and a mission that gives direction to our lives. Maxine Greene (1995) views teaching lives as quest-driven narratives in the making.

Student Voice

In this narrative inquiry, each of the teacher participants expressed the need to develop and nurture student voice. The practice of providing genuine experiences provides students with

opportunities to express themselves, to have a say in their education, and to test their views in a safe environment where democratic skills of civic engagement are developed. The development of voice requires the accompanying development of deep listening. The teacher models listening and creates experiences wherein learners are encouraged to listen to the views of others. If there is no listening, there is no voice. Voice is an essential part of democracy. Learning to be a democratic citizen means, among other things, learning to use one's voice. Greene (1995) knows that many teachers have learned to listen to children.

> We can consciously do more to place children in speech and free writing situations in which they can find out what they think and why and what they see and how as they talk about it, write about it, and bring meaning into their worlds. (p. 54)

The participants all stated their belief that, in democratic societies, one intended function of our schools is to nurture democratically-inclined citizens. We were all aware of The Program Rationale and Philosophy in the mandated Social Studies Curriculum (Alberta Education, 2005), which captures the essence of democratic citizenship from the government's perspective. However, a curriculum statement alone is not enough to accomplish the goal of developing democratic citizens. Experiences and instruction are also necessary to develop the skills and attitudes of democratic citizenship (Apple & Beane, 2007; Ayers, 2001; Dewey, 1938).

> Allowing youngsters to tell their stories is one helpful activity; providing them access to a wide range of materials is another. We know we are successful when students are willing to forge their own next steps, when they face the future with some love, some indignation, and a lot of courage" (Ayers, 2001, p.137).

Our research conversations around student engagement and meaningful learning are supported by curriculum theorists who propose that the teacher's role in developing democratic citizenship is not merely to deliver a curriculum but to also engage learners in a curriculum of

life (Portelli & Vibert, 2001; Dewey, 1938). Teachers organize experiences for learners (Dewey, 1938). Dewey says that learning depends not only on the experience but also on the quality of the experience, both in how well it engages the learner and how well it prepares the learner for subsequent experiences. Dewey paraphrases Lincoln to express a philosophy of education based on a philosophy of experience: "One of education of, by, and for experience" (p. 29). Dewey's progressive education calls for a theory of experience based on democratic social arrangements. Experiences build upon each other, based on the principle of continuity of experience, and experiences foster continuing growth. Teachers have an important role in selecting the experiences and ordering them for the learner's growth. Teachers attempt to judge what is going on in the minds of learners and shape both the environing conditions of the experiences and the experiences that lead to growth.

A democratic curriculum includes not only what adults think is important but also the questions and concerns that young people have about themselves and their world. A democratic curriculum invites young people to shed the passive role of consumers of knowledge and assume the role of "meaning makers." It recognizes that people acquire knowledge by both studying external sources and engaging in complex activities that require them to construct their own knowledge (Apple & Beane, 2007). As deliberative democracy (Benhabib, 1996; Dryzek & Dunleavy, 2009) continues to develop, the activities that nurture student voice, as described by the participants in this inquiry, strengthen the possibility of their engagement as citizens.

Angela talked about the possibility that compliance on the part of students is not always a good thing. She wanted young learners to be given the opportunity to express their views and wanted adults around them to hear why they may be non-compliant. Do we as teachers want

compliance for our own comfort, and do we too often use the reason that we require compliance for safety and good order? Children need to know that they can influence what happens to them and that it is safe to express their wishes. Angela said that we need to teach students how to ethically express themselves, and they need to know that they can make a difference. They become democratic citizens in the act of exercising voice in meaningful ways. Learners must have a say about their own learning and about the workings of the community in which they live.

One example Angela gave is the debate about whether to ban electronic devices in school. Is this an opportunity to allow young learners to help us understand how best to respond to the challenge and find ways to democratically arrive at a responsible use policy? Young learners become democratic citizens through the practice of real involvement in issues that are important to them. Later in life, the sense that we can influence what happens in our world may translate into engaged democratic citizenship.

Bill preferred working with non-academic classes because, he said, they offer the opportunity to have conversations and to be real. Bill found that sometimes the focus on results thwarted student engagement in the process of learning and building community. He believed that young learners are looking for relationships and care from their teachers. He felt that it is important for youth to establish their own voice and identity. He placed a lot of importance on honouring story and a sense of place. Teachers must be in relationship with young learners and make space for conversation.

Sandra believed that preparing democratic citizens begins at a very young age. Learners must believe that they have a chance to be successful. Too often, young learners are given the message that they do not measure up and that they likely never will. These learners become

discouraged at a very young age. Learners must have a sense that they have control over their learning and that it is possible to accomplish difficult learning tasks. Sandra accomplished this through powerful assessment and self-assessment techniques and differentiated approaches to learning. Children understand what the learning goals are and are given time to practice and improve. Sandra engaged her young learners in problem solving approaches in a climate of care and patience.

Relationships

Each of the participants in this study, in one way or another, commented on the relational aspect of their teaching. We all expressed our belief that relationships build communities and that relational communities are fundamental to democracy. Beginning with Dewey, there is a thread in the teaching and learning literature about the importance of building positive relationships between learners and teachers. Sergiovanni (1994), commenting on a study exploring school improvement, suggests that all problematic issues are related to relationships. "Most often mentioned were relationships between teachers and students. Where positive things about the schools were noted, they usually involve reports of individuals who care, listen, understand, respect others and are honest, open and sensitive" (p.18). There is variety in what the relationships may look like, but relationship building moves the role of the teacher from a dispassionate conduit of information (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) to a personal engagement of learners in meaningful ways (Ayers, 2001; Dewey, 1938; Eisner, 1998; Greene, 1995; Noddings, 2003). Dewey (1903) makes a powerful link between our basic humanity and education:

> In education meet the three most powerful motives of human activity. Here are found sympathy and affection, the going out of the emotions to the most appealing and the most rewarding object of love—a little child. Here is found also the flowering of the social and

> institutional motive, interest in the welfare of society and in its progress and reform by the surest and shortest means. Here, too, is found the intellectual and scientific motive, the interest in knowledge, in scholarship, in truth for its own sake, unhampered and unmixed with any alien ideal. (p.269)

Many educational theorists have presented the case for understanding the delicate human interaction between teacher and learner. Safe relational communities provide the opportunity for taking risks as learners and "the relationship associated with the learning is an inextricable part of what is learned" (Johnston, 2004, p.65). The interaction enhances the learning experience and advances growth into democratic citizenship.

> The most important component in the work of constructing democracy at school is to creatively engage in human relations, bravely facing the game of power in which students, teachers, and others participate, creating and re-creating critically, step-by-step, the means that support relations aimed at autonomy and reciprocity and, at the same time, neutralizing the ones that produce loneliness and submission. (Fleuri, 2008, p. 116)

The teacher's role in the relationship goes beyond an emotional response of friendship and care to something Hanson (2008) calls intellectual and moral attentiveness. "Intellectual attentiveness entails closeness to students' responses to subject matter. Moral attentiveness involves closeness to students' responses to opportunities to grow as persons" (p. 29).

Bill often talked about entering into conversation with his students and being in relationship with them. He talked about his own high school experience and the lack of relationship with his teachers, and he said that those experiences have made him conscious of relationships with his students. He believed that being in relationship with learners creates a learning atmosphere. Bill worked at establishing relationships with colleagues as well as with students, parents, and elders. Bill said that the best skill a teacher can have is being able to make

space for conversation. Everyone in the circle should have a say. This is how we create a spirit of democracy.

Angela also believed that a teacher's mission is more than delivering a curriculum. Teachers must make space for conversation. Learners need a safe space where they can express themselves, and teachers create the relational conditions for student voices to be heard. This also resonates with Hanson's (2008) call for attentiveness on the part of teachers:

> Students are the persons who stand before the teacher. In one way or another, each is a unique and unprecedented human being. Each student has witnessed, heard, and learned things nobody else has. Each incarnates a distinctive and evolving set of capacities, inclinations, dispositions, and attitudes. (p. 26)

Sandra believed that the relationships experienced by learners at a very young age help to shape them as democratic citizens. Many of the activities in her classroom were designed to create a caring community. She nurtured empathy and compassion in her Grade 1 students. She had them thinking about community, which is not only about taking responsibility for those less fortunate in the world but also about getting along with each other in the classroom and in the school.

Fairness

Fairness was an underlying idea in many of the topics that the participants and I discussed in our research conversations. In my own narrative, I recalled instances where I witnessed unfair treatment of fellow students and had feelings of resentment. In my work as a principal, I devoted a lot of energy to developing a sense of fair play among students and encouraging fair treatment of students by staff.

Sandra's approach to teaching young children resonates to some extent with Vivian

Paley’s pedagogy of fairness. Cooper (2009), in her analysis of Paley’s work, expands upon the idea of fairness in democratic classrooms. Cooper draws a link between pedagogy of meaning and pedagogy of fairness. When Sandra talked about students believing that they have a chance, she meant that each student must have a sense that they are able to do the work and that they have not been pigeonholed into a deficit mold. Within Sandra’s belief in a variety of assessment approaches and differentiated instruction, her intention was to give every student an opportunity to succeed. “A pedagogy of fairness, while obviously not external to the curriculum, concentrates on relational matters that influence the teacher’s sense of moral purpose in the classroom” (Cooper, p. 96). Sandra’s belief that the development of democratic sensibilities begins in young children is supported by Paley and Cooper. Sandra understood “the indifference to the sensitivity of this period in terms of young children’s separation from home and mother’s lap, and the purpose and potential of early schooling in a democratic society” (p. 96).

When Angela talked about giving students voice, and when she thought about why some students seem noncompliant, she was thinking about fairness. When she spoke about the possibility of students’ encountering, over a school career, some teachers who were not as capable as others, she remarked that this was unfair. She did not believe that, for young learners, school should be a lottery. When Angela spoke of an evaluation system that is based on the deficit model, she worried about the fairness of such a system. All of us had questions about the fairness of mandated testing at the provincial level; to us, it seemed to result in the creation of winners and losers.

Bill also spoke about the possibility of school being unfair for aboriginal youth or children coming from circumstances of disadvantage. When he spoke of the formation of the

student group called the queens and kings and having their meetings in the school board room, he was talking about fairness. Bill worked at establishing a culture of confidence among aboriginal youth so that they could participate in all the things that youth coming from the majority culture have access to.

Lundy (2008) writes about teaching fairly in an unfair world. Among other things, she suggests that, as teachers, “we need to be aware of our own privilege and power, really listening to what our students are telling us about who they are and how they learn best, and use appropriate teaching techniques” (p. 14).

Working Within the System

In my conversation with Bill about “fighting the system” or working “within the system,” we agreed that it is less exhausting to do what one can within the system. The four participants in this study have all worked within the system for a long time. We all had hopes for change and did what we could under the existing structures. The question remains whether real change occurs incrementally at a slow pace or whether it is necessary that some fundamental shifts occur in both the purpose and structure of education before real change can be realized. Barth (1990) sees schools improving from within.

> To be sure, finding ways to comply with the needs and goals of the larger organization is important to the survival of the organization and to each of us who is a part of it. But developing ways to foster the elements of teachers’ and principals’ personal visions is a full-hearted, badly needed form of school improvement. (p. 178)

On the other hand, Eisner (1998) believes that “improvement of teaching is not likely to occur unless the conditions of schooling change” (p. 204). He goes on to say that “the mission of those who wish to improve teaching must include the creation of schools that make fostering the

growth of teachers almost as important as fostering the growth of students" (p. 205). He names five dimensions that need major change. "These five dimensions are called the *intentional*, the *structural*, the *curricular*, the *pedagogical*, and the *evaluative*" (p. 213).

The four of us teacher participants found ways to change our practice or influence change by continuing to grow as practitioners. All of us experienced growth in partnership with others and encounters with professional research literature. Our narratives reflected moments of disappointment or criticism, but we all expressed hope for the future. It is not likely that we will experience major system-wide restructuring in Alberta in the near future. Our hope is that, as teacher expertise and professionalism increases, as research continues to inform us about the schools that children need, and as attitudes change regarding the purpose of education, change will gradually occur in the face of inertia. Those of us who advocate for change will continue to do so. There may be some opportunity for change following upon the several years of consultation with various stakeholders in Alberta by the previous Minister of Education, a proposed new Education Act, a new Premier, and a new Minister of Education. The Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI), funded by the Alberta government, has been in place for almost a decade. This signals a commitment to teacher development, one that we hope will continue and expand.

The Arts

The four teacher participants in this narrative inquiry all spoke of the impact of the arts in democratic education. I came from a drama background, Angela started with a background in dance, Sandra had an attachment to children's literature, and Bill spoke about the student-produced art he had been given and how important visual art could be for youth to express

themselves. We all saw the value of arts in education and worried about the lack of opportunities for children to engage in the arts. The arts are a way of developing important aspects of our humanity that may be lost in an emphasis on academic subjects. Dewey speaks of the importance of experiences for learners and, like Greene (1995), sees the possibility that encounters with the arts would help us to break with the mechanical and the routine.

My years as a drama teacher reinforced my belief that the engagement of students in drama helped many of them develop confidence in themselves as well as the skills of presentation and performance. I believed that drama broadens understanding and is a vehicle to experience ideas and persons from different worlds. Lundy (2008) captures the value of drama in the following comment:

> I am interested in working with students from the inside out. I want them to understand human relationships, power dynamics, multiple perspectives, complex ideas, and intense feelings by imagining themselves in other people's shoes for a while—thinking, feeling, speaking, writing, drawing, and moving as if they were another person in another time and place. (p. 53)

By means of the student assemblies I conducted as principal to provide teachers with common planning time, I often used student-led role play to help illuminate social skills and community responsibilities. In the same school, when we were implementing teaching to multiple intelligences, we brought in artists-in-residence for music and visual art. I believed then and continue to believe now that the arts should have a more prominent place in student learning.

Angela regarded her experience as a dancer as a special time in her life and believed that it had impact on her as a person and teacher. She believed that the artistic experience can be beneficial to all children. Sandra’s love of literature inspired her to use story with her children to explore the ethic of care, social justice, and community values. Of course, as well as these civic

values, through response to story, she helped learners develop skills of reading, writing, and critical thinking.

Individual Strands

From Ted's narrative—teacher isolation. When I look back at my story and the comment that I made about teaching being a lonely affair, I realize that I am not the first to have felt that, nor will I be the last. Teacher isolation is well documented in the literature. Eisner (1998) believes that teacher isolation is one of the factors that thwart school reform. "The result of professional isolation is the difficulty that teachers encounter in learning what they themselves do in their own classrooms when they teach" (p. 160). Buchen (2004) refers to the teacher as "the Lone Ranger" because "the structure of the school and the tyranny of time, place, and workload provide little opportunity to reflect individually or interact with other professionals" (p. 35). He laments that teachers are part of the problem because many prefer being Lone Rangers. Barth (1990) calls for collegiality as a major means of school improvement. "Unless adults talk with one another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change" (p. 32). He believes that teachers and principals long for more collegial interaction. "I do not think that teachers and principals really like to work the greater part of each day swamped by students and isolated from adults, secluded in what one teacher called 'our adjoining caves'" (p. 33).

At the beginning of my career, I may have felt isolated, but I did not expect that this could be any different. Later, in my work as staff developer and as a principal, I worked at developing collegiality and collaboration among teachers. The other participants in this narrative inquiry also spoke of the need for teacher collaboration.

From Bill's narrative—looking sideways. When Bill spoke of seeing things sideways,

it reminded me of the work of Catherine Bateson (1994), where she explores what it means to pay attention, and of the role of peripheral vision. Attention is not something we fully control. Bateson compared the difference between attention in women and attention in men. She said that men are more focussed because of their traditional roles of hunting and warfare, while women have always had to attend to a multiplicity of tasks. She contended that, in the modern world, both the skills to attend to one thing and the skills to attend to more than one thing at a time are necessary for both men and women. In tribal societies, the division of labour required different kinds of attention from men and women but, as our society moves toward increasing specialization, men and women are forced to focus on single activities.

There are reasons why more peripheral vision is necessary. It offers more opportunity to attend to a complex society. We may see that single-mindedness can be destructive when we think about the western ethic of financial success, which drives our institutions, including our schools. When Bill looked sideways, he was looking beyond the obvious and beyond what was perceived as given, especially when he was working with aboriginal youth.

Attending to the world requires both focus and peripheral vision, both of which we develop as we grow. It is interesting that inattention can also be a learned skill, reinforced by repetitive instructions to a child by a parent or a teacher. Teachers must come to understand the growing body of brain research that explains phenomena like attention. We expect children to pay attention, yet the brain is designed to discard irrelevant stimuli almost instantly. In the school where I served as principal, we tried to educate ourselves as teachers about current brain research and theory, such as Gardner's (1993) theory of multiple intelligences. We tried to develop learning activities that were more faithful to natural human learning. It was not easy, and it

became a long-term plan for change. The barriers of provincial achievement testing and other curricular restraints challenged us.

In some of our conversations, Bill and I shared a vision of democratic education that involves teaching and learning activities that go beyond preparing students for the world of work and consumerism. Humans are spiritual, social, intellectual, and physical beings with a tremendous variety of learning attributes. It may be impossible to attend to all the complexity; however, we cannot ignore learning needs.

I agree with Bateson (1994) when she posits that our current obsession with paying attention to educational goals in service of the marketplace may be at the cost of riding roughshod over the needs of other human beings, the environment, or our social systems. Bill looked sideways to be attentive to deeper meanings that may seem peripheral to those who set the educational agenda.

Bateson (1994) expresses the meaning of attention as being present and she links presence with care. She calls for learning a deeper noticing of the world. “We need a broader vision, to match the world in which we act with an image that includes the forest and the trees, the baby and the bathwater” (p. 110). Democratic education requires attentiveness on the part of educators. This attentiveness involves both singular focus and peripheral vision.

When Bill said that the best skill that a democratic teacher has is making space for students to have real conversation, he implied that he would like teachers to listen more and talk less so that student voices are heard. Because teachers feel the pressure of covering the full curriculum within a time-based school year, they are not able to take enough time to consider other important things, such as what is going on in the lives of children. “Life’s narratives are the

context for making meaning of school situations" (Connolly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 27).

From Angela's narrative—a culture of blame. Angela spoke about the culture of blame in one the schools in which she worked. In their study of children's and teacher's experiences in schools, Clandinin et al. (2006), in the complex interplay of stories, caution themselves and the readers of these stories against laying blame. "Blaming, we see, is another way of deflecting attention from the complexity of people's lives and, in doing so, making them invisible" (p. 169). Like Angela, I have often encountered blame in my experience in education and have probably engaged in some blaming myself. It easy to blame the children or their parents or the socioeconomic conditions or other influencing factors. Blaming rarely makes things better. Unfortunately, while it seems that there are some researchers and teachers who see the stories of children, there are policy makers and governments that prefer categorizations. "Describing dropouts as helpless, trouble making, incipient welfare recipients, or delinquents shifts attention away from the educational institutions from which these youth flee" (Fine & Rosenberg, 1983, p. 257).

From Sandra's narrative—faith and democracy. Sandra made the connection between faith and democracy when she focused, with her students, on the call to care for each other. The Beatitudes are part of the religion program, and Sandra blended the reflection upon them with the social studies program. She saw the teachings of the Bible as connected to the role of democratic citizenship. She saw prayer for the good of others as creating a sense of responsibility for fellow human beings. When Sandra spoke of kindness and how she worked with her students to develop a sense of care for each other, I am reminded of the comment made by William Ayers (1993) about a teacher he knows:

> Mara Sapon-Shevin (1990), an exemplary teacher, argues that the central organizing goal in our schools should be the creation of communities of care and compassion. She has in mind building classrooms that honor learners as whole people, and teachers as moral agents. (p. 64)

My belief in the fundamental dignity of the human person and my concern for social justice both emerged out of my Christian faith. Sandra and I shared the understanding that, while we live in a secular and pluralistic society, our faith experiences and our moral upbringing inform our engagement in society. For us, there is no contradiction between living in a secular democratic society and living a Christian lifestyle.

Rolheiser (2006) contends that "the values of individual freedom, democracy, equality of opportunity, and respect for others, lie largely in the Judeo-Christian scriptures. It is no accident that these values have arisen so strongly out of Western Judeo-Christian culture" (p. 28). Christianity has a role in secular society. "One of the most important things that Christianity has to say to secular culture is that real community is possible and that real community is living, working, and worshiping with those were different from us" (p. 79).

The existence of two dimensions of public education in Alberta, i.e., a public secular school system and a separate denominational system, is healthy because the two systems make each other better. The Catholic school system is able to freely engage the whole person, including the spiritual dimension, and this challenges the public system to account for that dimension of the human person without favouring any particular denomination. The secular system reminds us that diversity and choice are important. In this study, two of us were from Catholic systems and two from public systems. Angela referred to the need for learners to engage in moral decision-making without naming a particular religion, and Bill often spoke about

aboriginal spirituality. All four of us stated that we are committed to the spirit of democracy.

Final Thoughts

Upon rereading the narratives, I saw some common threads, which I have commented on in this chapter. I did not use a specific analytical methodology to elicit the threads beyond thinking about what I heard. I have also commented on some individual strands that caught my interest. I am sure that there are other threads and strands worth exploring. Narrative inquiry is a continuous process of telling, retelling, and reliving. This chapter has elements of a retelling, after the experiences of research conversations, field texts, and composition of the research texts. I also made connections to the literature where it made sense to me. The threads and strands all invite further reflection and conversation.

I am pleased to find that the threads that have emerged speak to the questions I posed in Chapter 1. All the research participants saw democracy as more than a form of government and believed that teachers and schools have an important role in developing democratic citizens. We all agreed that democracy is a spirit nurtured through lived experience and that there is a deep connection to a curriculum for life that encompasses a sense of the common good. Encouraging student voice and a sense of agency on the part of learners is an important part of the teachers work.

We all told powerful stories of what shaped us as teachers beyond our formal university training. The lived curriculum is something that we all shaped beyond the written curriculum and, even though we expressed disappointment with some features of the current curriculum, accountability structures, and testing regimes, we found ways to work within the system. We all demonstrated a sense of hope for a better future.

Chapter 9: Towards a Theory of Educating for Democratic Citizenship

> *The very idea of democracy, the meaning of democracy, must be continually explored afresh; it has to be constantly rediscovered, remade and re-organized; while the political and economic and social institutions in which it is embodied have to be remade and re-organized to meet the changes that are going on in the development of new needs on the part of human beings and new resources for satisfying those needs.* (Dewey in Jenlink, 2009, p. 293)

This chapter emerges from reflections upon the whole journey that I undertook in this narrative inquiry. Once again, there are elements of a retelling. My early chapters are a narrative of how I came to the question, my journey through the literature, and my journey to arrive at narrative inquiry as my methodology. This dissertation is a story of movement from some awakeness on my part, to observing the need to enhance our democratic ways of being, to wider awakeness. The theorizing in this chapter is based on ideas that emerge out of the whole experience of course work, literature review, and the encounter with the participants. Links to the literature in this chapter could just as easily appear in the literature review, but the following is literature I either revisited or newly encountered during or after the research conversations and writing.

Education and Democracy

The narratives in this study tell me that we can do better, both in improving the methods we use to educate for democracy and in improving the quality of democracy in Canada and elsewhere. All four participants in this inquiry believed that democratic education involves developing the whole child in preparation for a future beyond merely becoming a worker or consumer. We were concerned that the curriculum is overcrowded because schools are

attempting to "cover" every aspect of preparation for what we hope will become the educated person in current society. Osborne (2001) tells us that "policy-makers in education now think in terms of producing workers, not citizens, of retooling Canadian schools so as to produce the kind of work-force that will guarantee success in the new global economy" (p. 40). Not only do we have the usual core subjects, such as language arts, mathematics, social studies, and sciences, but we have also added subjects in the arts, physical education, nutrition, computer literacy, languages, character education, drug use prevention, anti-bullying, and the list goes on. It is not likely that we will soon abandon the multiple-subject approach in our present school systems, so, rather than adding democratic citizenship education, we should encourage all teachers in all subjects to consider "moral, social, emotional, and aesthetic questions with respect and sensitivity when they arise" (Noddings, 2005, p. 5). The participants in this narrative inquiry found ways to build these questions into their work in the interest of whole person education. My narrative speaks to the importance of the arts in education. When I was a leader in a school, my interest in multiple intelligences was in the spirit of whole child education. Angela, among other things, found that the development of critical thinkers with a voice was important to her. A key feature of Bill's view of education was the importance of relationship building. Sandra built a moral dimension into her work with Grade 1 students.

Democratic citizenship has been, and still is, a part of the social studies curriculum in Alberta and elsewhere (Alberta Education, 2005). Educating for democracy must go beyond specific courses to approaches that address the whole child and the whole school (Apple & Beane, 2007). Teaching the spirit of democracy becomes a priority for everyone involved in education, especially teachers (Apple & Beane, 2007; Goodlad et al., 2004). Every curricular

subject should have elements of democratic education in both content and approach. The majority of Canadians support public schools in Canada, both financially and by parents choosing public schools. In most cases, democratic citizenship is a stated educational goal (Alberta Education, 2005). Two dilemmas arise: in practice, schools are undemocratic; and schools perpetuate social inequality (Osborne, 2001, p.48). How can teachers teach democratic values without appearing hypocritical to youth? My hope for this narrative inquiry is that these stories of teachers attempting to overcome these dilemmas will move other teachers to action.

The growth of democratic education will be gradual. Teachers will lead through their commitment and moral purpose. Freeman (2005) reminds us that, through past iterations of the factory model of education,

> It was the teachers, both women and men, who, through their simple humanity, bridged the seemingly unbridgeable gulf between factory and womb. It was the teachers who birthed generation after generation of productive workers AND thoughtful human beings. It was they who may have saved society itself from destruction at the hands of its own ideational schizophrenia. (p. 2)

Teachers may need more pre-service and in-service support in curricular and pedagogical approaches to teaching for democratic citizenship. Like the participants whose narratives I have presented, most teachers enter the profession with hope and with the desire to make a difference for children. In the face of the demands and constraints of the accountability and marketplace narrative, teachers will gently but persistently voice the hope of the democratic narrative. Giroux (2003) tells us that “hope is the refusal to stand still in the face of human suffering, and it is learned by example, inflamed by the passion for a better life, and undertaken as an example of civic courage” (p. 43). In the post 9/11 climate, where democratic freedom is under strain, Giroux calls for a new language of social action. “Americans need new theoretical tools—a new

language—for linking hope, democracy, education and the demands of a more fully realized democracy" (p. 42).

The marketplace narrative in education must be balanced by the democratic narrative. Giroux (2005) tells us that, as "the laws of the marketplace take precedence over the laws of the state as guardians of the public good, the government offers little help in mediating the interface between the advance of capital and its rapacious commercial interests" (p. 88). He worries that

> [as] neoliberal ideology and corporate culture expand, there is a diminishing of non-commodified public spheres—those institutions such as public schools, independent bookstores, churches, non-commercial public broadcasting stations, libraries, trade unions, and various voluntary institutions engaged in dialogue, education and learning—that address the relationship of the individual to public life, foster social responsibility, and provide a robust vehicle for public participation and democratic citizenship. (p. 89)

All four participants in this study expressed concern that the focus on provincial testing drives curriculum and pedagogy in ways that hinder meaningful student learning. The current obsession with accountability in education in the service of the marketplace narrative may be disheartening to many teachers, but there is hope, in that a discussion about democratic education is occurring in some circles. There is discussion here at the University of Alberta, and some Alberta curriculum materials indicate that discussion may also be happening in classrooms (Alberta Education, 2005).

Through this narrative inquiry, I have relayed the stories of specific teachers who attempted to teach for democratic citizenship. I believe that change is possible if research into democratic education continues, if teacher preparation and in-service refocuses on democratic education, and if discussion about the purposes of education gains more widespread public attention. Educating for democratic citizenship deserves attention and focus as our human

society moves forward. Growing our democracy, both in Canada and elsewhere, requires the efforts of citizens and institutions beyond the schools. The conversation about the meaning and structures of democracy must continue whenever and wherever possible.

The role of teachers in educating for democratic citizenship is significant and worthy of study. Teaching and learning has grown in complexity, and each generation of teachers engages anew with ever-changing theory and practice in the educational endeavour. “Teaching is complex work. It is more intellectually challenging and emotionally demanding than most people appreciate” (Ungerleider, 2003, p.295).

Teacher Development

All of us participants in this study thought about how we became the teachers that we are. Our pre-service university education introduced us to the profession, but it was a combination of professional development events, professional reading, teaching experience, and thoughtful reflection that brought us to an awakened sense of our practice. We all expressed the opinion that there is a need for more opportunities for teacher learning. To enhance both teacher preparation and the professional development of practicing teachers requires continuous exploration. School systems have gone through various cycles of school improvement during the last several decades and, although we have learned many things, we have not arrived at perfect processes for teacher preparation or teacher development. Pedagogy is a complex mixture of instructional techniques and professional judgment calls.

> We see pedagogy, for instance, in the nuances of the teacher’s questioning techniques, in the manner in which feedback is offered to the students, in the unwitting modeling a certain behaviors, in the nature of the conversations between the teacher and the students, and in the general way that social behaviors are handled in the classroom. (Hlebowitsh,

2009, p. 93)

I imagine that a trajectory for teacher development could be as follows. Student teachers at university learn certain techniques and predispositions through instruction, conversation, and field service. Once in the field, teachers transform their practice through experience, reflective practice, teacher in-service, and collaboration with fellow teachers. Throughout a professional teaching career, there is constant interaction between theory and practice. Teacher professional judgment means teachers may do a fair measure of independent decision-making. Teachers make judgment calls based on professional preparation and experience. They gradually develop a sophisticated and finely tuned ability to fully see and understand who is in front of them, especially in light of the diversity of young learners. "Children are infinitely different in their characteristics, in their needs right now and their dreams for the future. Parents, grandparents, siblings, teachers and maybe a few others are privy to the critical information about any given child" (Hennessy, 2006, p. 127).

Teacher Autonomy

The participants in this study, in one way or another, all saw the need for more professional judgment and freedom for teachers in making curriculum decisions in democratic classrooms. Sleeter and Stillman (2005) examine the American experience with curriculum standards, and much of what they describe as occurring in California and elsewhere in the U.S.A. sounds familiar to us, here in Alberta. Our Program of Studies, our accountability structures, and the rhetoric behind them mirror much of the American situation described by Sleeter and Stillman.

Sleeter and Stillman (2005) use the word "frame" to refer to the degree of control

teachers and students have over the learning content and process. Strong framing requires teachers to deliver the curriculum; weak framing allows teachers to use their own sense-making process. Teachers and students learn their place in the hierarchy through the degree of power that they have over selecting, organizing, and teaching or learning the curriculum. In Alberta, the education system tends toward strong framing. Teachers are expected to deliver the Program of Studies; the accountability structures of teacher evaluation and provincial testing have powerful control over when, how, and what teachers teach (McEwen, 2005).

There have been movements that favoured weaker framing, particularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, emphasizing the importance of contextualized rather than skill-driven instruction and connections between language, thinking, values, culture, and identity. From time to time, on the periphery of the structures, teachers have encountered ideas about knowledge construction and scaffolding. I remember movements that reached us here in Alberta, when the inquiry method or learning styles approaches or other progressive pedagogies surfaced briefly. We even did away with provincial testing for a short time during the 1970s. These movements were submerged in the mid-1980s by the standards movement (McEwen, 1995). Standards-driven education is top-down and reflects the interests of the economy and business. In a standards-driven system, minority students are generally less successful than students from the predominant culture (Crick & Wilson, 2005; Goodlad et al., 2004; Kohn, 2005). The participants in this study express their concern that this is occurring in Alberta for lower socio-economic and aboriginal students.

Strongly framed curriculum enforced by high-stakes standardized testing reduces teacher-selected approaches. In Alberta, as in the U.S.A., even though we encounter rhetoric of

progressive approaches to pedagogy from time to time, the curriculum is so packed and test-driven that teachers have little time or energy to engage in alternative approaches. The participants in this study expressed concern that Alberta's curriculum is driven by an ideological agenda of business and economics. Curricular statements pay lip service to diversity, equity, democracy, and progressive pedagogy. Compliance to provincial standards is reinforced by teacher evaluation, provincially selected curriculum materials, test-driven accountability, and the prescriptiveness of a packed curriculum. The Alberta Education Ministry declares that Albertans want accountability because they want to know how their money is being spent (McEwen, 2005). It is not clear whether Albertans want the kind of accountability they get.

In Alberta, when we take into account the evaluation and testing bureaucracy in the ministry, as well as the time and resources expended at the jurisdiction and school level, we can see that substantial financial and human resources are devoted to the test-driven accountability structure. What if we expended just as many resources to the evaluation of democratic citizenship, character development, arts education, and critical thinking skills as we do for the provincial achievement tests and diploma examinations?

Current accountability structures imply that, without these particular structures, teachers and students would not engage in appropriate learning and, presumably, would do something useless and counter-productive. The implication is that we cannot trust that teachers and learners will pursue the goals of learning unless we hold them accountable in specific measurable ways. Governing bodies establish measurable outcomes and make the teachers and learners accountable for those outcomes. Their assumption is that test-driven accountability will create better teachers and learners. Their belief is that public reporting of results will motivate teachers

and learners—that they just need some pressure. Teachers know what to do; they just lack the will, especially in low performing schools.

What about the other important goals of education that are difficult to measure? Two things are implied by test-driven accountability. One implication is that the important goals of learning are those that can be measured and thus funded. Another is that we trust that teachers and learners will engage in other learning, such as citizenship, democratic behaviour, and the skills of life-long learning, without serious accountability structures.

Even though the participants in this study had many years of experience working within the system, each identified a personal sense of discomfort with some aspects of the system. All of us expressed a measure of disappointment with the current accountability structures. We have worked in the system but, at the same time, have hoped for and worked for changes that would focus more on the human side of teaching and learning.

It is ironic that teachers of democracy need themselves to be in a position of greater autonomy. As Dewey says, “The remedy is not to have one expert dictating educational methods and subject-matter to a body of passive, recipient teachers, but the adoption of intellectual initiative, discussion, and decisions throughout the entire school corps” (Dewey, 1903, p. 232). The participants in this study all believe that teaching to the test is harmful and that overly-prescribed and overcrowded curriculum hinders democratic learning. We all believe that there is a need for societal agreement around the goals and outcomes of democratic education. We support the idea that teachers must have more responsibility in selecting materials, pedagogy, and assessment to meet the needs of the children in their classrooms. At the same time, we hope for more collaborative action among teachers and meaningful classroom-based professional

development.

A Curriculum for Human Beings (Greene, 1993)

The participants in this inquiry recognize the basic human needs of students in their care and the diversity of those needs. In all of us, there is a sense of deep respect for basic human dignity. Greene (1993) supports the recognition of human diversity at very basic levels. If society marks certain persons as unworthy, it is unlikely that those persons will be concerned about irrelevant learning and an irrelevant curriculum. Society marginalizes certain persons and groups and then forces them into inappropriate educational experiences. Greene probes what diversity means in a democracy. Postmodern thinking recognizes that there are multiple realities and multiple ways of seeing the world, and that teachers should be able to understand a multiplicity of perspectives. This means thinking of human beings in terms of open possibilities, i.e., thinking of them as persons who are always in the making. Those in power may wish to maintain the status quo, but Greene wishes to discover what it means to have a truly inclusive society and a curriculum for human beings. “If there is to be a truly humane, plague-free community in this country, it must be one responsive to increasing numbers of life-stories, to more and more ‘different’ voices” (p. 218).

In a similar vein, Portelli and Solomon (2001) call for a “curriculum of life” (p. 63). They envision a curriculum that resonates with the view of democratic education held by the participants in this inquiry, one that connects the lived world with the world of school. Social and political contexts are recognized and engaged in, as part of the development of the whole person. The curriculum of life engages the school and the community in which the students live. Learners encounter real world questions; the disciplines are ways of making sense of the world,

rather than imposing an order on the world.

> The curriculum of life is rooted in the school and community world to which the students belong, addressing questions of who we are and how we live well together; it extends into the larger world of possibilities beyond school and community bounds; and it addresses directly questions about the larger social and political contexts in which these worlds are embedded. (p. 78)

Imagining Counterstories

In my literature review, I expressed the idea that democratic teaching may be counter cultural and thus, in some ways, a counterstory (Lindemann Nelson, 1995). Lindemann Nelson's discussion of a nursing group seeking to understand what it means to be a good nurse relates to what it means to be a good person (p. 27). This resonates with my work in democratic education. In this narrative inquiry with teachers, I imagined a community of choice as a moral space. Lindemann Nelson speaks of the moral values in the community of choice she describes; these include honesty, respecting people, avoiding harm, and compassion (p. 27). Moral values continue to underpin my work. I expect that stories of teachers teaching democratic citizenship in the ways I have described is counter-cultural—a counterstory (p. 24). Stories of teaching democratic citizenship that recognize difference and the common good undermine the dominant story of the marketplace. Stories of democracy, in this sense, are stories of resistance and insubordination. Resistance and insubordination will occur in the communities of choice that are actually delivering democratic education. Narrative inquiry is a way of expressing the counterstory of these teachers.

Clandinin et al. (2006) suggest imagining a "counterstory" of reform. Counterstories are imagined reform stories that are intended to subvert, shift, and change. "This imagined

counterstory will call each of us positioned as policymakers, teachers, superintendents, administrators, researchers, and teacher educators to reposition ourselves in relation to one another and, in particular, in relation to children and families" (p. 174). The counterstories are created around the lives of teachers, children, families, and administrators who live within the landscape of the school. The imagined counterstory places importance on relationships, and the participants in this study all believe that we learn best in the midst of meaningful relationships. The teacher is a key curriculum maker. Teachers have a role in thinking about imagined counterstories for democratic education. We imagine a curriculum of life that has the lives of children and families at the centre. Of course, this is a radical shift. Where is this counterstory to be told? In the school? In teacher preparation? In teacher professional development? In academic circles? In government circles? The counterstory must be told in all of the above.

Memory Work and Self Awareness

Upon rereading my narrative, I thought about how I reconstructed my own story from the memories I had of my early life, my school experiences, and earlier teaching experiences. Zinsser (1987) writes about memoir, where "the writer of a memoir must become the editor of his own life" (p.24). Because of the narrowed lens, memoir becomes a window into life. I think of this window as an element of narrative inquiry. This memory work helped me understand how I came to my beliefs about teaching and learning, particularly as I thought about educating for democratic citizenship.

By coming to an understanding of my own history and the histories of the other participants in my study and of how these stories influenced each of our approaches to teaching and learning, I hope to illuminate democratic sensibility in teachers. Perhaps these stories will

resonate with other teachers and encourage them to develop their teaching methods to be more democratic. Memory work is helpful to me because, through it, I refine my thinking about my learning and teaching identity. It helps me think about how we ought to work with young learners, and it makes me think about teacher development, both pre-service and later. I believe that a set of skills associated with memory work could be part of teacher professional practice. There is a relationship among memory work, reflective practice, and mindful teaching. Greene (1995) writes about wide-awakeness in teaching, and MacDonald and Shirley (2009) write about mindful teaching, both of which require memory work to inform teaching practice.

Miller (1998) cautions against the idea of there being a formula for constructing one's "life story" and any simplistic version of autobiography as a "memory game." Our recollections are incomplete and shaped by external influences, such as politics, professional and familial relationships, and gender. These influences must be brought to consciousness as much as possible. Despite the incompleteness of our stories, we are nevertheless able to take action against unjust and inhumane conditions when we encounter others' recognizable stories. "What political projects can I, can teachers, make from uses of autobiography that refuse closure and that posit the constructing and reconstructing of experience and identities as interpretive?" (p.153).

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) see a teacher's personal curriculum as a metaphor for curriculum and teaching:

> When we say that understanding our own narrative is a metaphor for understanding the curriculum of our students, we are saying that if you understand what makes up the curriculum of the person most important to you, namely, yourself, you will better understand the difficulties, whys, and wherefores of the curriculum of your students. (p.

31)

Mindful Teaching

The participants in this inquiry all demonstrate reflective, thoughtful approaches to their teaching and leadership. Our conversations reveal self-awareness, awareness of the conditions and circumstances in which we work and have worked, and awareness of the human relations that are part of our work. We all understand that mindful teaching is an important aspect of democratic classrooms.

The pedagogy of democracy requires a complex array of skills, attitudes, and approaches to teaching. During the previous four decades, pedagogy has been slowly changing from teacher-centred delivery of knowledge to a student centred constructivist approach to learning. Greene (1978) saw this need for change some time ago, when she said:

> A new pedagogy is obviously required, one that will free persons to understand the ways in which each of them reaches out from his or her location to constitute a common continent, a common world. It might well be called a democratic pedagogy, since, in several respects, the object is to empower persons to enact democracy. To act upon democratic values, I believe, is to be responsive to consciously incarnated principles of freedom, justice, and regard for others. (p. 70)

This new pedagogy requires of teachers a wide-awakeness about their own identities and predispositions and how they came to them, as well as how much influence they have on young learners. Greene (1978) suggests that teachers are moral beings who, through example, create in learners a moral sensibility. Wide-awakeness is delicate and complex; teachers are aware of themselves and the everyday-life world. “There are no guarantees, but wide-awakeness can play a part in the process of liberating and arousing, in helping people pose questions with regard to what is oppressive, mindless, and wrong” (p. 51).

MacDonald and Shirley (2009) have created a teacher professional development seminar around the idea of mindful teaching, an idea similar to Greene's wide-awakeness. MacDonald and Shirley are careful to explain that there is no recipe for mindful teaching. They describe it as

> ...a form of teaching that is informed by contemplative practices in teacher inquiry that enables teachers to interrupt their harried lifestyles, come to themselves through participation in a collegial community of inquiry and practice, and attend to aspects of their classroom instruction and pupils' learning that ordinarily are overlooked in the press of events. (p. 4)

Mindfulness is a powerful aspect of democratic education in this new era of diversity and complexity. Teaching is a personal and context-driven activity but, nonetheless, a professional activity and, to a large extent, a public activity. "Our contention is that teachers' professionalism relies on our ability to see multiple sides of the decisions that we make and to make informed judgments about which tools to use to provide the best instruction possible" (p. 27).

MacDonald and Shirley (2009) think of teaching as a spiritual activity because of the delicate relationship between teacher and learner, a relationship that goes beyond the mere transmission of knowledge and skills that can be measured by standardized testing. The democratic education envisaged by Dewey (1916) and others means understanding the full range of intellectual life.

> It will mean delving as deeply into our common humanity and sharing that spiritual adventure with all of those students who are counting on us to help them to realize all of the latent treasures that lie untapped deep within. (MacDonald & Shirley, 2009, p. 84)

Narrative

Sarbin (2004) investigated the impact of stories on readers. He contends that narratives can have "a substantial impact on the identity development, beliefs, and actions of the reader" (p.

5). I have chosen narrative inquiry as an approach with the hope of affirming teachers and the stories they live. These narratives can have significant impact, as suggested by Sarbin:

> My claim is that imaginings are induced by stories read or stories told, that imaginings are instances of attenuated role-taking, that attenuated role-taking requires motoric actions that produce kinaesthetic cues and other embodiments, and that embodiments become a part of total context from which persons decide how to live their lives. (p. 17)

Crites (1971) explores the narrative quality of experience and proposes that experience through time is inherently narrative. "It is a necessary mark of being human, i.e., being capable of having a history" (p. 291). I think that research into the world and the human condition should, at the very least, have narrative approaches. I believe that, in some ways, all research is narrative. Crites (1971) tells us that "narrative quality is to experience as musical style is to action" (p. 291). This may explain why I am attracted to story as a means of understanding the world. It is the resonance of stories and narratives that allows understanding across cultures. I hope that the telling of the narratives in this study will enlighten by reaching across divides that are otherwise difficult to bridge.

Crites (1971) makes a distinction between memory and anticipation. The future is indeterminate, but our past shapes our anticipation of the future in a narrative way. This has implications for narrative inquiry because we tell our stories in a hopeful way that will shape the future in a positive way. Narrative inquiry seems to go beyond the usual effect of story in our lives, seeking deeper meanings and deeper consciousness to help interpret the grand narrative and, perhaps, to change things for the better.

Greene (1995) helps us situate research approaches when she speaks of seeing small and seeing big. Seeing small helps us to see trends and patterns, but we know that it is our connection

with the particular that gives us insight into real events and real stories. Seeing big brings us in direct contact with the narratives of learners and teachers, and we start to understand what may be behind some of the trends in education. It is important to know the school completion rates for youth and particularly for aboriginal youth, but it is in the life narratives of real individuals that we may gain an understanding of why youth leave school before completing secondary education.

Greene (1995) encourages us to move back and forth between seeing big and seeing small. The problem with seeing small is that it can lead to faulty conclusions, such as regarding early school leavers as failures, no matter what the reason for their leaving. Categorizing them and their families as “problems” tends to deflect us from considering real contributing factors.

The participant conversations in this study were centred on our stories of school. We hoped to illuminate our own practice and inspire others who read this study to consider the value of narrative in improving their own practice. To a large extent, the foundations of change in pedagogy and curriculum lie in the hands of teachers. “Without such foundations rooted in the storied experiences of ordinary people, it is believed that efforts at social change are condemned to be either ineffective or hollow exercises of externally imposed authority” (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 50). We believe that the storied nature of democratic education will continue to shape both research and practice.

Concluding Remarks: Towards a Theory

Growing a democracy is a societal endeavour; the responsibility falls upon the shoulders of all of us, not just on the teachers and our schools. I have sought to better understand what role teachers might play in the worthwhile work of educating for democratic citizenship. It is

abundantly clear to me and to many others that education is a key element in creating democracy. Mindful teachers are central to creating democratic educational experiences for young learners. I will briefly repeat some of the ideas that continue to reverberate as a result of my conversations with the participants in this study and my explorations in the literature.

A critical orientation is an important feature of democratic citizenship. Democracy is at work when citizens have the ability and opportunity to question and evaluate all aspects of the social arrangements in society. As we move toward a more deliberative style of democracy, critical thinking becomes an even more important feature to be developed in young learners. Teachers are role models of critical thinking. Teachers have a critical stance toward their own practice and toward the circumstance under which they teach. Teachers have a critical eye on developments in society because they are called to develop critical thinking in young learners.

Every teacher is a teacher of democracy. Some will ask, "How can that be?" Is that not the responsibility of the social studies teachers? The response lies in what the participants in this study said about teaching and learning being relational. Lest I anger some teachers by adding yet another thing to their already full plates, let me assure them that teaching democratically is not an add-on. More than anything, to become a more democratic teacher means a change in attitude. I wonder what the impact would be if, tomorrow, every teacher consciously and intentionally began to think, "How do I make my engagement with the young learners in front of me more democratic?" There is no one answer to this question because its meaning would be different in every classroom. The participants in this study offer some of the ways in which democracy can happen in schools.

University preparation is part of the answer. I wonder what it would mean if

university undergraduate teacher preparation required more focus on the development of teacher attitudes and dispositions that foster democratic education. I also wonder about the impact of every teacher who leaves university knowing that, as well as teaching in a discipline or at grade level, they are teaching for democratic citizenship. I am talking about every teacher from Kindergarten to Grade 12, not just social studies teachers. However, as Eisner (1995) reminds us, university preparation creates the focus, but it is in the lifelong experience of teaching that we grow into awareness of what can be possible.

Democratic behaviour is learned by living it. I hope that this study makes it abundantly clear that the process of becoming a democratic citizen is experiential. Humans learn democratic capacity not by learning about it but by living it. Dewey and a host of other writers establish the centrality of this idea, as do the participants in this study. Sandra, a Grade 1 teacher, is passionate about creating democracy through relationships and an ethic of care, and Angela and Bill are keen to enhance student voice.

Increased teacher autonomy enhances democratic education. I dream about the possibility of reducing our education system's over-emphasis upon standardized testing. This change in emphasis would mean that we trust teachers to assess young learners and create experiences that take them forward in their learning. We must continue to professionalize teaching. We know so much about pedagogy and assessment. It is essential that we continue to reduce the isolation of teachers. I hope that teachers' stories like the ones in this study can be shared to help grow the profession.

A humanized curriculum is a democratic curriculum. Along with the other participants in this inquiry, I am drawn to conceptualizations of democratic curricula that connect

to the most meaningful aspects of what it means to be human. I believe that our commonality is being human and that many human aspirations resemble each other; however, it is in the lived narratives that the richness, contours, and nuances are recognized and honoured. I hope for a higher profile for the arts in education. What we cannot learn in our everyday interactions with the diverse humans beside us we can learn when we stretch our imaginations through engagement with literature, music, theatre, movement, and visual arts.

There is no doubt that educating for democratic citizenship is nuanced and complex and that there are no simple, straightforward, and formulaic approaches. Nor is the idea of democracy simply put. Democracy is not easy to define, and Anderson (2004) suggests that

> as educators, we should avoid thinking that a simple definition of democracy exists. Rather than adopting a tidy set of concepts to explain democracy, we should construct a frame of mind that can include a variety of foundational notions. Those notions should include, first, that seeking the public interest helps us develop a morality based upon concern for others. Second, in democracies, governing others is never simple because of the plurality of differences among people. Third, democracy works well when people govern themselves in reliable, trustworthy ways. Of course, there is a fourth; education is necessary because citizens do not easily learn how to govern themselves and others in ways that are democratic. (p. 3)

Narrative provides a way to understand others. As humans we come to better understand others when we understand their stories. I theorize that teachers are better teachers of democracy if they understand their own stories, for two reasons. One, by thinking about the stories they live by, they gain a better understanding of their strengths and biases and, two, they realize the importance of paying attention to the stories of the young people they work with. Story has been a powerful force in my life and in the lives of the participants in this study. As Sarbin (2004) tells us, story may move us to action. My hope is that this narrative inquiry will

inspire others to also take up the cause of educating for democratic citizenship.

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