

THE JOB EVERYONE THINKS THEY CAN DO: PERSPECTIVES OF LATERAL
ENTRY TEACHERS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER BEGINNING TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

THE JOB EVERYONE THINKS THEY CAN DO: PERSPECTIVES OF LATERAL ENTRY TEACHERS BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER TEACHING

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This qualitative study follows career changers, to tell their story and to analyze their experiences. Twelve new lateral entry teachers are tracked throughout their first five years of teaching in order to understand their perspectives of teaching before they began their career, during the course of their new career, and afterward. By careful analysis of these perspectives, educational administrators can provide improved services and support for these teachers.

Research reveals that more than half of all new teachers leave the profession within the first five years. By careful analysis of the perspectives of the lateral entry teachers in this study, services and support for this category of teachers can be improved and retention of these teachers increased.

The twelve teachers chosen for this study represent a cross section of lateral entry teachers spanning a variety of demographics. These demographics include gender, age, location, subject area, grade level, and backgrounds. This study provides insight into why

lateral entry candidates choose teaching as their new career, why they felt they would be successful in teaching and whether or not they were, what perceptions of the teaching profession did these careers changers share, and how, or if, these perspectives changed over a five-year period. In general, this study tells the career changing stories of 12 lateral entry teachers who are or were in the classroom educating our children.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

As a former teacher and current human resources director for a public school system, I became curious about the lateral entry applicants that I interviewed for teaching positions. I was curious why they had decided to change careers. I wondered why they wanted to become teachers and what made them believe they could teach even though they had no experience or training in teaching. The sentiment from the applicants seemed to be, “I am not happy with what I am currently doing, so I think I will be a teacher.” During my 16 years as a teacher, I learned how difficult teaching could be. It is not an easy job. I wondered why the lateral entry applicants who entered my office seemed to be unaware of the level of skill and difficulty teaching requires.

Lateral entry teacher Dennis Hong (2010) eloquently expressed these feelings on the blog site, “Musings on Life and Love.” Hong’s attitude and feelings about becoming a teacher mirrored many of my own feelings. As I conducted this study, I discovered Hong’s writings reflected many of the attitudes of the candidates included in this study:

I used to be a molecular biologist. I spent my days culturing viruses . . .

Today, I’m a high school teacher. I spend my days culturing teenagers.

Sometimes, my students get disruptive, and I swear to myself in frustration.

Acquaintances ask me how my work is going. I explain how I’m having a difficult time with a certain kid. I can’t seem to get him to pay attention in class.

Acquaintances smirk knowingly. And they say, “Well, have you tried making it fun for the kids? That’s how you get through to them, you know?” And then, they

explain to me how I should do my job. I realize now how little respect teachers get. Teaching is the toughest job everyone who's never done it thinks they can do. I admit I was guilty of these delusions myself. When I decided to make the switch from "doing" science to "teaching" science, I found out that I had to go back to school to get a teaching credential. I was baffled. How could I, with my advanced degree in biology, *not* be qualified to teach biology? Well, those school administrators were a stubborn bunch. I simply couldn't get a job without a credential. And so, I begrudgingly enrolled in a secondary teaching credential program. And boy, were my eyes opened. I understand now. Teaching isn't just "making it fun" for the kids. Teaching isn't just academic content. Teaching is understanding how the human brain processes information and preparing lessons with this understanding in mind. Teaching is simultaneously instilling in a child the belief that she can accomplish anything she wants while admonishing her for producing shoddy work. Teaching is understanding both the psychology and the physiology behind the changes the adolescent mind goes through. Teaching is convincing a defiant teenager that the work he sees no value in does serve a greater purpose in preparing him for the rest of his life. Teaching is offering a sympathetic ear while maintaining a stern voice. Teaching is being both a role model and a mentor to someone who may have neither at home, and may not be looking for either. Teaching is *not* easy. Teaching is *not* intuitive. Teaching is *not* something that anyone can figure out on their own. Education researchers spend lifetimes developing effective new teaching methods. Teaching takes hard work

and constant training. I understand now. Yet, people have delusions that *anyone* can do what the typical teacher does on a typical day. (Hong, 2010)

As a public school system human resources director and beginning teacher trainer, I have observed that many people believe they can teach, and many people believe they can do it better than current teachers. What qualifies non-teachers as experts on how to teach when their only frame of reference is their experience as a student? Lateral entry teachers that I trained had no teaching experience, but they believed they knew how teaching should be done.

I began asking three questions: What makes people change careers and become teachers? What makes people believe they can teach? And, once they are immersed in the reality of teaching, do their perceptions of teaching change?

In the next seven years, 1.5 million new teachers will enter the nation's schools. By 2017, 50% of the current teaching workforce will be replaced (Moir, 2010). With high attrition rates and shortages of trained teachers in many areas, hiring lateral entry or alternative licensure teachers is a practice that will continue.

The high cost of teacher turnover necessitates that a realistic picture of what teaching requires is being communicated to lateral entry teacher candidates. It is important to study the experiences and perspectives of lateral entry teachers to better understand (1) why they want to teach, (2) what can be done to improve services to them, and (3) how to help them succeed.

Background of Study

When I began this study five years ago, a drastic shortage existed in the number of licensed teachers emerging from college and university teacher preparation programs.

North Carolina colleges and universities were graduating only 35% of the 7000 new teachers that were needed in the state each year (National Center for Education Information, 2006). The hiring of lateral entry teachers was being used to address the teacher shortage.

In 2005, data on lateral entry teachers were scarce. Now, the number of studies regarding lateral entry teachers is plentiful. However no studies have investigated the perspectives of lateral entry teachers throughout their early teaching experiences.

Lateral entry teachers have traditionally had a high turnover rate (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2008). Teacher turnover is expensive and disruptive to the continuity of the education process (Ingersoll, 2003). Investigating the reasons lateral entry teachers choose teaching as their career change, why they believe they can teach, what they think their experience will be like, and whether their experience met their expectations provides valuable information to determine how to better meet their needs. This information, in turn, provides employers with insight into how to help lateral entry teachers succeed.

Economic Downturn

During the course of this study, the economy took a drastic downturn. This led to major budget cuts, which resulted in the reduction of teaching positions. At the conclusion of this study, a teacher shortage was replaced by a glut of unemployed, licensed teachers. Nevertheless, lateral entry teachers are still being hired, in spite of the availability of highly qualified, traditionally prepared teacher applicants (NCDPI, 2009).

For example, consider one western North Carolina school system. In 2004, of the 45 newly hired teachers, 12 (26%) were lateral entry teachers. In the same school system

in 2010, of the 20 newly hired teachers, five (25%) were lateral entry teachers (see Table 1). Therefore, the ratio of lateral entry teachers hired remained consistent although the number of new teachers hired decreased by more than half. To determine why this occurred is outside the scope of this study; however, these statistics are cited to suggest that lateral entry teachers are still needed and will continue to be hired (see Table 5).

Career Change

Career change involves switching career fields or employers. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2005), collecting this information is difficult—if not impossible. Nevertheless, the Department of Labor compiles data on this. Statistics show that a worker between the ages of 18 and 38 changes jobs an average of 10 times throughout their careers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2008).

Lateral entry teachers enter the teaching profession through either a mid-career change or an alternative degree. They already hold a 4-year degree in an area that can be applied to teaching, and they decide to seek teacher certification. For example, an engineer who decides to teach mathematics is a lateral entry teacher.

Various theories about career development exist to describe career experiences and attempt to predict future career success. Holland's (1992) career development theory, for example, describes relationships between personalities and work. His theory suggests that people need accurate knowledge and career information to make good career decisions. He explained that people search for environments that enable them to use their skills and apply their attitudes and values in a comfortable setting. In the case of lateral entry teachers, Holland's theory means these candidates believe teaching is a good match for their skills and personality, and they will be comfortable working in schools.

Lateral entry teachers are not formally trained as teachers. Consequently, their primary knowledge of the teaching career stems from their experiences as students. Some of these teachers had limited exposure to teaching through experiences such as being college teaching assistants or helpers in an educational program at a summer camp. Because of these experiences, they believe they can teach. According to Holland (1973), people search for environments that will let them exercise their skills and abilities, express their attitudes and values, and take on agreeable problems and roles (p. 42). Based on this theory, lateral entry teachers must believe that teaching will be the appropriate environment for them.

Moir (1990) outlined five phases through which beginning teachers transition. Moir's stages correspond to the journeys of the 12 lateral entry teachers described in this study. These stages provide a frame of reference for understanding the data. Moir (1990) characterized these first-year phases as anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation and reflection. How these phases correspond with the experiences of these lateral entry teachers will be described in this study

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the growing body of literature on alternatively licensed teachers by telling the stories of 12 lateral entry teachers over a five-year period, starting at being hired. Understanding the perspectives these teachers brought to the profession will generate insight into how to better support this category of teachers. According to the National Education Association (NEA), half of all new teachers quit within the first five years (NEA, 2003). Heller (2004) explained that retention is more cost effective than recruitment. Carefully analyzing these perspectives

will improve services and support for this category of teachers, leading to better retention. In general, the purpose of this study is to tell the stories of twelve lateral entry teachers over a period of five years, and to analyze their perspectives to provide better understanding of the lateral entry teachers who are in the classroom educating our children.

The perspectives of 12 lateral entry teachers before, during, and after their first year of teaching were explored in this study. The 12 new teachers were interviewed throughout their first five years of teaching to understand their perspectives before they began their new career, during the course of their first year of teaching, and after their first five years. This study describes the different perspectives these teachers brought to the profession.

This qualitative study follows career changers to tell their story and to analyze their experiences. The study provides insight into why 12 lateral entry candidates chose teaching as their new career. Furthermore, the study addresses why the participants believed they would be successful in teaching and if they later found their beliefs to be accurate. It explores the teaching profession from these careers changers' points of view. The study investigates how, or if, these perspectives changed over a 5-year period, what the changes are, and the significance of these changed perspectives.

Research Questions

This study investigated the perspectives of lateral entry teachers before they entered the classroom, throughout their first year of teaching, and five years after they began teaching. The following research questions were explored:

1. What were the expectations and perspectives of these lateral entry teachers before they began teaching?
2. How did their perspectives change over time?

Significance of the Study

With high attrition rates and a shortage of trained teachers, hiring lateral entry teachers is a growing practice (NCDPI, 2009). To continuously improve teacher quality, it is important to study their perspectives. This study provides data that can be used to improve alternative licensing.

Definition of Terms

Alternative routes to certification allow individuals who have bachelor's degrees in areas other than education to obtain professional teaching certificates. Many states allow candidates to secure employment directly with a local school district and begin teaching while they are meeting state certification requirements (Southeastern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2010).

For the purpose of this study, the term "lateral entry teacher" was used interchangeably with the term "alternatively licensed" to describe teachers who have no previous teacher training. North Carolina is the only state that uses the term "lateral entry" to describe this category of teachers. All 50 states have some form of lateral entry teachers. Alternatively licensed teacher (ALT), Second Career Teacher (SCT), and Alternatively Certified Teacher (ACT) are terms used interchangeably in the literature.

Lateral entry teachers are defined as teachers who enter the profession through a mid-career change or a non-teaching degree program. They have already earned a four-year degree in another area and have decided to change careers and procure teacher

certification. An example of a lateral entry, mid-career changer would be a copy writer with a bachelor's degree in journalism who decides to enter the teaching profession as an English teacher through alternative licensing procedures.

Participants in this study were lateral entry teachers with no previous classroom teaching experience. Their first teacher training experiences were the required two-week training that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) requires for all lateral entry teachers. This training did not affect the teaching experience levels of these 12 candidates for the following reasons: (a) training was very basic (b) training was often completed as a self-study experience from computer programs (c) training did not place participants in a classroom and (d) training did not require working with students.

Study Design and Methodology

This study was conducted with lateral entry teachers in selected western North Carolina public school systems. The human resources departments in 17 school systems were contacted. Names of possible lateral entry candidates were obtained. Twenty seven possible participants were identified; 16 were interviewed. Of the 16, 12 were chosen as study participants based on fully meeting the study criteria.

The 12 teachers were first interviewed after they were hired and prior to beginning teaching. The same candidates were interviewed a second time during the course of their first year of teaching. Candidates were interviewed a third time at the conclusion of their first year of teaching. A fourth and final interview was conducted five years later with study participants who were still accessible. Not all participants were available for the fourth interview; two participants were no longer teaching, had moved

from the area, or could not be located. Many contact attempts were made via phone, email, Facebook, and postal mail (see Table 6).

By the end of the five-year study, the 12 teachers were in the following situations:

1. Still teaching in the same school
2. Teaching at different schools.
3. No longer teaching (see Table 2).

For the first round of interviews, candidates were interviewed face-to-face at a convenient location chosen by the teacher. The locations of the interviews included classrooms, offices, and off-campus locations. The second interviews were conducted in the teacher's classroom when possible. This was the preferred location, but four interviews were conducted in a teachers' lounge, a hallway, a school media center, and a gym. The third interview was conducted in the teacher's classroom or similar locations as previously described. The final interviews, during the fifth year of the study, were accomplished face-to-face, by telephone, via e-mail, or via Facebook, to accommodate the participant's location and schedule.

In Round 1, candidates were asked 11 questions (see Appendix A). Of these questions, six were general background information, and five questions asked participants to describe their perspectives on teaching. The open-ended nature of these five questions enabled participants to share their perspectives, tell their stories, and reflect on their career decisions.

Round 2 interview questions were comprised of eight open-ended questions designed to determine the teacher's current perspective of teaching and to allow the

teacher to reflect on the first year experience. Round 3 questions were similar to Round 2, seeking to determine perspective changes.

Round 2 and 3 interview questions were conducted at midyear and at the conclusion of their first year. A final interview was conducted during the fifth year. Some participants were still teaching, at the same school, some were still teaching and had changed schools, and others were no longer teaching (see Table 2). Round 4 interview questions were different based on whether the teacher was still teaching, or not. Round 4 questions consisted of four to five reflective questions.

Summary

By examining the perspectives of these lateral entry teachers before, during and after their teaching experiences, this study gathered insight into how to provide meaningful assistance to this category of teachers. Careful analysis of the experiences of these teachers will improve services and support for this group as well as increase retention. In general, this study provides a better understanding of the teaching profession through analysis of the perspectives, experiences and progression of lateral entry teachers.

The study includes five chapters, a bibliography, appendices and tables. Chapter 2 presents a review of the related literature. Chapter 3 defines the research design used and the methods employed. Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the data, and Chapter 5 contains an analysis and presentation of the study results and recommendations to address the issue of improving services to lateral entry teachers.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the research on career-changing lateral entry teachers. The chapter is organized around themes in the literature as they relate to the topic of lateral entry teachers. Gaps that emerged from the current literature created the basis for this study. Research on this topic is growing, but no studies were found that analyze the perspectives of new lateral entry teachers or follows how their perceptions change throughout their early years of teaching.

This study tells the stories of 12 lateral entry teachers and explores how their perspectives changed over a 5-year period. The purpose of the study is to gain insight into why these alternatively licensed candidates changed careers, why they believed that teaching was the right career choice for them, what they anticipated teaching would be like, and how their perspectives changed over five years..

The literature reviewed for this study details the following aspects: the growing phenomenon of lateral entry teachers, why mid-career changers choose to teach, why people change careers, and the stages through which teachers transition. Also, the challenges and problems new teachers' face, the effect of these challenges on teacher attrition, and factors that help to retain teachers were reviewed.

Alternatively Licensed Teachers

The number of individuals graduating from traditional teacher preparation programs, particularly in hard-to-staff urban and rural areas, is not sufficient to meet the demand. Partially due to a limited supply of teacher graduates and declining rates of student achievement, many critics of traditional teacher education look to alternative pathways to produce qualified teachers (Hawley, 1992). Highly effective teaching entails

not only the application of research-based methods; it also requires leadership, content knowledge, life experience, organization, commitment, wisdom, enthusiasm, and applied knowledge. Administrators often have found these qualities in mid-career changers (Hess, 2009). Haselkorn and Hammerness (2008) found that administrators' evaluations demonstrated that lateral entry teachers consistently were rated higher than beginning first-career teachers in four main areas: (a) organization of content for student learning, (b) creating an environment for student learning, (c) teaching for student learning, and (d) professionalism (Haselkorn & Hammerness, 2008).

By the mid 1990s, lateral entry teachers were the fastest-growing group in teacher training programs (Reiter, 2008). For example, Reiter's (2008) study revealed that career-changers or professionals, who decided on teaching as a second career, are now the fastest-growing sector of new teachers. Smith and Pantana (2009) predicted that career-changers make up approximately 33% of new teacher hires.

Why Do People Choose to Become Teachers?

Why do people choose teaching as a career? What entices them to spend their days teaching other people's children? Why do they choose teaching rather than other professions that would provide better compensation, higher status, and more respect in less stressful environments?

In studies of the motives of those people who choose to teach, intrinsic motives were cited more often than extrinsic motives. For example, Capraro (2010) found:

Teachers choose to teach because to do otherwise would leave them feeling unfulfilled. They may not choose the school setting, but a person who knows the joy of teaching really must teach. They may become a trainer, a coach, a tutor, a

lecturer, or even a writer of informative articles online. The drive to share knowledge is irresistible to a true teacher (p. 1).

Researchers have found that career changers want to teach because they believe they have the ability to teach, they value teaching, and they want to shape the future (Smith & Pantana, 2009). Richardson and Watt (2006) found the top reason for choosing to switch careers to become a teacher was love for children and a desire to make a difference in their lives. They also found that career changers identified dissatisfaction with their previous career as a major reason for switching to teaching.

Steger (2009) reported that meaningful work consists of three components: (a) the work we do must make sense, (b) the work we do must have a point, and (c) the work we do must benefit some greater good.

Blazer (2009) conducted a study to determine if having a parent or grandparent who was an educator was a contributing factor for teachers in not only choosing education, but also remaining in the profession long term. He concluded that although parents or grandparents did not force their children to become teachers, the experiences these individuals had prepared them for the duties, experiences, and expectations that teachers encounter.

An organization called Recruiting New Teachers surveyed mid-career professionals who wanted to become teachers. Respondents offered five major reasons for becoming a teacher. According to The Teacher Center (2010) these were:

To give back: Successful mid-career professionals want to “pay back” that great teacher or the educational community that helped them.

- To put experience to use: Mid-career changers want to bring life experiences and expertise from their previous careers to the classroom.
- To change the meaning of “work”: Mid-career changers often go into teaching to mentor and interact with young people.
- To follow one successful career with another: Individuals with experience in other careers have the desire and commitment to be successful teachers.
- To share knowledge: Mid-career changers combine the dedication of new teachers with content-area expertise (p. 2).

The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2007) reported that exceptional expertise in subject areas was the primary reason that lateral entry teachers were hired. Their previous degrees and work experiences made them content experts. Such expertise makes them attractive candidates for teaching.

Career Changers

Lateral entry teachers enter the teaching profession through either a mid-career change or an alternative degree. They hold a four-year degree in an area that can be applied to teaching, and they choose to seek teacher certification.

Theories about career development describe career experiences and attempt to predict future behaviors. Holland’s (1973) career development theory describes relationships between personalities and work environments. This theory suggests that people need accurate knowledge and information to make good career decisions. Holland (1973) explained that people search for environments that enable them to use their skills and abilities and to apply their attitudes and values in a comfortable setting. According to Holland's theory, lateral entry teachers believe teaching is a good match for

their skills and personality. They believe the classroom will be a comfortable working environment. It is likely that lateral entry teachers make this assumption by reflecting on their own experiences as students.

Holland based his theory of career personality types on several assumptions. One of these is that people tend to choose careers that reflect their personalities. People are attracted to certain jobs; therefore, their work environment mirrors their personality. For example, a detective enjoys working with information. Holland would characterize this career personality as investigative. A detective would probably not be in a comfortable environment in a classroom. Holland classified the personalities and work environments into six types that he labeled: realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional. He suggested that the closer the match of personality and job, the greater the satisfaction.

Smith and Pantana (2009) speculated that those who choose teaching to fulfill their intrinsic desire to work with children might actually be doing so because of the satisfaction they personally receive from being around children; therefore, they are focusing on their own intrinsic needs—not the children. This perception ties to Holland's theory that career choice is based on personality, need, and comfortable environments (Holland, 1973).

Interestingly, teaching as a career spans all six of Holland's personality types, primarily because of the different academic subjects in schools. For example, a chemist who has chosen to be a lateral entry science teacher as a second career would be classified as Holland's "investigative" career type. This type has strengths in analyzing information, abstract ideas, and theories. As a teacher, these same skills are often used.

A lateral entry teacher who was previously a social worker would correlate with Holland's social type, which deals with helping people, as teachers do.

Kaplan and Owings (2002) found that administrators value a variety of qualities in lateral entry teachers. They have maturity, life experience, good work habits, as well as depth and breadth of content knowledge. They know how to apply their content knowledge to practical situations, and administrators think of them as determined individuals who work well with others. Older career changers were also found to have lower attrition rates than younger ones (Kaplan & Owings, 2002).

Moir (1990) described new teachers' experiences as they transition through stages of anticipation, survival, disillusionment, reevaluation and reflection. Even though lateral entry teachers often have exceptional expertise in their subject area and age maturity, they transition through these same stages.

Teacher Attrition

Attrition of lateral entry teachers is a problem. Approximately 25% of lateral entry teachers leave teaching after one year (NCDPI, 2008). Ingersoll (2003) reports that teacher turnover is expensive and disruptive to schools. Better understanding of lateral entry teachers could decrease their attrition.

Teacher Turnover

Teacher turnover is costly for school systems and disruptive to the continuity of instruction. The Alliance for Excellent Education (AEE) (2005) found:

There is a growing consensus among researchers and educators that the single most important factor in determining student performance is the quality of his or her teachers. Therefore, if the national goal of providing an equitable education

to children across the nation is to be met, it is critical that efforts be concentrated on developing and retaining high quality teachers in every community and at every grade level. (p. 1)

Norton (1999) reported that 25% of teachers leave the profession by the end of their first year. Sandlin, Young, and Karge (1993) found that up to 40% of new teachers leave the profession by the end of two years. Multiple studies have reported that as many as 50% of new teachers leave within the first 5 years of teaching (Hafner & Owings, 1991; Ingersoll, 2003; Norton, 1999). According to the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI, 2005), 41% of North Carolina teachers leave within their first three years of teaching. Teachers who stay more than five years accumulate teaching experience and are more likely to continue in the teaching profession (Patterson, 2010).

The number of newly hired public school teachers needed for the 2008–09 school year was estimated at 2.7 million (NCES, 2008). Some of these hires will replace those leaving the profession. Others are needed because of increasing student enrollments. Older teachers are beginning to retire in large numbers (Kronholz, 1997). Teachers leave the profession due to retirement, dissatisfaction, relocation, family responsibilities (e.g., child care), or to change careers (NCDPI, 2009). The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction reports an average annual teacher turnover rate of 12.51% (NCDPI, 2009). In the next seven years, according to Moir (2010), 1.5 million new teachers will enter the nation's schools. By 2017, 50% of the current teaching workforce will be replaced (Moir, 2010).

Current budget shortfalls across the country have brought drastic changes in the number of teachers employed across the United States. To meet funding shortfalls, states

have increased class sizes, laid off teachers, and implemented reduction in force measures. Even with current budget deficits and increased class sizes, a shortage of trained teachers means the practice of hiring lateral entry teachers will continue.

According to NCDPI (2008), one reason for teacher turnover is dissatisfaction with teaching. Dissatisfaction may stem from being unprepared for the job. Studies have demonstrated that alternatively licensed teachers feel less prepared to teach than traditionally trained teachers (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Specifically, differences noted between these two groups are planning for instruction, meeting the needs of diverse learners, and creating a positive learning environment (Darling-Hammond, Chung, & Frelow, 2002). Alternatively licensed teachers also feel less prepared in classroom management skills (Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003). Lateral entry teachers express deficiencies in motivating students and assessing student learning (Baines, 2010). Research has revealed substantial differences in the effectiveness of lateral entry teachers on student achievement as compared to traditionally trained teachers (Abulafi, 2010; Goldhaber & Brewer, 2000; Gomez & Grobe, 1990). According to Goldhaber and Brewer (2000), test scores of students taught by lateral entry teachers trailed test scores of traditionally prepared teachers, specifically in the areas of math, science, social studies, and reading.

Understanding the perspectives of lateral entry teachers in their first year of teaching provides insight into the background and experiences that lateral entry teachers bring to the profession. By carefully analyzing these perspectives, educational administrators can provide improved services and support for these teachers. By

improving services and support, a more positive experience can be provided for lateral entry teachers, and teacher retention will be improved.

Cost of Attrition

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 2010) said the teacher dropout problem is spiraling out of control. Teacher attrition has grown by 50% over the past 15 years and the national annual teacher turnover rate has risen to 16.8%. In urban schools, the turnover rate is over 20%. In some schools and districts, the teacher dropout rate is higher than the student dropout rate (NCTAF, 2010).

Hiring and firing teachers is expensive (Heller, 2004). Teacher retention is more cost effective than recruiting and hiring new teachers (Heller, 2004). According to the Association of American Educators (AAE, 2005), teacher turnover in North Carolina costs the state \$188,565,281 per year.

The Alliance for Excellent Education (2005) reported that the average cost nationwide to replace a teacher is \$12,500 per teacher (AEE, 2005). The cost of replacing all public school teachers who have left the profession is approximately \$2.2 billion (AEE, 2005). The U. S. Department of Labor estimated that attrition costs an employer 30% of the leaving employee's salary (U. S. Department of Labor, 2005). Corbel (2009) maintained that North Carolina spends slightly less, approximately \$11,800, to replace each teacher who leaves a school district.

Teachers who transfer to different schools are also a source of attrition and create additional costs for school systems. As reported by AAE (2005), teachers changing schools cost school systems between \$500 and \$17,500 per teacher, or an average of \$4,400 per teacher. Transferring teachers cited factors of dissatisfaction, including lack

of planning time, a heavy workload, problematic student behavior, and a lack of influence over school policy (AAE, 2005).

Hardie's (2007) research showed that more males, minorities, and older individuals pursued careers in education through alternative routes than through traditional preparation programs. Traditionally certified teachers, regardless of gender, race, and age, were retained at higher percentages than alternatively certified teachers (Hardie, 2007). It is important to understand why lateral entry teacher's attrition rates are higher than traditionally trained teachers and to determine what can be done to change this. By analyzing the perspectives of lateral entry teachers, this study provides insight into why they stay, why they leave, and how to keep them.

Attrition Factors

Teachers decide to stay or leave for a variety of factors ranging from personal characteristics to level of satisfaction with the school's environment (Ingersoll, 2003). Teachers leave because teaching can be difficult and unrewarding. Teachers leave to accept positions with better pay, more prestige, and fewer pressures. Schools with low teacher turnover rates have higher levels of student achievement (Ingersoll, 2001). High turnover rates in schools contribute to decreased performance and decreased consistency of instruction (Ingersoll, 2003; Shen, 1997).

Despite (or perhaps because of) the previously mentioned desirable qualities of lateral entry teachers (e.g., expertise, maturity, and good work habits), administrators often believe that lateral entry teachers do not need as much support as traditionally trained beginning teachers (Smith & Pantana, 2009). According to Mayotte (2003), first-career teachers showed evidence of an easier transition into the field than lateral entry

teachers. This ease was attributed to younger teachers being more flexible and receiving more assistance from mentors and administrators who acknowledged them as newcomers in need of guidance. Lateral entry teachers were often treated differently from first career teachers; subsequently, their needs were sometimes overlooked by administrators (Mayotte, 2003). Older lateral entry teachers were viewed as new to the school, but they were not offered as much assistance as younger, beginning teachers because of their perceived life experience and expertise (Smith & Pantana, 2009).

First-Year Stages of Teaching

This study offers insight into the stages these 12 lateral entry teachers experienced in their first year of teaching. Lateral entry teachers miss the opportunity of the student teaching experience usually required of traditional trained teachers. Because of this, it is important to understand the stages through which these teachers transition as they become teaching professionals. Understanding and anticipating these stages gives us a context within which we can learn to better support lateral entry teachers, to make their first exposure to teaching a more positive experience.

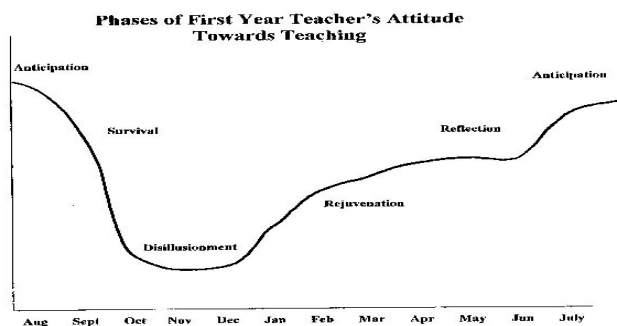
Lateral entry teachers are similar to traditionally prepared beginning teachers, except for their lack of pedagogy training. Ellen Moir, Director of the Santa Cruz Center for Beginning Teachers, described the cyclical phases through which beginning teachers transition. Moir's (1990) research and graph is commonly referred to as the beginning teacher "mid-year dip" (see Figure 1). Moir's graph provides a visual of the stages through which beginning teachers transition. Moir (1990) characterized these phases as:

- The Anticipation Phase begins before the teachers begin teaching. During this phase, teachers anticipate what teaching will be like and how they will

teach. This phase sometimes begins when they are participating in their internship experience.

- The Survival Phase occurs when teachers are in the classroom struggling to cope with situations they did not anticipate. They are experiencing new routines, new schedules, and new materials, and they are struggling with time commitment.
- The Disillusionment Phase is a time when beginning teachers question themselves as they experience conflicts with students and sometimes parents. They receive their first evaluations from a principal. During this phase they begin to question their decision to become a teacher.
- The Rejuvenation Phase is characterized by replenishment after the mid-year break and an improvement in attitude. The end of school is in sight. They are becoming more comfortable with teaching.
- The Reflection Stage occurs during the final weeks of the first year. The teachers begin to look ahead to the next year and start to make plans and think about what they will change and do differently to improve for the next year.

Figure 1: Phases of First Year Teachers' Attitude toward Teaching (Moir, 1990)



Recognizing the phases through which new teachers transition gives insight into needs of all first-year teachers, including those who are lateral entry. By understanding these needs, support for these new teachers can be improved and retention increased.

First-year Challenges

Much has been written about the many challenges facing first-year teachers. The research suggests several reasons teachers leave the profession.

Student Apathy

Samuelson (2010) claimed that the biggest problem facing education in America today is student apathy, which has reached epidemic proportions. When students are not motivated, even capable teachers leave the profession. Student motivation comes from many sources including curiosity, ambition, parental expectations, the desire to get into a good college, teachers who inspire, peer pressure, and intrinsic qualities.

Samuelson (2010) said:

The unstated assumption of much school 'reform' is that if students aren't motivated, it's mainly the fault of schools and teachers. Wrong. Motivation is weak because more students (of all races and economic classes) don't like school, don't work hard and don't do well. In a 2008 survey of public high school teachers, 21% judged student absenteeism a serious problem; 29% cited student apathy (p. 3).

Time Commitment

Teacher commitment is important to student success. (Huberman, 1993). Teaching requires a time commitment for which some of the lateral entry teachers were not prepared.

Krantz-Kent (2008) found that older teachers worked more hours than younger teachers. Teachers aged 50 and older worked more hours per week than teachers who were younger; these teachers worked 6.7 more hours than teachers in their 30s and 5.1 more hours than teachers in their 20s. Additionally, teachers were more likely than other professionals to work at home. Thirty percent of teachers worked at home on an average day, compared with 20% of other full-time professionals. Also, teachers were more likely to work on Sundays than were other professionals. Fifty-one percent of teachers worked on Sunday to prepare for Monday morning classes. This was compared to 30% of other full-time professionals. On Sundays, papers must be graded and lesson plans prepared for Monday morning. To be effective teachers, the 7 1/2 to 8 hours of at-work time per day must be spent with students. This means that creating lesson plans and grading assignments must be accomplished on “your own time” (Krantz-Kent, 2008).

Additionally, teachers must be “morning people.” By the time other professionals are arriving at work, teachers have already held parent conferences before school, provided morning tutoring sessions, and taught first period. Teachers carry out these duties in addition to caring for their families and often having a second job. According to Krantz-Kent (2008), teachers are 17% more likely to hold a second job than are other professionals. These responsibilities drain time away from teaching.

Classroom Management

The issue of classroom management and discipline are major issues for all new teachers. Many studies have found that beginning teachers have difficulty managing their classrooms. No other dimension of teaching causes more concern for beginning teachers than managing the classroom and maintaining discipline (Ryan & Cooper,

2004). Volumes of research, websites, books, and multimedia presentations all advise beginning teachers on how to manage classrooms.

Surveys of graduates of education schools and colleges indicate that the primary area of concern of new teachers is their feelings of inadequacy in managing classrooms (Kizlik, 2010). Classroom management and management of student conduct are skills that teachers acquire and hone over time (Kizlik, 2010). According to Shore (2001), one full academic year of classroom support and mentoring helped novices gain confidence in their basic classroom management skills and “survival” techniques, leaving them freer to focus on deeper issues of content, pedagogy, and student learning (Shore, 2001).

Supports for Teachers

Today, perhaps more than ever, teachers face great challenges. Some of these challenges are increased class sizes, expectations from administrators, increased amounts of paperwork; and lack of resources. Various sources are available to support new teachers

Factors that Increase Retention

A teacher’s decision to stay or leave is contingent on a variety of factors ranging from teachers’ personal characteristics to their satisfaction with the school’s environment. The key to the reasons that teachers remain in the profession seems to lie in the level of success teachers encounter in raising their students’ academic performances (AAE, 2005). For this reason, giving teachers the supports necessary to succeed is critical.

Many studies have found that new teachers need various forms of support. Although many factors share a part in teacher retention, many of the best supports take the form of mentoring.

Mentoring

Ingersoll and Smith (2003) found that teachers involved in induction and mentoring programs were less likely to leave teaching. The types of induction support that had the strongest positive association with retention were a mentor in the same field, common planning time with other teachers in the same subject, scheduled collaboration with other teachers, and being part of an external network of teachers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003).

According Brown and Schainker (2008), new teachers reported that mentoring contributed to their success and employment decisions. Furthermore, they found that teachers who plan to stay in their school received more support than those who were planning to change schools or leave the profession.

Nonetheless, some educators dispute a correlation between teacher support and teacher retention. One study even indicates that mentoring and support programs have the opposite or no effect on teacher retention (Glazerman, Decker, & Mayer, 2004).

Principal's Role in Retention

Brown and Schainker (2008) said:

The conditions and resources needed to support new teachers in their continuous learning, growth, and professional development include shared decision making on substantive issues, collaborative work with others to reach shared goals, and expanded teacher leadership capacity. Principals need to model high expectations for all and keep the vision of student learning alive and at the forefront of all decisions. Principals should maintain an open door and a visible presence throughout their schools and encourage and support collegiality among all

teachers while providing nurturance, guidance, and leadership when needed. By fostering official or unofficial professional learning communities, principals can reduce teacher isolation; increase teacher responsibility and understanding; improve teacher satisfaction, morale, and commitment; and influence teacher retention. (p. 14).

In general, research confirms that a number of working conditions, including principal support, has a positive effect on teacher retention. The support or the lack of support by a principal plays a key role in the retention of qualified teachers (Haar, 2007).

Positive Relationships with Students

Wait (2010) found the two most important aspects of combating student apathy are building personal relationships with students and making things immediately relevant to their lives. Many studies describe the importance of positive teacher–student relationships. Many studies find that positive teacher- student relationships have important, positive, and long-term effects on students, both socially and academically. Students who have close, positive, supportive relationships with teachers attain higher levels of achievement than students with adversarial relationships (Rimm-Kaufman, 2004). Teachers who have close, positive relationships with students reported that their students were more motivated, cooperative, and engaged, and they have less absenteeism (Birch & Ladd, 1997). Likewise, teachers who establish rapport with students are happier and more successful in their jobs.

Buskist and Saville (2002) said:

Rapport is a contextual variable that sets the stage for effective teaching.

Effective teaching involves tinkering with that environment so that we maximize

the chances that students will learn from us. Rapport-building is one way to hedge our bets that we will be successful in this endeavor. (p. 94)

Students are more engaged and invested in the classes in which they have positive relationships with their teachers (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Pianta, 1999; Rimm-Kaufman, 2004; Wong, 2004). To improve students' chances for academic success, educators must strive to form meaningful personal relationships with students (Curriculum, Technology, and Education Reform [CTER], 2009).

In summary, according to many studies, students and teachers who like and respect each other create open, relaxed, cooperative classroom environments, which foster high student achievement. Rubalcava (2005) reported that many young teachers believe that teaching is about making connections with students.

Collegiality

Collegiality exists when teachers work together in a “transparent, supportive, caring and encouraging atmosphere” to assure that everyone succeeds (Keedy, 1991). According to Barth (2006), interactions among teachers within a school generally “range from vigorously healthy to dangerously competitive” (p. 3). Barth (2006) suggested that it is important to provide teachers with opportunities for interaction and strengthening relationships.

Brown and Schinker (2008) discovered that teachers who were happy with their teacher placement and wanted to stay at a particular school planned with colleagues more frequently during the school day, had discussions about teaching with colleagues, and were observed more often than those who wanted to move to another school or leave teaching altogether. According to Collins (2001), not only do you need to "get the right

people on the bus," you also need to get them in the right seat on the bus. Having a collegial staff and promoting opportunities for interaction improves morale and supports teacher retention.

Baseball manager Casey Stengel said, "Getting good players is easy—getting them to play together is the hard part" (p. 1). Schools are full of good players. Collegiality is about getting them to play together. The nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school and on student achievement than anything else (Barth, 2006).

Conclusion

Lateral entry teachers are a necessary and growing phenomenon in education. In the past 10 years, lateral entry teachers have made up approximately 33% of the estimated 10,000 new teachers hired in North Carolina schools each year (NCDPI, 2004). Lateral entry teachers are desirable hires for many reasons including the qualities they bring to the profession (e.g., life experiences and content expertise). However, lateral entry teachers face many challenges in transitioning from other professions to education. By studying the perspectives of lateral entry teachers before and during their transitions, a better understanding into the needs of this group of teachers will be gained and better programs to support and retain them can be developed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Rationale for the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the perspectives of lateral entry teachers. Twelve teachers were interviewed over a five-year period. The interviews were performed to gain insight into why these teaching candidates changed careers, why they believed that teaching was the right career choice for them, what they anticipated teaching would be like, and to discover any change in their perspectives throughout their experiences.

According to multiple sources, half of all new teachers quit within the first five years (National Education Association [NEA], 2003; Southeastern Regional Education Board [SREB], 2010; Illinois Education Research Council [IERC], 2005); National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES] 2009). Heller (2004) explains that retention of teachers is more cost effective than teacher recruitment.

Carefully analyzing these teachers' perspectives can lead to recommendations to improve services and support that will improve retention. This study tells the stories of 12 lateral entry teachers over a period of five years and analyzes their perspectives to provide better understanding of what lateral entry teachers experience.

Alternative teacher certification programs license teachers in lieu of the traditional teacher education degree programs (Feistritzer, 1999). In North Carolina, lateral entry teachers have a 4-year degree that does not qualify for teacher certification. North Carolina is the only state that uses the term "lateral entry." All 50 states have similar alternative licensing programs. Other states refer to these teachers as "alternatively

licensed,” “alternatively certified” or “second-career teachers.” These terms are similar and are often used interchangeably in the literature.

This study explored career changers who became lateral entry teachers. It contributes to the growing body of literature on lateral entry teachers by providing insight into their perspectives throughout their first years of teaching. Understanding the perspectives of these teachers informs administrators about how to better support and retain lateral entry teachers.

Research Design

The study uses a qualitative approach. Qualitative studies use words rather than numbers as the data that are described and analyzed. Words reflect perspectives. Conclusions expressed as words can be more convincing than pages of numbers (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Qualitative research can help us understand complex situations and address complex questions. It brings meaning and perspective to questions by presenting data that quantitative research cannot. It provides a way to find deeper understanding.

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 2001). Creswell (1998) described qualitative research as "an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem" (p. 15), The researcher builds a complex and holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting (Merriam, 2001). The specific methodological tradition in this study is phenomenology.

According to Patton (1990), phenomenology is a philosophical tradition that details the structure and essence of a phenomenon affecting a group of people. Understanding comes from sensory experience of phenomena. Phenomenology describes, explains and interprets those experiences.

Creswell (1998) stated, “A phenomenological study describes the meaning of several individuals for their shared experience of a concept or phenomenon” (p. 51). Phenomenological research describes what the participants have in common.

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument (Patton, 1990). “Data are mediated through this human instrument, rather than through inventories, questionnaires, or machines” (Merriam, 2001, p.7). The task of the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can accurately represent their thoughts and points of view (Patton, 1990).

In this study direct quotations are the raw data sources. They reveal the participant’s depth of emotion, their thoughts, experiences, and perspectives.

Lateral entry teachers were interviewed and their environments and experiences were described, giving them a voice and a context within which to tell their stories. The perspectives presented in this study were obtained through open-ended interviews. After the interviews were performed, the data were analyzed to discover common perspectives and themes.

Moir’s (1990) “Phases of First Year Teachers” described the stages through which many beginning teachers transition. By comparing the experiences of these lateral entry teachers to Moir’s data on beginning teachers, insight was gained into what these

teachers were experiencing and how their needs could be met. Moir's (1990) stages provide a framework for analyzing and reporting the first-year data.

Additionally, John Holland's (1973) psychological theory on the relationship between career and personalities was a reference for understanding why these participants chose teaching for their new career. Holland's (1973) theory suggests that one of the reasons some of these teachers' were more successful than others is that their personalities were a better match for teaching.

Setting and Participants

The initial interviews took place in neutral locations including one school system's administrative office, two beginning-teacher training locations, and two classrooms before the participants began teaching. The second and third interviews were conducted at the individual schools of each of the 12 lateral entry teachers (see Table 6). The settings included both rural and urban, middle schools and high schools located in western North Carolina. In this study small schools are defined as having fewer than 300 students and large schools as having more than 800 students. On the basis of this definition, nine of the school settings were large schools, two were medium-sized, and one school was small. Three of these schools were middle schools; nine were high schools. Table 1 describes the demographics of these teachers and their schools.

Nine high school and three middle school lateral entry teachers participated in the study. This study tells the stories of these 12 teachers: (a) how they began their teaching careers (b) their perspectives about teaching before beginning to teach, and (c) how their perspectives about teaching changed over time. Ten of the original twelve participants from four western North Carolina school systems responded to follow-up interview

requests, which were conducted four years after the initial interview (see Table 2). The stories of all 12 are told in Chapter 4.

Criteria for Participant Selection

I contacted human resources directors in 17 school districts in western North Carolina, August 2005, to obtain the names of possible candidates and contact information. Many of these districts, especially the smaller ones, had not hired lateral entry teachers. I identified 27 possible candidates and interviewed 16 as possible participants. Of the 16 interviewed, I chose 12 as study participants from four western North Carolina school districts. I based this selection on the following criteria:

- Each had a minimum of a Bachelor's degree in a related field or subject area to which they would be teaching.
- Each had no classroom teaching experience. (Some participants had been graduate school teaching assistants, some had taught in summer camp programs, and a few had nominal experiences as a substitute teacher. No participants had significant Pre-K - 12 classroom teaching experience.)
- Each became employed as a full-time teacher in a western North Carolina public school.

Participant Profiles

These twelve lateral entry teachers had diverse backgrounds, educational degrees, and former careers. A thumbnail sketch of each teacher is provided here as a demographic overview.

- Craig was a career college student before becoming a science teacher in a small rural middle school. He has a Master's degree in organic chemistry.

- Pam was a stay-at-home mother with two young daughters. Her husband is a teacher. She is teaching chemistry at a rural high school.
- Jennifer was a zookeeper who changed careers to become a science teacher. She teaches in a large rural high school.
- Connie's background is in journalism and advertising. She teaches English in a very small alternative high school.
- Ginny majored in geography and environmental science and worked with a nature conservancy doing government information surveys. At the time of the study, she was teaching science at a rural high school.
- Dennis was an operations manager for a finance company. He was hired to teach math at an urban middle school
- Britney worked at as a receptionist in New York City while pursuing an acting career. At the time of the study, she was a middle-school drama teacher.
- Christopher was an outdoor guide with the U.S. Forest Service before becoming a lateral entry English teacher at a large rural high school.
- Dan was a social worker who changed careers from a case worker to a math teacher. His first teaching assignment was at a high school on an American Indian reservation.
- Jessica was a social worker who came from Idaho to western North Carolina. At the time of the study, she was a lateral entry English teacher at a large rural high school.

- Ken was an engineer who had worked with large engineering firms in major cities throughout the United States. At the time of the study, he was teaching physics at a large, urban high school.
- Travis attended private schools and was a recent college graduate with a degree in English. He had no previous work experience. He was hired to teach English at a very large urban high school.

Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected by conducting a series of three interviews with all 12 teachers and an additional fourth interview with ten of them. The interviews spanned five years. The interview was conducted in a neutral location before the teachers began working with students. It was important to the study's purpose to gather the candidates' perspectives before they entered the classroom. For initial interviews, five participants were interviewed at their pre-service induction program, five were interviewed in an administrative office, and two were interviewed at the candidate's school, prior to the arrival of students. The second and third interviews were conducted at each teacher's schools during their first year of teaching. These interviews were conducted in classrooms, a break room, a hallway, and a gymnasium, to accommodate the teacher's schedule and extra duties. This allowed me to become acquainted with each teacher in his or her work environment.

The fourth and final interview was conducted in the same classroom, at the same school, for three of the teachers. Two final interviews were conducted in the teacher's classroom at their new school. Three final interviews were conducted by means of email,

one by social media, and one final interview was conducted via phone. Two of the participants were unavailable for interviews (see Table 6).

North Carolina requires each lateral entry teacher to participate in 10 days of training before they begin working with students. This training has been called various names, including “Beginning Teacher Induction Program,” “Lateral Entry Boot Camp,” or “Pre-service Boot Camp.” Four of these five interviews were conducted at a Pre-service Boot Camp, and one interview was conducted at a similar training called the New Teacher Induction Program. Five other participants were interviewed in their school systems’ Human Resources office. Two participants were interviewed at the school where they would be teaching before the beginning of school and before the arrival of students. All interviews were done privately, in a one-on-one setting; however, some interviews occurred in high-traffic areas (e.g., hallways or gymnasiums), which was not ideal.

Questions were similar for each of the four rounds of interviews (see Appendix A). During the first interview, candidates were asked 11 questions. Of these, six were general background information and five were designed to determine perspectives on their career-change decisions. The open-ended nature of these five questions enabled participants to share their perspectives, tell their stories, and reflect on their career decisions. Round 2 interview questions were comprised of eight open-ended questions to determine the teacher's emerging perspective on teaching. Round 3 interviews asked six questions that were similar to Round 2 questions to determine changes in their perspectives and to allow participants to reflect on their first year experience.

Round 4 questions were open-ended and depended on whether or not the interviewee was still teaching,

At the beginning of the first interview, rapport was established with each interviewee through casual conversation. I then asked six general questions to provide background information. The remaining five open-ended questions asked for each new teacher's perspective on teaching.

The second interviews were conducted at mid-year, from January to February, at each of the teachers' schools. These face-to-face interviews gave me the opportunity to experience the teachers in their classroom environments. Eight questions were asked. At this point, all interviewees were still teaching. The questions focused on their experiences thus far.

The third interview was conducted at the end of the first year of teaching. These were face-to-face interviews conducted at the teachers' schools during the last week of the school year. Six open-ended questions were asked of each teacher.

The final interview was conducted during the teachers' fifth year. These interviews were completed at various locations convenient for the participant. They were conducted face-to-face, by telephone, via e-mail, or Facebook. For one third (can you give the number instead of the ratio?) of the candidates, the interviews were conducted four years after the teachers' first year of teaching when they were no longer teaching. These two groups (i.e., those still teaching and those no longer teaching) were asked different questions. For those still teaching, the questions explored the teachers' perspectives after five years. For those no longer teaching, the questions centered on why they left teaching and their perspectives on the profession.

Once the interviews were completed, the responses were transcribed verbatim. The transcription data were then summarized into a narrative format. Cross-case analysis was used to identify similar patterns and themes that emerged from the data (see Table 3). As key words emerged, the terms were highlighted and recorded in a chart. Key words were clustered into themes. Theme strength was ranked in order, from the most times mentioned to the least.

Data Analysis

The perspectives of lateral entry teachers were explored, and their experiences described. Through careful analysis, commonalities and patterns were identified. The researcher's role in the study was to tell the stories of lateral entry teachers during their first teaching experiences and four years later.

A total of 46 interviews were conducted (see Table 2). The final interview allowed me to gather reflective data and allowed the teacher's to finish their stories.

At the time of the final interviews, eight of the 12 teachers had moved to different locations. Four teachers were teaching in the same school, four teachers had changed schools, and four teachers had left the teaching profession. Because eight of the teachers had changed locations, contacting them was difficult. Final interviews were carried out via phone, email, and social networking. For example, one teacher was teaching in Honduras, so the interview was accomplished via Facebook.

Each of the face-to-face interviews was documented by either audio tape with the teacher's permission or written notes. Some of the interviews were conducted in very noisy places (e.g., hallways during class changes and bus duty in the gym during basketball practice), which made some audio impossible to transcribe.

Transcribed interviews were transformed into a more readable, narrative format. These narratives told the story of each teacher. The narrative aided in the analysis of data by allowing patterns and commonalities to emerge within the teachers' stories. In reading their narratives, common themes were obvious. Eight themes were identified. Each occurrence of a theme in the data was documented and tallied. Table 3 details the analysis, commonalities and frequencies in the data.

Study Limitations

One limitation of the study was that data were collected from a small number of participants. Also, a four-year gap between the initial interviews in the teacher's first year of experience and the follow-up interview during the fifth year leaves a large, untapped time span..

Also, qualitative researchers can bring biases to their study. My experience as a teacher and as a beginning teacher trainer may have influenced the manner in which I asked questions, approached the interviews, and interpreted the data. The same experiences, however, also allowed me to understand interviewee experiences. This limitation was addressed by conducting interviews in a neutral location, by establishing relationships with these teachers, and by asking the same questions of each participant in a neutral way. These procedures allowed the teachers to be open in their responses.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

When I began this study, all 12 participants were excited and confident about the challenges their new careers presented. Their confidence seemed to be overconfidence. Many gave the impression that teaching was going to be easy. They were confident in their content expertise; they believed they knew how to deliver content and light a spark for learning in each student.

These new teachers believed that discipline and classroom management would not be a problem. Ironically, the biggest complaint from principals in regard to all first-year teachers is poor classroom management and ineffective student discipline. The impression that the study participants gave was that their classes would be so interesting to students that no behavior problems would occur. Students would be mature and respectful, and they would love their classes.

Although all of them were assigned mentors, they felt mentors were unnecessary. Some indicated that with their experiences, they would not experience difficulties.

All of these perspectives changed quickly. Jennifer said it best when I asked her if she experienced a mid-year dip. She replied, “My dip came the first week of school! It was really difficult! I wasn’t sure if I was going to make it or if I was coming back the next week!”

In the following section, I present the perspectives of 12 lateral entry teachers before, during and after their first year of teaching and how these perspectives changed over the course of five years. By examining the perspectives of these teachers and their experiences, insight can be gained into how to provide meaningful assistance to lateral entry teachers. The next section presents their descriptions of why they chose teaching as

their career change, why they believed they could teach, what they thought their experience would be like, and if their experience met their expectations over time. The data analysis section of this chapter examines these stories to provide a better understanding of the teaching profession through the eyes of 12 lateral entry teachers as they progressed through their first five years of teaching. The data reveal that some of them found teaching to be an appropriate career, but others did not.

Data Presentation

Twelve lateral entry teachers were interviewed across a five-year period. This section presents their stories and perspectives.

Science Teacher Craig

Craig was a student working on his Ph.D. before becoming a lateral entry science teacher in a small, rural middle school. He will be teaching at Young Middle School. Young Middle is a small, mountain school with 354 students and 27 teachers. Young Middle was named a “School of Distinction” by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) and a “North Carolina School to Watch.” At the beginning of the study, of the school's 27 teachers, four were lateral entry. During the last year of the study, the school still employed 27 teachers, but only two were lateral entry.

I first met Craig in his classroom before school began. He was excited and confident that teaching was the right career choice. Craig explained that he was a doctoral student before choosing teaching as a career. His plan was to complete his Ph.D. and then pursue a career teaching at a college or university. He completed his bachelor degree in history and chemistry and a master's degree in organic chemistry. His exposure to

teaching was limited to his experience as a graduate school teaching assistant and as a math tutor.

At mid-year when I met with Craig, we talked about what he found to be the most challenging, the easiest, the greatest disappointment, and his biggest surprise. He said that the paperwork and bureaucracy of public schools were the most challenging. Craig believed that “just the general rigmarole” was the easiest. “Just learning the ins and outs of teaching has been the easiest. Lesson plans, meetings, all the nuts and bolts of teaching, is second nature and easy for me,” he said.

He explained that the most pleasant surprise had been the collegial, friendly environment of the teachers. “The support has been fantastic!” he explained. He believed that the administration really trusted him and that had been the most helpful.

Craig’s biggest disappointment has been the students’ apathy. Craig said, “There is a lot of student apathy when it comes to, not just science, but learning in general.”

We then discussed his “mid-year dip.” He said that he believed it was not just the teachers that experienced the dip, but it was also the students. He believed his mid-year dip occurred after Christmas. He described his enthusiasm for teaching as 10, before the mid-year dip. He explained that coming back after the holidays was tough, so his enthusiasm dropped from a 10 to an eight, but that it would go back up to a 10.

At the end of the year, we talked again about his anxiety level. He said, “My anxiety level was pretty high, especially in terms of my own standards. I worried what I might have overlooked, what I haven’t taught them, what I haven’t prepared them adequately enough for, especially for high school. So anxiety level, I would say was

about a six. At the end of his first year, he mused, "There is just a lot more work that goes into even the basic or average level of teaching than people realize."

After five years, Craig and I correspond by e-mail. Looking back over his career, he said that he is giving less homework now than when we first began. He is still enjoying teaching, but it is not without frustration. One frustration is the lack of available materials. Everything for his science class is on compact disks rather than books, and many of his students do not have computers at home. He now uses more project-based learning with his students, and he has had mixed results. He said, "The students have fun, but if the project is too protracted or drawn out, they lose interest."

I asked Craig to reflect back on the past five years and to tell me what he would do differently. He said, in retrospect, he wished he had used a discipline or behavior modification plan when he first began teaching.

Craig said that his perspective on teaching had changed after having experienced it first hand. "There is a lot more 'fun' than I expected in American education today and a lot less learning. My pedagogy is still largely faithful to the time-tested model where kids learn the material first, and then have fun applying what they have learned," he explained.

I asked Craig how he felt about his decision five years ago to become a lateral entry teacher. He said "It was a wise and perfectly fitted choice for me!"

Science Teacher Pam

Pam was a stay-at-home mother before she began her teaching career. She was hired to teach chemistry at a rural high school. Pam is married and in her late thirties. Her husband is also a teacher at a "feeder" middle school to her high school. Her

husband is an experienced teacher who has switched to public school from a private school. Pam has no teaching experience. Previously, she worked in a doctor's office, as a dormitory parent with her husband, and now as a mother. She and her husband have twin daughters. She has a bachelor's degree in environmental science with a minor in chemistry. She wanted to be a researcher; however, after the birth her daughters, she decided that she wanted to teach.

Pam was hired as a lateral entry teacher to teach science at Park High School. Park High is a sprawling, rural school of approximately 900 students. The community is primarily blue-collar; a paper mill is the primary employer. Park has between 60% and 80% of their students achieving at grade level; more than 40% of the students receiving free or reduced-cost lunches. Only three of their 60 teachers are lateral entry.

I met with Pam in the summer, shortly before school began. Pam said she believed that teaching would be an adventure. "I don't think it will ever be boring," she said. She had already met her mentor who has nearly 30 years of experience, a wealth of knowledge, and had been extremely helpful to her.

Before teaching, Pam believed her greatest challenge would be fitting everything into one semester since her school would be on the semester-block schedule. Also, she anticipated that getting the students prepared for the End of Grade Test would be hard because she had no experience with the testing process. She also thought the paperwork would be challenging. Pam believed that the easiest thing for her would be building relationships with students.

At mid-year, I met Pam in her classroom after school. We talked about what had been hardest for her so far. "I guess that would be I didn't get as much training about

things that go on here at the school, especially NC Wise. A lot of it I had to kind of figure out on my own,” she said. NC Wise is a statewide program to manage student data, such as grades and attendance.

We spoke about what had been the greatest surprise, the greatest disappointment, and the easiest thing for her with teaching. The greatest surprise came when she gave her students a project and let them complete it individually. She was surprised that the top students got the lowest grades and the students that had struggled the whole year made A’s. She believed that it was due to her belief that the underachievers have difficulty with structure. I think it was because they didn’t have the structure, and they could just figure it out on their own,” she said.

Her biggest disappointment with the students was the number of students that just didn’t care. She felt would be nice to get out of that trend. She stated that she had talked to other teacher friends and they felt the same way. Apathy is a big problem and she believed that it was characteristic of this generation of students.

Her greatest challenge had been classroom management. “It’s a hard thing to get a grip on and to come to terms with what works for you. You can go to classes, and seminars, and learn what supposedly works but, when you put it into practice it has to be more practical for you. And for a little while, I think I have a grip on it, and then it just goes crazy!” she said. Consistent classroom management, she said, is definitely her biggest challenge. “If I had the classes this semester that I had my first semester, I would be rethinking teaching. But I had that first semester with really good kids that I could kind of get in my groove.”

At the end of her first year, I met with Pam in her classroom again. She experienced a good year, in retrospect. She felt that the easiest thing about teaching had been the relationships with the students. This was as she predicted at the beginning of the year. Building student rapport had come naturally to her.

We discussed Moir's (1990) stages of beginning teachers, particularly "the mid-year dip." Pam said that her dip happened in the middle of the first semester and it all had to do with classroom management and discipline.

At our last interview during Pam's fifth year of teaching, I asked Pam to reflect back over the years. Pam said that the main thing that she wished she had done differently was to be tougher from the beginning and consistently tough with the discipline throughout. She remembered a conversation with her principal. She told him, "I can't be a mean person." He said, "You don't really have to be mean. You just have to be tough." So now, she believes that she is a lot tougher. She recognizes that the actual teaching part has gotten easier each year, and her classroom management is much better than when she began. She feels now that she is in charge and can handle things. However, when she first began teaching, she was very overwhelmed.

I asked Pam what she wished that she had known or what she would do differently if she had the opportunity to do it all over again. She said, "I wish I had known how to be tough. I let them get away with too much, and I did not have control. This year has been her easiest and she attributed it to the Harry Wong conference she attended in her fourth year of teaching. "I wish I had read his book during those first few years, but I was just trying to survive," she said.

I asked Pam how her perspective on teaching had changed over the years. She replied that she still loved what she was doing. In retrospect, she was extremely happy with her decision to pursue teaching as a career. I asked Pam, "Where do you go from here? Do you plan to continue teaching, or do you see yourself going in another direction?" I asked. She said that she planned to continue teaching and hoped to be there, at Park High, until she retired. "I can't imagine doing anything else!" she exclaimed

Science Teacher Jennifer

My first interview with Jennifer took place in my office in August, shortly before she began her first year of teaching. Jennifer was a former zookeeper who changed careers to become a science teacher. She was hired to teach in a large, rural high school. Jennifer, who is in her mid-twenties, is bright, attractive, articulate and mature. She is currently completing a master's degree in biology. She has no previous teaching experience other than working as a lab assistant in graduate school. Prior to being hired as a lateral entry teacher, she worked at a large amusement park caring for animals. She also worked with a zoo and at an environmental center as an organic farmer. I asked why she decided to switch careers and become a teacher. She replied, "I enjoyed the educational aspect of my job as a zookeeper, and I really wanted to get my master's degree, so it seemed like a natural fit." She was hired to teach high school biology at Turner High School.

Turner High School was built in 1967; it is a medium-sized high school. Turner is perched on a hilltop, overlooking a small, rural town. It hosts 1,200 students with 60% to 80% of the students achieving on grade level. At the beginning of the study, 6 of their 70 teachers were lateral entry.

I asked Jennifer what she thought her first day with students would be like. She said, “On the first day, I will probably go over classroom documents and textbooks and hand out the beginning of the year letters. I will review schedules with the students, I will go over the classroom rules and procedures, and review the syllabus.” She said that she would prepare for her classes by reading the chapters in the textbook and making an outline of each chapter. She added, “I am preparing to be overwhelmed, especially on the first day. I know that I will have a really huge and steep learning curve, but I still believe that teaching will be a positive experience.” She rated her enthusiasm level at this point to be a 10. She felt that her anxiety level was a 10, also. “I think I will have to rely on my mentor a lot for help. Even though her mentor had not been assigned yet, she believed that her mentor would be very helpful throughout her first year of teaching.

Prior to beginning teaching, Jennifer felt that her greatest challenge would be the pacing of the instruction. As it turned out, that had been her biggest disappointment instead of her biggest challenge. “There is so much that we’re expected to cover that we can’t go in depth on things that I’m interested in or that the students are interested in. There has been a lot of interest in topics we weren’t able to really look into that much,” she explained.

At mid-year, I stopped in to meet with Jennifer. We met in the counselor's office since she hadn't been assigned a specific classroom. She traveled from room to room teaching science from a cart. Jennifer's biology class was primarily 10th-grade students. She explained, “Most of them are sophomores, and then juniors and seniors who have either failed or just haven't taken the course yet, so it's all levels of sophomores, and it tends to be lower level juniors, and seniors.”

Trying to teach science without any facilities had been Jennifer's biggest challenge. Another interesting challenge that Jennifer had encountered was a moral challenge. "Teaching involves many more moral decisions than I expected, like how much to help kids, how much to let them do stuff on their own, and how much to get parents involved," she said.

I met again with Jennifer at the end of her first year at Turner. I asked her what had been the easiest for her. She believed that the easiest thing during this first year of teaching had been asking students good questions. It just came naturally for her.

Her biggest surprise had been the student apathy and motivations. She explained, "I was kind of prepared for it, but it still surprised me when it happened. I can't get them to do work outside of class, outside of school. If I gave them time in class to do homework, they would do it but, whenever I expected them to take home it home to complete, they wouldn't do it. I think there are a variety of reasons because I talked to the students about it. Some of my students worked full-time jobs outside of school and just didn't have time. I had students this year who had kids, or were primary caregivers of their siblings, or they just had bad home situations, and education isn't stressed in the home that much. They don't see the importance in it. So there's not one real reason."

The most pleasant surprise she encountered this year had been how much the other biology teachers were willing to help, to share materials, to listen to her vent her frustrations, and to help out by giving their perspectives of the different aspects of teaching. "The support and collegiality has been a wonderful surprise. When I vented, it usually went back to those moral decisions of should I be on this, should I be pestering this kid with his parents, or does he/she need to learn on his own and from making his or

her own mistakes?” Jennifer said. Another surprise for Jennifer was how much she was had to do to keep the students motivated.

I ask her about the “dip” and if she experienced that. She explained, “The first week of school was really difficult for me and then, after that, it was better. And everyone said that February was going to be hard. Sometimes, it’s just hard to keep everyone motivated. And the thing that helped me through those times was everyone else’s first-year stories. I kept thinking of their stories, and I thought, well, I’m doing better than that. I can make it.”

At my final interview, I ask Jennifer how the past five years had been. “Wonderful,” she replied, “I couldn’t have asked for anything better!” She reiterated that she was very happy with her decision to become a teacher. “I am so glad that I chose to teach. Of course, there are always difficult days when you wonder what life would be like if you chose a different path; but in the end, I can’t imagine doing anything else but teaching.”

I asked how her perspective on teaching had changed over the past five years. She said, “When I began teaching, a good friend of mine who teaches gave me valuable advice. She told me that no matter what my first year was like, that I should plan on going back a second year. The first year was definitely not representative of how my other years have been, so I am glad I took her advice. I am continually excited about new ideas that I have for my classroom and I am always trying to better my lessons and the overall atmosphere in my room. I went into teaching with the attitude of, ‘I’m not here to entertain you, I’m here to teach you’, and although some days I still feel that way, I have made a big shift in my attitude to where I try to teach in an entertaining way to get

them engaged. I try to make the material relevant to their lives, and when possible, choose topics that they will find interesting. I always think each year will get easier, and in some ways they do. But, in other ways, they get more difficult. I find that I continually raise my expectations of my students and of myself, which in turn leads me to work harder every year!”

Jennifer reflected on her first year of teaching and told me what she wished she had known and what she would do differently if she had it to do over. “I had such wonderful support from other teachers my first year which helped me to get through that difficult time. When I look back on that first year, I feel bad for the students that I had because I did not know what did and did not work in a classroom. That first group had to be my experimental group until I understood what would make a class successful. I made the lessons better, made the labs better, and changed the labs to inquiry labs. I don’t know that I would do much differently because the mistakes that I did make, and there were plenty,” she laughed, “helped me to be a better teacher in the following years.”

I asked if she would continue teaching. She said, “Yes, I definitely plan to continue teaching, but for how long? I’m not sure. I always tell myself that if I am ever to a point where I dread coming to work, or I stop having fun at work, or I don’t look forward to seeing my students, I will quit teaching. Unless that day comes though, I’ll keep teaching!”

English Teacher Connie

Connie’s background is in journalism and advertising. She was hired to teach at Central High School, a small, rural, alternative school that houses between 80 and 90 students in grades 9 through 12. Alternative schools are public schools that offer

nontraditional education for students whose needs cannot be met in a regular or vocational school. Alternative schools utilize a variety of approaches in teaching and in the learning environment. This particular school has a dress code and small classes that average eight students per class. Central is housed in an 80-year-old building that has spacious classrooms with huge windows and high ceilings.

It was mid-August shortly before school began when I met with Connie in the school system's administrative office. Her previous experience or connection to teaching was working as an adjunct teacher at a community college. Also her mother and her aunt were both teachers. The passion that they had for teaching was one thing that helped to persuade her to become a teacher. She said that she envied their 'teacher talk', and she wanted to make a difference in the lives of kids.

I asked Connie what she thought her first day would be like. She responded that she thought that it would be a challenge. She planned to meet the kids and to do something that would motivate them on that first day. She thought that her background in sales would be beneficial because sales and teaching are both motivational. She said that she was a very enthusiastic and creative person. She planned to share her enthusiasm and hoped that it would be contagious. She reported that, at this point, her enthusiasm for her new career on a scale from 1 to 10 was a 10.

To prepare for her first day, Connie said that she had spoken to everyone. "I've talked to other teachers. I've met with my mentor, who is fabulous! I've talked to my mom and aunt. I have reflected on my own high school experience and one particular English teacher that was a great influence on me.

Connie believed that her greatest challenge would be organization and time management. Before beginning teaching, she has already completed some preliminary lesson plans. She currently felt that her anxiety level was about a six. She thought that the easiest thing for her would be establishing a good rapport with the students. Connie explained, "I really care about kids so I think the relationships will be easy."

At mid-year, I asked Connie what had been the biggest surprise and the greatest disappointment. She said that her natural rapport with the students had been a delightful surprise. She said that one of the nice things about her small, rural alternative school was that all the teachers knew the students really well. So if she was having problems with a student, she could go to a fellow teacher and ask for advice since they were all very willing to help. They were all eager to suggest things that worked or might work with particular students. The collegiality and support from the staff were definitely a pleasant surprise for her also.

A disappointment was the motivation level of the students. She said that at her school, they have bright kids, but they just are not motivated. "I don't think that our kids behave necessarily that much differently from other kids. I think our kids just don't have the reinforcement at home. These kids need more people to show an interest in them," she said.

I then asked Connie what had been the easiest for her. She said, "I never thought of myself as a kid person. I don't have kids. I didn't grow up thinking, 'I can't wait to have kids', but now I absolutely love these kids. It's one of the nicest jobs because you really get involved. You're dealing with human beings on a personal level. The easiest thing for me has been the rapport with the students."

I asked Connie if she had experienced the “mid-year dip.” She said that she thought that her dip actually came early when she was getting used to things. It wasn’t the paperwork, it wasn’t the lesson plans, it wasn’t all that, “she said. “It was the stuff, sometimes painful stuff, about some of these kids. I want to make a difference, but some of their stories are so hopeless. Her frustration now came from administrative things, like why NC-Wise didn’t always save things. NC-Wise is a state what student information management system for grades, schedules and attendance.

Connie told me this story:

Right now, the most disappointing thing, now that grades are out and End of Course scores are in, is the failures. I think as teachers, we push so hard for these kids to be successful and, obviously, we want our test scores to be good for ourselves and our school, but we want the kids to do well, too.

Connie also relayed to me this story:

I have a student who I just adore. She’s a great girl. She’s a really good student. She failed her English End of Course test. She got a 61. She had a solid B average through my class. I told her, you have to come take the retest. You’ll be okay. You came in late for your EOC test. I think you can still make it. We’ll review; we’ll remediate. She never showed up. I had to fail her. That’s the worst part about it. That’s the last thing you want to do when you actually see that these kids have tried, she’s read everything, she’s participated, some quizzes she bombed, some quizzes she’s done well, but she failed the class. And although I love her, and I’ll be happy to teach her again, that really disappoints me. That hurts my little heart because I hate to fail, especially a kid who’s tried. Those

kinds of things have been the really hard to accept. I think she's one of those students who never know where she's spending the night. She just jumps from friend's house to friend's house. We tried to call her to get her to come in Monday, and take her retest, and couldn't get in touch with her. It is such a slap in the face, because here you have to give a student an F and she really doesn't deserve one. That's frustrating!

During her fifth year, I asked Connie to reflect on her teaching career and how she thought things had gone. She said that looking back, her classroom management was just okay, and there were things about it that she had changed over the years. "I haven't had too many problems, but I am much firmer now," she said.

She said she was very happy with her decision to change jobs. "I'd never want to go back to what I was doing. I can't imagine leaving education. I think having done the business world and the publishing, and the marketing, and the advertising; I've just got to do something I care about. So, I might not be rich, but I'm going to be happy. So, that's more important," she said. I asked Connie if she planned to teach next year and five years from now what she thought she might be doing. "Absolutely," she replied. "I hope they'll keep me here. I can see myself teaching in 10 years. This suits me, teaching at a small school like this. It suits me because I like the individuality."

Science Teacher Ginny

When I first met Ginny before school started, it was in her classroom where she was preparing for the first day of school. Ginny majored in Geography and Environmental Science and worked with the Nature Conservancy. She was hired as a science teacher at Mountain High School. Mountain High is nestled in the northern

Appalachian Mountains. The school has an enrollment of almost 800 students with an average class size of 16.

For this school year, Ginny would be teaching two environmental and one honors science class. She believed that she would enjoy teaching. She really loved doing research, believed that she would love getting kids excited about science, and she liked being out in the field. She thought that teaching would give her the best of all those worlds. With teaching she felt that her plan would be to have her summers off to pursue her other interests, such as field work and research.

On the first day of school, Ginny planned to introduce herself, go over her rules and procedures with the students, get some personal information from them, and do a “KWL” (what you know, what you want to know, and what you learned) sheet. “I want to find out what they are interested in and what they want to learn about,” she said.

Ginny believed that her biggest challenge would be discipline. “It will be difficult to find the line where they will behave and listen, but at the same time, not be a big, bad, mean teacher. In class we read Harry Wong’s book, and he talks about the four stages of teaching. I’m in the delusions of grandeur stage. I have all these big plans and I think on my first day I’ll have a reality check. It will be a big change in my life just being in school every day,” she laughed.

Her greatest disappointment had been the student apathy. “Motivating the students is the hardest thing,” she replied. “Just trying to get the kids excited about learning is difficult. I try to connect with their lives and get them excited about possible careers in science. Since environmental science is not a tested subject, they lack that ‘testing motivation.’ In fact, Ginny explained, that is the first question that they asked

this year when they first met was, ‘Is there an End of Grade test in this thing this year?’ And once they heard through the grapevine that there wasn’t, they had pretty much written off the course.”

At our end of the year interview, Ginny confessed that she felt disorganized. She said that one thing she would change would be to get tougher with discipline. This first year, especially with discipline and consistency, she felt she was too easy. She planned to be tougher with rules and procedures, and with expectations. She also planned to work on having better lesson plans and more structure.

At the end of the year, I asked if her perspective on teaching had changed. She still agreed that her greatest challenge had been classroom management and discipline. “I can’t ever be relaxed with the discipline,” she expressed. She felt that the relationships and interactions and getting to know the students on a personal level had been easiest for her this year.

Ginny says the support of the Science Department had been “awesome.” The Science Department had been very most helpful. She could go to anyone for help. She got a lot of support from a second-year science teacher.

My last interview with Ginny was conducted by means of Facebook. I had learned from the school system that she had lost her teaching position through a Reduction in Force due to major budget cuts by the State. The last contact information provided by the school system yielded no results by phone, e-mail or U. S. mail. I saw a story on the local news regarding the State budget cuts and teaching positions being lost, and they interviewed Ginny. She mentioned that she was moving out of the country since she had lost her job through the reduction in force. I began searching again, and I finally found

Ginny by exploring Facebook. She is now living and teaching in Honduras. She thankfully replied to my request. Here is her response:

“Yes, my position was cut and I was devastated! I loved my high school. I am surprised at how many people saw that news clip. I looked for jobs in N.C. and couldn't find any and decided to follow my dream. I've always wanted to live outside the U.S. and it seemed like the right time to try it. It was all very last minute, so I was not very picky. I am living in San Pedro Sulfa, Honduras and teaching science at a bilingual high school. It has been a very interesting experience. The school is so inefficient and they love to micromanage. The kids are really funny and sweet but totally unmotivated to do any actual work. I'm looking to change jobs for the fall. I've applied to schools in Budapest, Rome, London, Lisbon and Bavaria. I'm also applying to the Washington, D.C. City Schools. That is my home, and I have thought about moving back before. I've really enjoyed exploring in Honduras. It is a beautiful country and totally underrated. I wish my Spanish was better.”

She said that she was still very happy with her decision to pursue teaching as a career. I loved my job up until the point where I lost it. There wasn't really much I could do about the bad economy. I'm glad I didn't get my license before I started teaching. I don't think it would have helped all that much. I learned most (if not all) of what I know on the job and from colleagues.”

I asked Ginny how her perspective on teaching had changed after having experienced it first hand. Ginny said, “My perceptions are so askew right now; it is hard to answer that question. Things are so backwards here. It is a little unbelievable sometimes. Right now I think that North Carolina has the greatest school system ever, but

when I left I didn't think that. I would say that I think the tenure system is pretty stupid, but if I had tenure I might not. It was really upsetting to see horrible teachers who didn't care at all about education get to keep their jobs, and I lose mine.”

I asked if she anticipated that she would still be teaching next year. Ginny replied, “Right now I plan to do this until I’m 80. I want to get my master’s degree. I don’t know if I will take time off for it or do it while teaching.”

(Note: In 2010, Ginny is now living in Washington DC. I have been unable to determine if she is currently teaching there.)

Math Teacher Dennis

Dennis was formerly an operations manager for a finance company before becoming a middle school math teacher at an inter-city middle school. He is married, in his late thirties, and has a bachelor’s degree in business administration. He worked for an investment company dealing with mutual funds for 15 years. His job dealt primarily with mathematical statistics and data. He will be teaching middle grade math to sixth and seventh graders at Selden Middle School.

I asked Dennis what made him decide to make a career change. He said that he was looking for a change and wanted to try something different. I asked why he had chosen teaching. He explained, “Well, education was sort of in my family.” His mother and father were both teachers. He stated that he had no experience or background in education other than attending school himself.

I asked Dennis what he believed would be the hardest thing about being a new teacher. He said, “I think my biggest obstacle will be classroom management. I’ve looked up some stuff online about discipline and I’ve got a couple of books.”

He believed that the content would be the easiest for him. I asked him if he was familiar with his curriculum that he would be responsible for teaching. He said, “Yes, I actually went online and looked at the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.”

After the two weeks of “Boot Camp,” he would only have a week to prepare before the students start. I asked him how he would prepare for the first day. “I want to have things on the walls. I have some ideas about figures and shapes and stuff to put on the walls and numbers,” he speculated. “I will have this Monday through Wednesday with no students and then Thursday the students start.”

Dennis described what he thought his first day would be like. “I’m guessing it’s going to be, administrative. I will introduce myself. I’ll have the kids introduce themselves. I’ll set down the ground rules for the semester and it probably will be a little chaotic.” I asked him if he had in mind what his rules for classroom management would be or what procedures he would want the students to follow. “Yup,” he replied, “I have some ideas, but from what I’m told, we’re going to put them down on paper here at Boot Camp. I think it will be great.”

He expressed that on a scale of 1 to 10, he felt that his enthusiasm for his newly chosen career was, “I would probably say a nine.” His anxiety level was “probably a six.”

I next met Dennis mid-year at Selden Middle School. Selden is located in a quiet, older neighbor of small well-kept houses. The school is a one-story structure with one main building and four rectangular -shaped detached buildings. The office building was on one side of the parking lot and the other buildings are arranged in a disorganized pattern on the opposite side of the parking lot. When I drove up to the school, my first thought was that this was not a good layout for a middle school. It would be very

difficult to secure and manage this disconnected array of building. There were no covered walkways to facilitate movement or protect students from the weather.

I waited in the office area for Dennis. The office staff was not friendly, but the office area had some interesting brochures that explained the school's mission and detailed the curriculum. After waiting quite a while for Dennis, to finish class, I was told that I could go over and wait outside his classroom door. I received some vague directions to which building and classroom I should go to. I wandered around the campus, cutting through another building to arrive at Dennis's classroom. The entire time, no security was visible and no one questioned my presence on the campus. No visitor or identification badge was issued. Building doors were not locked and it would be extremely easy for anyone to enter any classroom building without first checking in with the office. This lack of a secure facility was all very surprising to me.

Based on the North Carolina School Report Card (NCDPI, 2004, 2009), Selden Middle hosts 523 students with 59.7% of the students achieving on grade level. At the beginning of the study, nine of the 41 teachers were lateral entry. After five years, only two of the 34 teachers are lateral entry. The student population has dropped to 395.

I met Dennis in his classroom during the last few minutes of class, while students were preparing to leave. He expressed that he was very disillusioned with teaching and education as a career. His concerns included lack of discipline of the students, and in the school in general. In his opinion, leadership at the school was very weak and non-supportive. On that particular day, 6 out of 8 teachers in his building were absent. Only two substitute teachers had shown up, so they were all having double classes. There wasn't enough physical space in the classroom for 50 students at one time, so students

were sitting on tables, in the floor, and on the window sills. He said that it was “impossible to teach in that situation and there was no learning going on.” All he was doing was trying to keep order in the classroom, which was extremely difficult. According to Dennis, leadership in the school was very weak and non-supportive.

His biggest surprise had been how hard classroom management was. He said that he struggled with classroom routines and procedures such as checking notes and agenda books. Also, he found it difficult to keep up with make-up and late work when students were absent. He complained about the amount of paperwork that teachers must do and the amount of time spent grading papers. These were all surprising to him. He had a district assigned mentor who “drops by during his planning time every couple of weeks, which was not very helpful.”

At the end of his first year, I met with Dennis again at Selden. At this point in time, he felt that his enthusiasm level for his new profession was “about a three,” and his frustration level is “a 9 to a 10.” His experience at Selden had not been a positive one.

As a lateral entry teacher, he had a two-year district contract that must be fulfilled. Still Dennis believed that he would continue to teach next year and for years to come.

Dennis told me the easiest thing for him had been the content and subject matter. This was what he had predicted at the beginning of the year. He still had great frustration with the students’ lack of motivation and lackadaisical attitude toward learning. The absence of administrative support was still a problem, but he indicated there might be an administrative change in place for next year.

At the end of his first year at Selden Middle, his contract was not renewed. He immediately resigned and reapplied for a vacant position at Garner High School.

For our final interview, I met Dennis at his new teaching assignment. He has now been at Garner for four years.

The campus at Garner is made up of five magnet schools in a "school within a school" format. The five magnets consist of schools of International Studies, New Technology, Math, Science and Environmental, Business and Finance, and Leadership and Public Service. He teaches in the Business and Finance school. Dennis told me Garner serves a generally low-income population in a very industrial section of the city. The school struggles with low student achievement and behavior problems.

Dennis' classroom is in a round building towards the center of campus. The campus hosts many detached buildings with central courtyards. I visited the school on a Friday afternoon and stayed until after 3:00. The buildings were locked at 3:00, and I was subsequently stuck in the courtyard between buildings. I was only able to access the parking lot by pounding on a door until a security guard came and let me through.

Dennis said, "Middle School was very tough and I am glad to be in high school now." In his five-year teaching experience, he has had six different principals at two schools. He likes high school better than middle school because "The kids are more mature and you can do higher-level things with them." Still, he expressed his disillusionment with teaching.

Dennis said that in retrospect, his perspective on teaching had changed significantly. "Teaching is less about teaching," than he thought it would be. Also, it was less enjoyable than he thought it would be. "There are too many rules, too much paperwork, too much politics, and other things. The focus was too much on test scores

and not enough on students.” Teaching was not like he thought it would be before he began as a lateral entry teacher.

Looking back, if he had to do it over again, he said that he would not make the same decision. He would choose another profession. He confided in me that at the end of this school year he would resign. I asked him what he would do next. He said that he would probably go back to the financial industry.

Drama Teacher Britney

Britney obtained her undergraduate degree in drama. She taught at a Girl Scout Camp for the summer and worked as a receptionist while pursuing an acting career. Britney said that she decided to become a teacher after working at the camp. She felt it was more suited to her personality. Despite how much she loved performing, she wanted to work in the field of education. She really missed the academic environment.

She became a drama teacher at an urban, middle school. I met Britney at a pre-service training for lateral entry teachers. The "Boot Camp" was a 10-day program to prepare newly hired lateral entry teachers for the classroom. The primary goal was to have a positive impact on lateral entry teacher retention and development by increasing their confidence and pedagogical knowledge before they entered the classroom.

Britney was hired to teach theater arts at Random middle school. “It is actually more of an introduction to theater in general, and an opportunity to play around,” she said. "This is the first year for our particular middle school, so I'll be the starter of this program, but a lot of the other middle schools have had it for a little while, which is great!”

I asked Britney what she planned to do to prepare herself for the start of school. At this point in time, Britney had not even seen her classroom. "Well, for me particularly, it's important to set up the room in a way that lends itself to creativity. I don't want to stifle the students, so depending on the space that I'm given in the school, which because they've never had the program, I think he's kind of really struggling to find a good space for this class. It's about setting up the seating arrangement in a way that they have plenty of room to get up and get involved. They will need to know there's going to be a whole lot of exploring and getting up on your feet. There will be some written work but they need to know that it's a lot more than that. Participation is more what theater is than anything else. So that and having some visuals, bulletin boards, and resources in the classroom that are exciting to them, whether it be playing music on the first day or something like that. Because it's an elective, I want them to feel like, hey, this is your time to really enjoy the learning process, and I'm going to teach you something that you probably have never been exposed to. I just kind of want to welcome them into that world without it being overwhelming or scary or anything like that."

Britney continued to explain, "As far as the curriculum goes, I've looked at it a little bit. Because this is a new program at my school in particular, the principal is not real up on exactly what's going to be taught. I think on the middle school level they are in preparation for the high school level."

When I asked Britney what she thought would be the easiest for her, she believed it would be her enthusiasm for the job. "I just want to kind of keep a positive attitude in the classroom and convey that I think that this is something worthwhile. This should be something that should be fun and should be a nice creative outlet."

We talked about any anxiety and anticipation that she might have. She felt that the thing she was most anxious about was the student behavior and discipline. "I am really a little nervous about standing up and really just having to take control. I am a pretty soft person as far as that goes," she said.

For my next interview with Britney, I met her at her school. Random Middle School is located on a busy rural highway. It is surrounded by trees, and borders on a public park. There are three main buildings and 15 portable buildings. Britney's classroom is one of the portable units, which she shares with another teacher.

Britney was very busy preparing for her next class which was scheduled to begin momentarily, so we didn't talk very long. She seemed disillusioned. According to Britney, there was not much discipline at the school. It was mid-year and you could feel her frustration. She stated that her principal did not really care about what she was doing. "If I do a play or a program, that's OK. If I don't do one, that is OK with him, too. He really doesn't care about the drama program. Elective courses are very secondary with him. He's nice, but he doesn't have high expectations for my program."

She loved working with the students, but the classes were large. Some of the students chose to take drama, but most were placed in her class because it fit their schedule and they were not enrolled in band or foreign language. "They really aren't very interested in drama. I am trying to teach drama with 34-38 students per class, in a room with desks and no resources," she said.

When I asked Britney if she would still be teaching next year, she sighed. "I will probably still be here, but I would love to go somewhere else, maybe high school or elementary school. Middle school kids are difficult."

When I met with Britney at the end of the year, she was packing her room to move. She had attended a transfer fair that her school system offered, and had received a transfer to an elementary school. She was excited about her new assignment, but also sad to be leaving some of her students.

I ask Britney if her perspective of teaching had changed over the past year. "I think there are so many children out there that actually need quality teachers; teachers who know their subject area really well and who are willing to take the extra time and really be a good influence for that student. Middle school has been hard" she said. "Not only is it a difficult age, but the arts program at Random has not been a priority, which is unfortunate, because that's something that could really help students."

For my final interview, I met Britney at her new school, Creative Arts Elementary School. Creative Arts is a magnet school designed to address students' interests and abilities in the arts. Five hundred students attend Creative Arts. It is in an older, not very affluent neighborhood. Some of the houses are abandoned, have boarded windows, and are in various states of disrepair. Still, the school and the academic program that I discovered on my visit were impressive.

I asked Britney if most of the students at the school were from the surrounding neighborhood or if they were from outside of the school's boundaries. She said that they were mostly neighborhood students and a few students who are attracted by the arts. As the drama teacher for the school, she sees each class of students two or three times each week. She expressed that this was her "dream job." Here, the arts are the focus for the whole school."

I asked Britney how she felt, in retrospect, about her decision to change careers and become a teacher. She expressed that she was very pleased with her decision. She loves her job and loves what she is doing now. “At that time, it was definitely the right decision for me. I think someday I might go back and get my doctorate, and maybe teach at the university level, but for now this is what I want to do.”

I asked Britney, in looking back to when she started teaching, what she would do differently? She said, “I would go in with a better plan for classroom management and discipline. When I was at Random I had to learn classroom management on the job. It was pretty tough and I struggled, but I stuck with it.”

I asked Britney how her perspective on teaching had changed after having experienced it first hand. “I value teaching the same now as before I started. Other peoples’ perspectives of teaching really get me down. You hear about ineffective teachers and it taints peoples’ perspectives. You have just got to believe in what you are doing and I do.”

English Teacher Christopher

Christopher was an outdoor guide for the U.S. Forest Service before becoming an English teacher at a large, rural high school. He also worked as a bookstore assistant, a line cook at a resort restaurant, and as a library assistant. Christopher has no teaching experience. His perspective of teaching is from attending a private boarding school.

I first met Christopher while recruiting new teachers at several job fairs. I later interviewed him in my office. Christopher told me that he had always been an academic at heart. He was a good student, excelled in school, and was valedictorian of his high school class. He felt that his abilities were better served as a teacher than a park ranger.

He would be teaching English at Township High School. Of the 70 teachers at Township High, six are lateral entry teachers.

Christopher believed that his biggest challenge would be learning the curriculum. He believed that the easiest part of his new job would be his content knowledge and establishing a rapport with the students. He also said student discipline would be a challenge.

I asked Christopher what his current enthusiasm level in anticipating his new career was. "My level of excitement is about an eight or nine and my frustration level is about a six. I am excited about the challenge and feel that I can make a difference," he said.

Later that year, I met with Christopher in his classroom at Township High. I asked Christopher how things were going this year. "My year has gone very well so far," he said. "The last few weeks I have had the leisure to look back on the first semester and in retrospect I think it has gone as well as or better than I expected it would."

"Are you happy with your decision to pursue teaching as a career?" I asked. "Absolutely, I am. I can't imagine a school or a system that would be more welcoming. I settled in as comfortably as I could ever possibly have imagined," he responded.

Christopher and I talked about what had been the greatest challenge for him so far. He answered, "Just sheer time requirements. The learning curve has been very steep with teaching English. In addition, I worked at the stadium during football season as stadium manager. Plus, my thirty-five mile commute, my family obligations with a wife and young daughter, extra curricular activities (I was assistant soccer coach), and taking

the required courses. I have definitely felt the pinch. It has been a greater demand than I expected."

I asked about the "mid-year dip." "I guess I have experienced it now, but only in terms of time and probably the demands of my college classes combined with the February doldrums. I don't think it's anything out of the ordinary. Had I been taking a class in the fall, I think it would've hit earlier, but fortunately I was able to budget my resources and put it off until after Christmas and that made a difference," he told me.

I asked about his enthusiasm and frustration level on a scale of 1 to 10. He answered, "Enthusiasm, I would say a 10. I think a lot of that comes from looking back on a successful first semester. I really have no qualms about anything that has happened. There are certain things that I know will be easier next year, and that only increases my enthusiasm. Things like having the folders full of lesson plans that I can draw on, so I won't be reinventing the wheel."

When we met at the end of the year, Christopher said that the easiest thing for him had been the rapport with the students. "I have found that I work well with 10th graders, which was the brunt of my students. I think with 100 plus students, building rapport runs the full spectrum of possibilities, but a lot of students who started off the year tentative have warmed up and I don't think any student has gone in the other direction," he said.

He continued, "I have one class of ninth graders which has been the most challenging class. There is a vast difference between ninth and 10th graders. As a first year teacher working with many students with Individual Education Plans and various other learning and personal problems, it has been very difficult. I think it's a difficult

group for any first year teacher to reckon with, because you don't have a lot to draw on as far as normal students."

I asked Christopher what had been his biggest surprise. He said coming from a private school background, the lack of student motivation was his biggest surprise. "Being 40 now, I guess there's a generation gap there, as well, but I was never much for television or computers in my youth and it seems like the vast amount of students have spent far more time in recreational technological pursuits than anything academic. And I think that lack of reading has really impacted their grasp of English. That has swayed my vision of what teaching high school would be like."

Christopher told me that the community and parental support at this school had also been a pleasant surprise. "I've not had a single parental contact issue where the parent wasn't willing to bend over backwards to do what is best for that their child," he said.

I asked Christopher what had been the most helpful this year. He replied, "I guess the collegial quality of the school and the town. It's a welcoming town I've felt comfortable from the get go, coming from a rural background myself, and I have never felt like an outsider since my arrival, so that has smoothed everything incredibly."

"If you could change one thing in general about education or the system, what would that be," I asked. "Well, as I mentioned, the ninth grade, C-level students, have been the biggest challenge for me and I would probably avoid funneling them towards first year teachers. It seems like they are better served by experienced teachers. I understand experienced teachers probably are less-inclined to have or want those students, but in the students' best interest and in the interests of the beginning teachers, I

think that's a mistake. What frustrations that have occurred with me have often been associated with classroom management and discipline problems."

After his first year of teaching at Township High School, Christopher resigned to accept a teaching position at a nearby private school. I asked Christopher if he was still happy with his decision to pursue a career as a teacher. "Absolutely," he replied, "I still miss Township and making the decision to pursue this position was not an easy one."

I asked him if he was at that same point again when he decided to pursue teaching as a career, would he make the same decision and what would he do differently. He said he would do nothing differently. "I was so fortunate to have to have found myself in the company of such a generous and accomplished mentor, and to have spent my first year in a school system that was as welcoming and provides so much first-year support."

I asked Christopher if his perspective on teaching had changed after having experienced it first hand. He said, "There is no question but that the time commitment has far exceeded my expectations. There are just not enough hours in the day to do all we want to do for these kids."

I asked Christopher if he saw the same student apathy in the private school setting as he did when he was teaching at the public school. "No," he replied, "not as much. I think in private school when parents are shelling out \$15,000 to \$30,000 a year there's a financial incentive for those students to be there and parental incentive for them to succeed, but I think it's cultural, too."

Math Teacher Dan

Dan was a social worker who became a math teacher at a high school on an

Indian Reservation. He has a bachelor's degree in Sociology. He had worked as a social worker in two states. He most recently had been a Forensic Child Abuse Investigator. He also had limited experience as a substitute teacher. Dan was hired to teach math at Center High School on the Reservation. He would be teaching Algebra and Tech Math to ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students.

I first met Dan at a beginning teacher training. I asked what had made him decide to make a career change. He replied, "The average time in a social work position is two to three years, and I was pretty much burnt out with the long hours and high caseload. I decided then that I wanted to pursue a career in teaching if I was ever given that option."

Dan told me that he believed his teaching experience would have some frustrating moments, but for the most part he thought it would be enjoyable, pleasant, and rewarding. He believed that his greatest challenge with this career change would be learning how to handle the diverse population.

By October, Dan had resigned his position at Center High and had been hired to fill a split position teaching math half-time at Township High School and half-time at Park High School.

I met with Dan at mid-year (December) at Park High where he shared a classroom with another teacher. He really liked working at Park. Dan said his lead curriculum teacher had been great! He describes his experience as small classes with nice, polite students. He was having a harder time at Township. He had large classes there. "The kids just don't want to learn. They just don't care," he said.

At mid-year, he was struggling and disillusioned. The lead teacher at Township was not helpful. "I take her suggestions for improvement and do them, and then she

comes in to observe me, and it is always something else. I have talked to my mentor and I do what he says I should, and then she comes in and doesn't like it. The Lead Teacher at Park thinks that I am doing fine! My mentor thinks I am doing a good job. I just can't figure out what that lead teacher wants from me."

By January, Dan contacted me about changing positions and going to the middle school level. In April, Dan resigned his math position at both high schools. I did not hear from him until four years later.

After Dan left his teaching career, I contacted him to find out what he was doing now. He said that he was a trainer/job coach for child welfare professionals in another state. He was teaching in a classroom setting and was completing field observations on new case managers. He really enjoyed what he was doing now.

I asked Dan to look back and reflect on how he felt about his decision to pursue a teaching career. He seemed very bitter as he said, "It was good to consider the teaching career. I came in contact with a lot of nice people. However, I learned that your outlook on a new career can be heavily influenced by one person. My enjoyment of teaching quickly went away due to the frequent observations by the lead teacher. It seemed she was out to get me. The lead teacher's continuous negativity out weighed what others said. "

I asked him if he was at that same point in his life at again, would he make the same decision and decide to pursue teaching as a career, or would he do something differently. He replied, "I would never have taught in the school that I attended as a student. I was very successful at the Reservation school prior to transferring. In

retrospect, I should have probably stayed in that school system, rather than trying to teach where I went to high school.”

I asked Dan if his perspective on teaching had changed after having experienced it first hand. He told me, “I have found that too many parents feel like the school should be the disciplinarian and the school feels like the parent should do it, and the teacher is caught in between, and is trying to manage a classroom of behavior problems and teach class at the same time. It is just too much.”

English Teacher Jessica

Jessica was a social worker who was hired to teach English at Township High School. Prior to a social worker, she worked as a chiropractic assistant and an environmentalist for AmeriCorp, and most recently, as a social worker program director. Jessica grew up in a small, rural community, much like the one in western North Carolina where she now lives.

Jessica decided to change careers and to become a teacher because she wanted to connect with students and ignite a spark in them for learning. She described that she wanted to change the world by changing students’ interests. She wanted to make a difference in their lives.

At mid-year, I met Jessica in her classroom at Township High School. I asked Jessica what had been her most pleasant surprise so far. She said the English Department had been great. "I can go to them any time I have questions. They provide ideas for units, and just lead me through, step by step, instead of just throwing information at me."

I asked what had been her biggest disappointment and she said the large class size. She said, "My largest class has 26. And I guess the other surprise is that students

aren't required to have lockers and so they end up carrying stuff around all year which, when given a half a classroom, definitely impacts space."

Jessica's greatest challenge was not knowing what kids would comprehend in a lesson. Jessica said, "My biggest challenge was predicting which teaching material I was going to give them to get them to pass the End of Course test." She added, "Well, you teach them and they do hands-on projects, and you do testing, and you do quizzes. I mean, but you just never know as a first-year teacher how that's going to reflect back. The thing that's not most important, necessarily in high school is for the kids to be able to move on."

"The other hardest part is taking classes when you're a first-year teacher. I ended up dropping out of my classes because there was no way. I mean, if I was going to have a home life, and take care of any home duties, and have a job, and commute, and stay sane, that would be a little hard, I think. I wish we would be discouraged, actually, from taking classes our first year, unless people really had to."

Jessica continued, "I think something that's easy for me is lesson planning as far as diversity of activities just because I was a program director for so many years, that type of training before, where you have to engage in learning by just giving information, but then having students do things; like I never felt at a loss for coming up with activities for them to do."

At year's end, I asked Jessica to reflect on her year. She said, "Well, I think in looking back on the whole year, the most major thing has been that it has been rocky at Township. We've had unstable principal leadership. The top has been completely

unstable and that trickling down to a new teacher, you just don't have the leadership that you need to fall back on."

Her biggest surprise this year had been that high school students fight. She said, "I grew up in a small, rural community. It was not acceptable for kids to fight in school and there is so much fighting that takes place at this school. And then, all the kids get is three to five days out of school suspension. It seems like almost a positive consequence for them to get out of school. That's been the biggest surprise. I mean, you can look at a discipline plan for the school, but how that plays out and how that affects your class is just surprising."

At the end of her first year of teaching, Jessica resigned to move back to Montana to care for her ailing grandmother. She has now returned to work as a Social Worker in Montana. She did not answer my inquiries after five years.

Science Teacher Ken

Ken was an engineer who had worked with large international firms in the United States and overseas. He was hired to teach physics at a large, urban high school. Ken was one of the lateral entry teachers that I met at the "Boot Camp." He is a Korean, in his late 50s; although he has lived in the United States for more than 20 years, his English is still not fluent. I could not help but wonder if he would be able to communicate effectively with his students. He moved to the United States from Korea as a senior research chemist in several different laboratories for various large American corporations. He would be teaching chemistry at Olson High School.

I asked Ken what made him decide to become a teacher. He said he went to college in Korea and had a professor who inspired him to pursue chemistry. He went on

to graduate school and got his Ph.D. in chemistry. He said, "Life sometimes turns you in different directions. We moved many times and went through many hostile takeovers with the competing companies that I worked for. We decided that we wanted to be rooted somewhere and make a living there. So I refused an offer to go to Germany, and decided to come back to North Carolina."

Olson High School is a very large high school that houses 1,800 students in a suburban area of a large city. During this school year the school is transitioning to a "Renaissance" magnet school that will focus on the arts, humanities, and social issues. The school has split into five small, theme-based schools including one that will focus on math and engineering.

At mid-year when I met with Ken in his classroom at Olsen, we talked about his greatest challenge this far. He said classroom management was his greatest challenge and one that he wasn't prepared for. He said, "Well, if I remove, let's say half the students from the classroom every single day, it would probably be a good place, but it's too much to do. Trying not to send out even single behavior problem sometimes it's challenging. When students are kicked out of the classroom, the administration is very supportive and can handle it. For example, once in a while, I have 20 or 30 students at the same time and what am I going to do? Probably nothing. As a first-time teacher, when I displayed the classroom rules, I expected that students would simply read and follow them, but that's not the case."

I asked Ken what had been the easiest for him. He felt that encouraging the students who were willing to learn was easiest, but also trying to encourage students who do not want to learn was hard. "Some students are really studying. They're asking for

extra credit opportunities and some students are bringing parents with them, which I really appreciate. We talk and we come up with ways of helping students to do better," he said.

I asked Ken to rate his experience as a teacher. He said it was hard at first and then it got a little better, so probably a five or six. Ken described his classes, "One is an honors class. They've been okay. Of the two other classes, one has been super all year long and the other one, a regular class, they're the ones that I cannot predict how they will behave. The general pattern is Mondays and Fridays are always difficult. I'm trying to give my lesson plans some activities and some demos on Monday, and Friday, but I have to adjust them because of the behavior."

At the end of his first year, I met with Ken again in his classroom. It was after exams, and I asked him what had been his biggest surprise this year. His biggest surprise had been the students who didn't want to learn and he said he understood why after showing all the grades. "I tell them 'if you continue this way, the option is only one: I have to flunk you. Unless I need to flunk you, I don't want to. I'll do everything to rescue you, to give you extra opportunities,' but some students just can't grasp it. It is sad."

However, he said he was happy with his decision to pursue teaching. "Yes! There's no doubt about it, but I am a first-time teacher and it has been an experience. Certain things I had not been prepared for. Nobody told me.

I asked Ken to look back on his first year and to tell me what he would do differently. He said he would modify a lot of things. "You have got to know how they respond to formulas or certain ideas. Maybe certain things are good for a college student

the way I explain them, so I have to bring them down to high school and explain them in a different way. That's not the way I usually think, but I have to see things from their perspective and I'm adjusting," he said.

The most helpful this year had been the chemistry teachers meetings because he always listened to the teachers. He talked to other teachers who had been there longer and they usually had some tips that they shared about their ups and downs. He felt better knowing that others had been through similar things.

After teaching for three years, Ken was released by the school system in a reduction in force due to the current economic decline. He was unavailable for a fifth year interview. He is currently not teaching in the district.

English Teacher Travis

Travis was a recent college graduate with a degree in English. He was teaching English at a large urban high school. He was a very young, 23-year-old lateral entry teacher who had recently married. He also recently had graduated from a Tennessee university with a degree in English and philosophy. He mentioned that he had previously planned to continue his education and receive his Ph.D., but he was burned out. Therefore, he had decided to become a teacher. He said he wanted to do something relevant - something that was going to keep him on his track to pursue his Ph.D. without "putting him through the ringer for five more years." He had no experience in teaching or any work experience. He was hired to teach English at East High School in a large, western North Carolina city.

East High houses 2,200 students with an average class size of 24. It is a large, sprawling high school with a very inviting atmosphere. Even with almost 2,200 students,

transitions between classes were very orderly; I was impressed with the organization of such a large, urban school. East is identified as a “School of Progress” on the North Carolina School Report Card, with between 60% and 80% of their students are at grade level, with an average Scholastic Aptitude Test score of 991. East has a traditional seven-period schedule. There are 153 teachers with only a 19% teacher turnover rate; therefore, the staff is fairly experienced and stable. East has only 15 lateral entry teachers.

Travis is a “floating teacher,” which means he does not have his own classroom; instead, he goes from room to room with his materials on a cart. He explained that his greatest challenge with this situation was getting to places on time. Because he has to go from room to room, it is difficult get to class and have all materials ready by the time the students get there. .

For the final interviews with Travis, I spoke with him by phone and through e-mails. Travis said, “I decided to leave teaching at the end of the year. I was really worn down by the workload and realized that I had a long way to go before I could be certified, which was a condition of my employment at East. The reality hit home that I could support my family much more effectively in another field. I think teaching was the right decision for me at the time, because I had thought about it for so long. In retrospect, though, I regret that I rushed into it directly out of college without any intermediate training.” Travis’ contract was not renewed after one year at East.

He now works in university development. The reasons that he left teaching were the excessive paperwork and because it was so time consuming. “Often I was working 60 plus hours a week. I was not prepared for that. I was leaving at 4:30 AM to go to work

and getting home at 5:30 in the evening. Those who are not in education don't realize how much time and effort the job requires," he said.

Another aspect of the profession that contributed to his decision to leave was the "lack of tangible rewards for the job." Travis felt that "You really can't see, especially short-term, that you are making a difference." There was "very little reward for the job." Travis explained that working in development is more "fluid" than teaching. There was some travel involved, but the work load was much less than teaching. "You make your own schedule. The main thing is that you get out of it what you put in. The reward is much more immediate and easy to see," Travis explained.

Population Sample

Table 3 displays the pseudonyms for each lateral entry teacher, his/her gender, age range, former career, college major, hometown, and what they were hired to teach. It also describes their schools, regarding number of students and whether it was an urban or rural setting.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed according to the following major questions:

1. What were the expectations and perspectives of these lateral entry teachers before they began teaching?
2. How did their perspectives change over time?

Secondary questions included the following:

1. Why did the alternatively licensed candidates change careers and chose teaching?

2. Did these candidates believe that teaching was the right career choice for them?

Why Did Participants Change Careers?

Career change theories address why people change careers and how the career choices match personalities. Of the 12 career changers, two had been career students (i.e., their only experience was that of a student). These two career changers had completed master's degrees, and one had begun working on a doctoral degree. Five of the career changers had science-related backgrounds, one was formerly a banker, one was an actress, one was in advertising and sales, and two were social workers (see Table 1.) As prescribed by lateral entry state requirements, the area of teaching licensure sought had to be closely related to their bachelors' degree field of study. A social work or sociology degree is not specifically related to an academic teaching area; therefore, the two social worker career changers needed a preponderance of coursework to be in one specific subject area, which would then become their license area and the subject area they would be teaching.

These 12 participants' reasons for becoming teachers were very similar. One main reason was altruism.

At the beginning of the study, more than half of the participants said their reason for changing careers was altruistic. They wanted a career where they felt their work was worthwhile, where they could make a difference, and where they could give something back.

Craig said "The Ph.D. track was taking me further away from who I am and what I want to be: a teacher." He said that he chose teaching because he believed "It is a

profession where you can give back by equipping students with the tools to create their own self-worth throughout life.”

Pam was a stay-at-home mom who decided that she wanted to teach. She wanted “to make a difference in the lives of students.” Craig agreed. “I feel a part of a great and noble undertaking,” he said.

Ginny was doing environmental plant restoration and grew increasingly disillusioned with plant removal and restoration. She felt it was thankless because it took so long for to see results. She wanted to work with kids and get them excited about science and the environment. Ginny said, “This is really where it is at! I always wanted to make to a difference in the world; whether restoring pine flat woods or through education. With education, I am getting them while they are young and I will be able to impact their lives.”

Connie said, “I wanted to make a difference. So, I decided to become a teacher!” Christopher said, “I am excited about the challenge and feel that I can make a difference.”

Actress Britney said, “I think the idea that there are so many children out there that actually need quality teachers. They need teachers who know their subject area really well and who are willing to take the extra time and really be a good influence for that student.”

In addition to altruistic reasons to choose a teaching career, 8 of the 12 lateral entry teachers indicated there were people in their lives who influenced their decision to become a teacher.

From these teachers' perspectives, influences for their career changes came from important people in their lives. Eight indicated they were close to someone who had influenced them in their decision to pursue teaching.

Connie said, "I talked to my mom and aunts, who were teachers. I reflected on my own high school experience and one particular English teacher that was a great influence on me. The passion that they had for the teaching career was one thing that helped to persuade me to become a teacher."

I asked Craig why he chose to teach. He explained that the greatest influence to seek a teaching career came from "great teachers growing up, and seeing my mom's joy, and our small town come to cherish her. My mom was a 40-year career teacher."

Jessica said that she often went to her sister, who is also a teacher, for help. "She taught me how to do scaffolding. I talked to my sister a lot and got advice, tips, procedures, and ideas from her." Jessica was also influenced by a professor. "I always thought that I wanted to be a teacher. I started out going to school to study education and history. I had a really phenomenal professor for my early education class and my history courses. He was so charismatic. He really made an impression on me."

When I asked Ken why he decided to become a teacher, he said, "I went to college in Korea. I had a professor who inspired me to pursue Chemistry, so I went to graduate school and then got a PhD." He first followed another career path, but then came back to teaching because of that professor.

In addition to being influenced by family members and teachers, experiences that dealt indirectly with teaching were also influential. These experiences caused them to begin thinking about becoming a teacher.

These twelve lateral entry teachers were chosen partially because they had no experience or minimal prior teaching experience. Eight of the 12 lateral entry teachers had limited exposure to teaching, including three participants who worked at summer camps, two who tried substitute teaching, and three who worked as assistants in graduate school. Four had no experiences with teaching, other than as a student.

Pam said her only previous teaching experience was as a substitute teacher at the private school. Dan said, “Since I substitute taught 3 to 4 years ago, I decided then that I wanted to pursue a career in teaching, if I ever had that option. The one thing that influenced me the most, I believe, was students telling me, when I substitute taught, that they enjoyed me being their teacher even if it was only for a day or two.”

Ginny said that she did some substitute teaching and did not really like it. “I substituted in an elementary school and it was really not my thing. I like little kids but a whole class is simply overwhelming. They didn’t listen to me! It was exhausting,” she said.

Craig said, “I taught as a lecturer in college for chemistry for about, what was it, a TA for two and half years and lectured for a year and a half.” He said he tutored students in math and that was “pretty much it for teaching.” Jennifer said she had no previous teaching experience other than working as a biology lab assistant when she was in graduate school.

What Expectations Were Perceived before Beginning Teaching?

Initially, all twelve teachers said they expected teaching to be a life long vocation. Each was excited about this new career.

When they were asked what teaching would be like, they expressed similar opinions. Ten of the teachers anticipated that it would be very rewarding. Craig said, "My teaching career will be hard but rewarding work." Dan said, "For the most part, I think it will be enjoyable, pleasant, and rewarding."

Seven of the twelve believed establishing relationships with students would be easy and come naturally for them. Two said the mechanics of teaching and the content would be the easiest.

All twelve had a plan for their first classes. They would review classroom rules and get to know their students. Six teachers said they would make the content fun, interesting, and enjoyable for the students. Brittany said, "I think this is something worthwhile and learning should be something fun." Two felt that it should not be entertaining, but should be more about the desire to learn.

Five said teaching would provide them with more time than their previous career. More time would give them opportunities to pursue interests and spend time with family.

Some of the lateral entry teachers said they anticipated the easiest aspect of teaching would be delivering the subject content. Lateral entry teachers are often hired because of their strong content expertise. When I asked Dennis what he thought would be the easiest aspect of teaching, he said, "For me I think the content will be the easiest part." This expectation proved true for Dennis and many of the others. Ten out of the 12 had work experiences and strong content backgrounds in their subject area.

Travis said, "I think content wise I'm pretty good at what I know, so if there is [sic] any kind of content issues, I haven't even really worried about that at this point because I feel like I've got a good grasp on it."

Christopher said that he believed that his biggest challenge would be learning the curriculum. He was, however, confident in his content knowledge.

How Did Their Perspectives Change over Time?

The perspectives of all twelve of these teachers changed significantly over the five year study. Initially all 12 teachers believed teaching would be a long term career choice. This did not prove to turn out to be the case for six of the teachers. Their perspectives changed from enthusiastic and confident to disillusioned and frustrated.

Ginny expressed her frustration in regard to teacher tenure. She felt cheated because she lost her position based on lack of seniority rather than perceived performance. Dan felt victimized because he felt that one teacher "had it in for him" and influenced other colleagues. Jessica expressed her disillusionment regarding the attitude of disrespect demonstrated by the students. Dennis said he preferred the business world. Travis said the small intrinsic reward was not worth the massive time commitment. Ken was disappointed by the lack of student commitment.

Six teachers said teaching was the right, long-term career choice. Overall they said they loved their job and couldn't imagine doing anything else. This was further demonstrated in some of their achievements during the five years. Craig was selected as "Teacher of the Year" for his school and has taught numerous science professional development classes. Connie achieved National Board certification and "Teacher of the Year" honors for her school. Christopher was awarded the Faculty Award for his school.

Even though six participants were satisfied with their career decision, their perspectives had changed. Craig found that students expected learning to be fun. Similarly, Jennifer found that she had to entertain if she wanted students' attention. Both

the group that is still teaching and the group that is no longer teaching said the profession was less about teaching than they thought it would be.

Four of these six teachers' perspective of discipline and classroom management changed. They became more structured and through in setting rules and boundaries. They confessed that they were too lenient with rules and discipline during their first year. Four of the six still teaching had originally predicted that establishing appropriate relationships with students would be easiest for them. Subsequent interview data indicated this initial perspective was true. Analysis of the data indicated that establishing relationships with students had a positive effect on these teachers' success and longevity. None of them initially expected the support of colleagues would be important, but eleven found collegial support to be vital and as important as strong administrative support.

Furthermore, five of the six, mentioned that they did not feel supported by the administration. All of the participants found administrative support to be important.

All teachers, both new and experienced, face professional challenges. The 12 lateral entry teachers were surprised by and unprepared for some of the challenges they encountered. The following were the most common challenges reported by these teachers.

Difficulty with Classroom Management

Classroom management is especially difficult for beginning teachers. Nine of the 12 lateral entry teachers said that classroom management was their greatest challenge and was a surprise. Initially, they were all very confident in their ability to manage their classroom, but they quickly found how difficult it really was.

When asked what her greatest challenge had been, Pam said “I would say definitely classrooms management. Surprisingly, that’s all the stuff we are doing now in beginning teacher meetings. It’s a hard thing to get a grip on and to come to terms with as to what works for you. You can go to classes, and seminars, and learn what supposedly works but, when you put it into practice it has to be more practical. And for a little while, I think I have a grip on it and then it just goes crazy. Consistent classroom management, I guess, is the biggest challenge. If I had the classes this semester that I had last semester, I would be rethinking teaching. But I had that first semester with really good kids that I could kind of get in my groove and then this semester, I have had trouble.”

Ginny said her greatest challenge has been classroom management and discipline. “I can’t ever be relaxed with the discipline,” she said.

Connie said, “My classroom management was okay, but there are things I’ve changed. I am more specific now, in the beginning, about going over rules.”

Christopher said, “What frustrations that have occurred with me have often been associated with classroom management and discipline problems. Those have been the most frustrating academic conferences and parental conferences I’ve had.”

Dennis anticipated that his biggest challenge would be classroom management. He said, “I think being older will be an advantage to me. I know that this is a tough age.”

Jessica said her biggest surprise was that high school student's fight. “I grew up in rural Montana and it was not acceptable for kids to fight in school and there is so much fighting that takes place at school. And then, all kids get is 3 to 5 days out of school suspension. It seems like almost a positive consequence for them to get out of school.

That's been the biggest surprise. I mean, you can look at a discipline plan for the school, but how that plays out and how that affects your class is just surprising.”

Initially, 9 of the 12 lateral entry teachers said that they anticipated classroom management would be the hardest skill to acquire as a beginning teacher. Those who continued to teach over the course of five years, changed strategies, got “tougher,” and became more in control.

Student Apathy

From these teachers' perspectives, their greatest disappointment in teaching was student apathy. Eleven of the 12 lateral entry teachers said student apathy was their greatest disappointment. Several were very surprised by this because they all felt they would make their subject matter interesting and students would be excited and love learning. Sadly, this was not the reality.

Pam said her biggest disappointment “was the number of students that just don't care. It would be nice to get out of that trend,” she said. She had talked to other teacher friends, and they felt the same. “Apathy is a big problem.” She continued, “I believe that it is this generation of students.”

Ken said that his greatest disappointment was “the student who doesn't want to learn. It is very sad”

Craig's biggest disappointment was student apathy as well. He said the hardest task for him was “motivation and just getting kids excited about science. I think sometimes they look upon it as just a task, something to do, and get it over with.”

Jennifer described being totally surprised and unprepared for how much she was going to have to do to keep students motivated. “I thought students would have some

motivation to learn. I can't get them to do work outside of class or outside of school. If I give them time in class to do homework, they'll do it, but whenever I expect them to take it home and complete it, they won't do it. I think there are a variety of reasons because I've talked to students about it. Some of my students work full-time jobs outside of school and just don't have time. There have been students who have kids, or are primary caregivers of their siblings, or they just have bad home situations, or education isn't stressed in the home that much. They don't see the importance in it. So there's not one real reason."

Dennis said he had great frustration with the students' lack of motivation and desire to learn, and with the lack of administrative support. "The students simply lack self-discipline," he said. "I am checking students' notes and work more carefully now. If I ask if there are any questions, they don't ask anything. They just don't seem to care."

Ginny's greatest disappointment with teaching was the "lack of internal motivation of the students." She explained, "Even with my AIG (Academically and Intellectually Gifted) kids, if they are not getting a grade, they don't care. Even if it is something really great and educationally important, if there is not a grade involved, forget it. There is a lot of student apathy when it comes to, not just science, but learning in general. They're not that jazzed to learn."

Another huge surprise for these new teachers was facilities. Three of the beginning lateral entry teachers expressed that another disappointment in their first year of teaching was the fact that they had no classroom in which to teach.

Lack of Facilities

When these first-year teachers were hired to teach, they did not know they would not have their own classroom. Once the school year began, they learned that they would teach in rooms that were otherwise unused during a teachers' planning period. They had to carry teaching materials from room to room on a rolling cart.

Jennifer spoke of her experience. "Yes, mostly I'm happy, with occasional stressful days." Her biggest challenge was trying to teach science without any facilities. Jennifer does not have a classroom; instead, she travels from room to room teaching science from a cart. She provided her perspective, "The safety issues with not having a classroom or lab are huge. I don't mind the inconvenience. I am just concerned that something disastrous will happen."

Travis was also a "floating teacher." He explained that his greatest challenge is getting to places on time. He said, "It has been a huge issue, especially at the beginning of the day when there's the largest number of demands from the students. They are rushing to get their things done, and I'm trying to get in the door. All it takes is going down the hall and one folder falling off the cart and that's a mess, an absolute disaster! Dealing with the start of any class is always a challenge because a lot of teachers, wisely, just keep the same information on their boards from one period to the next. I can't do that. I have to do things on transparencies, and that involves set-up and takedown, so that's been a huge issue."

In our interview before she started teaching, Britney envisioned her classroom in a certain way. As it turned out, she did not have a classroom. She described the reality and frustration of her situation. "I was teaching drama with between 34 and 38 students

per class, in a trailer with desks and no resources. I share a room with another teacher and can't change the desk arrangement or anything in the room!"

Time Commitment

These teachers found that the time commitment was much greater than they had anticipated before they began teaching.

Travis said he left teaching because of all the paperwork and because it was so time consuming. "Often, I was working 60-plus hours a week. I was not prepared for that. I was leaving at 4:30 a.m. to go to work and getting home at 5:30 in the evening." He continued, "Those who are not in education don't realize how much time and effort the job requires." Travis found that the job was not conducive to family life, so he chose to change careers.

Christopher said, "There is no question but that the time commitment has far exceeded my expectations. I regularly find myself putting in 70–80 hour weeks, and if there is any one thing that is likely to drive me to leave the profession any time soon, it is this one. I love the work, but this sort of schedule ultimately takes a high toll, and is simply not sustainable in the long term. Part of this is my own perfectionist nature, and part is that I have taught new classes for each of the five years I have been in the business."

The lateral entry teachers in this study were not prepared for the amount of time that teaching requires. This surprise coupled with student apathy, classroom management problems, and lack of facilities, all added to their disillusionment.

Teachers Transition through Emotional Stages during their First Year

In the beginning, these newly hired lateral entry teachers were all excited and enthusiastic regarding their new careers. Their level of enthusiasm was close to 10 on a scale from 1 to 10. The actual average was 9.3.

By midyear, enthusiasm had dropped to 4.8 on the scale. Moir (1990) calls this the disillusionment stage. All 12 of the lateral entry teachers experienced the “dip” during their first year of teaching. Their “dips” occurred at various time between September and February. These “dips” were accompanied by doubts and questions about their decision to teach.

The 12 lateral entry teachers in this study went through the beginning teacher stages described in Chapter 2. Data points were determined by teachers’ answers to the questions posed in the four interviews. During the interviews, the teachers were asked to rate their level of enthusiasm and excitement and their level of stress and anxiety at each interview during their first year of teaching. These questions were asked to determine if these teachers' perspectives correlated with Moir's (1990) study which outlined the phases that beginning teachers transition through. These phases are anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection,

The enthusiasm question was asked before they began their new career, at mid-year of their first year of teaching, and after completing their first year. Each teacher rated their level on a scale from 1 to 10.

The study participants were also asked about their own “dip” and when it occurred. Some of the lateral entry teachers described their dip occurring as early as September. The majority of the teachers felt a dip between October and January (See

Table 4). As indicated in the chart below, the 12 lateral entry teachers transitioned through similar stages as described by the Moir research in Chapter Two.

The disillusionment stage was very obvious in five of the teachers interviewed. By midyear, Britney was questioning her decision to become a teacher. She was teaching drama to middle school students who did not want to take drama. She said, “I was teaching drama with 34 to 38 students per class, in a room with desks and no resources. They didn’t really want to be in here, so it was hard.” Her disappointment and frustration at this point was palpable. Teaching had not turned out to be as she had expected.

Connie described, “I’d go home, or I’d call my mom, and I’d just know all the students’ sad stories. One of the first things I assigned them as ninth-grade students was to write an autobiographical essay because I wanted them to do something that would help me to learn more about themselves. I shouldn’t have done that! It was tragic! Some of their stories are so sad. But, you know what? It made me respect them more, and admire them more for coming to school, and I just know that there’s a limit to what I can do.”

Dan told me, “I have found that too many parents feel like the school should be the disciplinarian and the school feels like the parent should do it, and the teacher is caught in between, and is trying to manage a classroom of behavior problems and teach class at the same time. It is just too much.”

Jennifer said she had experienced the dip. “The first week of school was really difficult and then, after that, it was better. Sometimes, it was just hard to keep everyone motivated. And the thing that helped me through those times was everyone else’s first-

year stories. I kept thinking of Mrs. H's first-year stories and one of my other teachers in my college courses, and I thought, well, I'm doing better than that. I can make it."

"My dip happened about the middle of last semester," Pam said, "and it was the classroom management and discipline with the students, when I had sent like 10 or 15 detention slips a day." Pam said that her frustration level was about an eight but her enthusiasm level dropped from a 10 to about a 3."

Lateral Entry Teachers Experience Multiple Levels of Support

The teachers in this study all appreciated the various levels of support they received. Unexpected support was the most pleasant surprise for 11 of the twelve teachers. Support from mentors, administrators, and colleagues were valuable assets for these beginning teachers.

Mentor Support

Seven of the twelve teachers expressed strong, positive relationships with their mentors. Connie said, "I met with my mentor, who is fabulous!"

Travis had similar feelings. Travis has a mentor that is at the same grade level and same subject as him, which is ideal for effectiveness, but unusual. He describes his mentor as being very organized which has helped him a great deal.

Pam said, "I went to him my second or third day, and he said, so how much of these Power Points and worksheets do you want, all of them? So he did. He downloaded all of them. That was great!"

Dennis did not have such a positive experience. He had a district assigned mentor who drops by during his planning time every couple of weeks. He stated that, "she was not very helpful. "

Administrative Support

Administrative support varied a great deal for these teachers. Most had little contact with their administrator, but a few had good relationships.

Pam detailed meetings with her administrator and the advice that he gave her. On one occasion they discussed classroom management and he told her, "You don't really have to be mean. You just have to be tough."

Britney did not have positive administrative support at her first school, but did in her second. Of her first administrator she said, "The principal is not real up on exactly what should be taught."

Jennifer said, "I think in looking back on the whole year that most major thing was it's been rocky. We've had unstable principal leadership. The top has been completely unstable and that trickling down to a new teacher. You just don't have the leadership that you need to fall back on."

Collegial Support

These teachers found their most pleasant surprise to be the collegiality and support they received from coworkers. Ten of the 12 lateral entry teachers identified collegiality as one of the most pleasant surprises they found in teaching. Nine out of 12 also indicated that mentor and administrative support was very good.

Collegial support was expressed as strong factors of job satisfaction by the lateral entry teachers in this study. Characteristics of support detailed by the teachers included encouragement, collegiality, administrative leadership, teacher leadership, and strong mentoring ties.

Travis said, “I found resources in other teachers. They would kind of lay everything out for you, and using other people’s ideas and things like that really helped. I just about died around early November because I was trying to do so much all the time, and I got advice from other teachers and it got better.”

Travis noted that he also got help from a variety of different people. “The planning periods are a good time for that kind of thing because I have two different planning periods and so there are always different people around. That provides a lot of support. I always have a roommate since I’m a floating teacher. You know, it’s just kind of good to go through something to see if it made sense. Being a floater, I see three or four different teachers a day, just moving in and out of rooms, so that helps. And, I feel like I’ve had a lot of different networks to go through.” Travis also said that the administrative support had been good. “When it comes down to sort of brass tacks, they do what they can do, and they’re behind us,” he said.

After her first year of teaching, Jessica said, “Well, the English department has been great. I am able to go to them any time I have questions. They have provided ideas for units, and have just led the new teachers through, step by step, instead of just giving us information all at the beginning.”

Craig explained what he felt was the most pleasant surprise that he had discovered in teaching. “I guess the collegial friendly environment of the teachers has been the most pleasant thing. I thought there might have been a little, not hostility, but a little bit more of a dividing line because of the whole Northerner–Southerner thing and cultural class, perhaps. The support has been fantastic! That’s been a real pleasure in terms of administrative support. The administrative support has allowed me to make decisions,

whether it is with parents or academics. I think the fact that the administration has put the ball in my court and entrusted me with the responsibility, and the assumption that I have the wherewithal and the know-how to steer my own ship. That's been the most helpful."

Craig said the most helpful thing this year was, "I guess the collegial quality of the school and the county. It's a welcoming county. I've felt comfortable from the get-go. Coming from a rural background myself, I have never felt like an outsider since my arrival, so that has smoothed everything incredibly. My mentor's classroom is next door to mine. I have access through the back, so I don't even have to leave my classroom to contact her. She's given me free reign to an appropriate level, but has always been there when I needed her, so it really couldn't have worked out better for me. She has the answers to all the questions or is capable of finding them out quickly. My mentor is teaching only one class, 10th graders, this year and no ninth graders, so and with the ninth graders particularly, I've had to go to other teachers here, and especially with that being an end-of-course tested class. Everyone here has been welcoming and we're all on the same hall, so help is usually just a few steps away."

Many of the other teachers expressed the same feelings. Connie said one of the nice things about her small rural alternative school was that all the teachers knew the students really well. So, if she was having problems with a student, she could go to a fellow teacher and ask for advice, and they were all willing to help. They were all eager to suggest things that work or that might work with particular students. "The collegiality and support from the staff were definitely a pleasant surprise," she said.

Jennifer said the most pleasant surprise she had encountered had been how much the other Biology teachers were willing to help, to share materials, to listen to her vent her frustrations, and to help out by giving their perspectives of the different aspects of teaching. “The support and collegiality have been a wonderful surprise. When I vent, it usually goes back to those moral decisions of should I be on this, should I be pestering this kid with his parents, or does he/she need to learn on his own from making their own mistakes? There is always someone around to help me with those things.”

Despite the collegiality and support, four of the teachers changed schools, and four are no longer teaching. Of the four participants that changed schools, two gave a lack of administrative, mentor, and colleague support was a big factor in their decision to change. Two of the four teachers who changed schools, but were still teaching, said they did not feel supported and felt isolated in their original schools.

Positive Student Relationships Belief Was Accurate

These twelve lateral entry teachers found positive factors in teaching that were surprising to them. The factor most often reported by these teachers was positive student relationships.

Student relations and content expertise are strong attributes of good teachers. Before beginning to teach, more than half of the lateral entry teachers said the easiest part of teaching would be establishing rapport and relationships with students. This perspective proved to be true and remained constant throughout the five-year period.

Travis said the easiest part of adapting to teaching was getting to know the students and establishing relationships with them. “I think largely, because I am only five years out of high school, I still see things in a lot of the same ways that they do. I

mean, I watch the same shows that they do. I listen to the same music. So they say things around me that they think go over my head, but I come right back at them with it. I am part of the same generation that they are and I can make the same connections to pop culture. So that's been really easy to deal with for me."

Christopher said the easiest part of his new job would be knowing his content area and establishing a rapport with the students. "I worked in the college environment as a teacher assistant when I was working on my master's program. I was used to students who were older and more mature. I found that I work well with 10th graders, which are the brunt of my students. The older students are a little more cynical. The tenth graders still hold to some youthful ideals. I think with 100-plus students, building rapport runs the full spectrum of possibilities, but a lot of students who started off the year tentative have warmed up, and I don't think any student has gone in the other direction."

Connie was very outgoing and stated that she "really cares about kids so I think the relationships have been the easiest." She said, "I have never thought of myself as a kid person. I don't have kids. I didn't grow up thinking, 'I can't wait to have kids,' but now I absolutely love these kids, even the ones that are troublesome and attention deficient, that can't sit still and talk a mile a minute. You just can't stay mad at them because at least they're enthused about something. It's one of the nicest jobs because you really get involved. You're dealing with human beings, but on a personal level a lot, so it's fun. The easiest thing for me has been the rapport with the students."

Ginny also felt positive relationships with the students had been the easiest for her this year. "The students need to know that you like them. The relationships and

interactions and getting to know the students on a personal level has been the easiest for me.”

The majority of these lateral entry teachers’ developed positive relationships with students. Establishing these was easy and came naturally to them. It was what they seemed to enjoy the most and a major reason why they decided to pursue teaching as a career.

Lateral Entry Teachers' Longevity Experience

By the end of the first year, one of the lateral entry teachers had resigned. Two did not have their contracts renewed. Three had changed schools. By the end of five years, four teachers were still teaching at the same school, two had changed schools and were very happy with their change, and six were no longer teaching.

Of the eight still teaching, all were happy with their career-change decision. The both expressed this in their interview and demonstrated it with their longevity.

Connie said, “I love it. My enthusiasm for teaching is still a 10. It really is! I can’t wait to try new stuff.”

Craig said, “As far as my decision four years ago to become a lateral entry teacher, it was a wise and perfectly fitted choice. I absolutely love it. They will have to bring me out of here in a body bag as a condition of employment.”

Britney said, “This is my dream job!”

From the other teachers’ perspectives, their confidence in their decision to teach, as well as their anticipated longevity in teaching had changed over time.

At the beginning of the study, 12 teachers were confident in their ability to be

good teachers. They thought they would still be teaching 10 years from then. In reality, that was not the case.

Dennis said that in retrospect, his perspective on teaching had changed significantly from when he began. He said, "Teaching is less about teaching than I thought it would be. Also, it is less enjoyable than I thought it would be. There are too many rules, too much paperwork, too much politics, and other things. The focus is too much on test scores and not enough on students. Looking back, if I had to do it over again, I would not make the same decision to become a teacher. I would choose another profession." He confided in me that at the end of this school year, he planned to resign. I asked him what he would do next. He said, "I will probably go back to the financial industry."

Ginny said, "Yes, my position was cut and I was devastated! I loved my job up until the point where I lost it. There wasn't really much I could do about the bad economy. I'm glad I didn't get my license before I started teaching. I don't think it would have helped all that much. I learned most, if not all, of what I know on the job and from colleagues. I would say that I think the tenure system is pretty stupid, but if I had tenure, I might not. It was really upsetting to see horrible teachers who didn't care at all about education get to keep their jobs and I lose mine."

According to Dan, "It was good to consider the teaching career. I came in contact with a lot of nice people. However, I learned that your outlook on a new career can be heavily influenced by one person. My enjoyment of teaching quickly went away. I should never have taught in the school that I attended as a student."

Travis said, “I decided to leave teaching at the end of the year. I was really worn down by the workload and I realized that I had a long way to go before I could be certified, which was a condition of my employment. In retrospect, though, I regret that I rushed into teaching directly out of college without any intermediate training. I would wait longer to jump in. Of course, at that time I really needed the paycheck. Ideally I would begin the certification process before starting to work in the classroom, or wait to take the job until after that process was finished. One reason I chose to leave teaching was the lack of tangible rewards for the job. You really can’t see, especially short-term, that you are making a difference. There is very little reward for the job.”

Summary of the Findings

Results from analysis of interview data revealed specific themes that were reoccurring across the 46 interviews (see Table 3). Ten of the 12 lateral entry teachers chose teaching as their career change for altruistic reasons such as wanting to give something back or making a difference in the lives of young people. Eleven of the 12 teachers discovered that student apathy was the greatest disappointment that they found in teaching. Also, for 10 of the 12 teachers, student apathy was their greatest surprise about teaching. However, 8 of the 12 teachers found that establishing student relationships and developing student rapport was the easiest aspect of teaching. Classroom management and discipline proved to be a significant challenge for 10 of the 12 teachers. Other major challenges for these teachers included teaching without their own classroom, the quantity of paperwork required, and the amount of time necessary to get the job done.

Teaching did not turn out to be as easy as the career changers initially thought. At the end of five years, only six of them remained in teaching. However, even those who were no longer teaching had fond thoughts of many of their students and colleagues. Collegial support was the most pleasant surprise expressed by 11 of the 12 lateral entry teachers.

The perspectives of all 12 teachers changed significantly over the five year study. Initially all 12 teachers believed that teaching would be a long term career choice. This did not prove to turn out to be the case for six of the teachers. Their perspectives changed from enthusiastic and confident to disillusioned and frustrated. Ginny expressed her frustration in regard to teacher tenure. She felt cheated because she lost her position based on lack of seniority rather than perceived performance. Dan felt victimized because he felt that one teacher "had it in for him" and influenced other colleagues. Jessica expressed her disillusionment regarding the attitude of disrespect demonstrated by the students. Dennis confided that he preferred the business world. Travis felt that the small intrinsic reward was not worth the massive time commitment. Ken was disappointed by the lack of student commitment.

Six of the teachers found teaching to be the right, long-term career choice. Overall they expressed that they loved their job and couldn't imagine doing anything else. This was further demonstrated in some of their achievements during the five years, some of which included National Board certification, Teacher of the Year honors, and Faculty Awards.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the significance of the study and presents conclusions and recommendations. The perspectives of 12 lateral entry teachers were gathered and analyzed. Conclusions based on the data and related studies are then presented. Recommendations are of two types. The first are aimed at supporting and retaining lateral entry teachers. The second are recommendations for further research.

Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study was to gain insight into why 12 lateral entry candidates chose to change careers, why they believed teaching was the right career choice for them, what they anticipated teaching would be like, and to discover any change in their perspectives throughout their first year and five years later. The stories of these 12 career changers help us understand their experiences and needs.

This study answered these major questions:

3. What were the expectations and perspectives of these lateral entry teachers before they began teaching?
4. How did their perspectives change over time?

Secondary questions included the following:

3. Why did the alternatively licensed candidates change careers and chose teaching?
4. Did these candidates believe that teaching was the right career choice for them?

Major Question 1: How did these lateral entry teachers perceive the teaching profession before they entered the classroom?

Before they began teaching, all 12 of these lateral entry teachers were enthusiastic about their new careers. Some had limited exposure to teaching through substitute teaching, camps, or graduate school assistantships. Some based their perspectives of what teaching would be like on their own experiences as students. All of these teachers were bright students, studying in advanced or honors-level classes. They had little experience, if any, being associated with struggling or unmotivated students. Only one teacher reported previous experience as a tutor for a struggling learner.

The participants had already been successful at one career, and anticipated full success in teaching. They perceived teaching as an 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. job for 10 months a year. They believed they would have their summers off and plenty of free time because they would conclude their workday at 3 p.m.

Initially, these 12 believed they knew what teaching would be like and they believed they would be successful. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (2010), one of the main reasons given for changing careers was “to follow one successful career with another. Individuals with experience in the military, the Peace Corps, and other careers have the drive and commitment to be successful teachers” (SREB, 2010). Only half of the 12 lateral entry teachers found teaching to be a “successful” second career. For the purpose of this study, “success” is defined as finding that teaching was the right career change.

Secondary Question 1: Why did participants change careers and choose to teach?

Nine of the 12 teachers had become disillusioned with their original careers. These cited burn-out or a realization that their chosen career had turned out to not be what they had thought it would be or not the right career choice for them. Nine said that they felt little reward in their occupation. Two had not yet experienced a real career because they were “career” students, meaning they had never experienced a career other than attending successive levels of college preparation.

Nine of the 12 teachers had someone in their lives that influenced them toward teaching as a career. Most commonly, family members (some of whom were teachers) had inspired them.

These career changers chose to pursue teaching for a variety of reasons. They wanted to "give something back" and make a difference in the lives of young people. They wanted to share their knowledge with students; they believed that they could help students get excited about learning. Six of the participants suggested that too many current teachers were not able to do so. Other participants expressed that they had experienced a great teacher in their lives who had excited them about learning; they wanted to emulate that behavior.

Major Question 2: How did their perspectives change over time?

Perspectives of these lateral entry teachers changed over time. Most found teaching to be more difficult and more time consuming than they had envisioned. They found students to be harder to teach and to motivate than they had anticipated. They also found they truly enjoyed the students, generally even more than they had expected.

Those participants who were still teaching at the end of five years had positive feelings toward teaching and were very happy with their decision to become teachers. Those who were no longer teaching had mixed feelings. They enjoyed some aspects of teaching, particularly the collegiality and the successes. Other aspects, such as the politics and perceived lack of support, left them disillusioned.

These lateral entry teachers faced many challenges for which they were unprepared. Paperwork, discipline, difficult students, time demands, and dealing with parents are a few. First-year teachers are often surprised by the many challenges they encounter. Lateral entry teachers may be even less prepared. The reality of teaching led to a change in their perceptions.

These lateral entry teachers revealed that getting students excited about learning was not as simple as they had initially anticipated. They discovered that their students were difficult to motivate and did not care about learning. Eleven out of 12 of the lateral entry teachers said that student apathy was their greatest disappointment with teaching. Although this generally surprised these teachers, the literature supports their experience.

According to Samuelson (2010), student apathy has reached epidemic proportions. Motivation comes from many sources, including curiosity, ambition, parental expectations, and the desire to get into a good college, inspiring or intimidating teachers, peer pressure, and intrinsic qualities. Additionally, Glanz (2010) said, “Teachers are regarded as adversaries; students work below capacity to avoid being seen as teachers’ pets. To many students, high school and college are archaic prerequisites for gainful employment. What really counts, students think, is contacts and good luck.” Students look at examples like Mark Zuckerberg, founder of Facebook, who dropped out

of Harvard after 2 years. Bill Gates, founder of Microsoft, also dropped out of Harvard. Because of youthful immaturity, students often do not realize that the skills learned to operate these corporations were most likely learned in school. Glanz (2010) continued, “Not studying is a way of asserting oneself.”

Anecdotally Hong (2010) said, “Teaching is convincing a defiant teenager that the work he sees no value in does serve a greater purpose in preparing him for the rest of his life . . . Teaching is being both a role model and a mentor to someone who may have neither at home, and may not be looking for either” (p. 2).

Some of the lateral entry teachers lamented students’ challenging situations and home lives. Likewise, nearly 50% of all kindergarten teachers report that at least half of their students come to school with problems that hinder their success (Pellino, 2007). Pellino’s (2007) research indicated that the social contexts of students significantly impact their development. The conditions in which students live, their day-to-day life experiences, and their home situations have a significant effect on their education and achievement (Payne, 2005; Pellino, 2010).

Student apathy, students’ personal issues, and the demands of the teaching profession were big surprises expressed by all 12 lateral entry teachers. Because these teachers had no formal preparation (e.g., college and university teacher preparation programs), they were unprepared for these revelations. The lateral entry teachers’ perspectives on these aspects of teaching definitely changed. Some of the lateral entry teachers were able to accept these challenges, whereas others were not.

Smith and Pantana (2009) detailed that pre-service teachers identified “more time with family” as one of the main contributors for choosing teaching as a career. This was

the initial perspective of four of the teachers. They found the time commitment to be much more demanding than they had expected. For these lateral entry teachers, more time with family may not have been an accurate assumption. They were unprepared for the time commitment that teaching required. These teachers reported spending many hours more than the required work time in activities such as grading papers, writing lesson plans, conferencing with parents, and holding study sessions for students. They found that they had little time for anything except teaching and preparing, especially during their first year of teaching.

The concept of “three months” off in the summer was also an unrealistic assumption. In reality, the average summer vacation time for teachers is approximately 7.5 weeks (NCDPI, 2009). The North Carolina General Assembly (2004) states, “The calendar shall include at least 42 consecutive days when teacher attendance is not required. . .” (pg. 58-60). This amounts to a minimum of six weeks of vacation time. Lateral entry teachers frequently spend this time in the summer completing coursework that is required for lateral entry teachers to continue their teaching license and assignment.

These lateral entry teachers found that students were hard to manage, disrespectful, and even prone to fighting. Nine out of 12 of the lateral entry teachers said student behavior and discipline were their greatest challenge, which they reported as an unexpected surprise.

The education literature is filled with books and articles on how to manage student behavior. Many of the lateral entry teachers did not begin with a plan to manage behavior; however, those that were still teaching five years later had been successful in

learning how to implement a consistent and fair discipline policy. Many of these teachers were surprised that discipline was primarily delegated to the teacher level and that very little was done administratively.

The literature supports these teachers' experiences with discipline. Sokal, Smith, and Mowat (2003) reported alternatively licensed teachers feel less prepared in classroom management skills than traditionally prepared teachers. Because they have not completed a formal teacher education program, lateral entry teachers have not been systematically exposed to the myriad of classroom management and discipline resources available. They must scale a steep learning curve to overcome their deficiencies. In at least one study, one full academic year of classroom support and mentoring helped novices gain confidence in their basic classroom management skills (Shore, 2001).

Nine of these teachers described having all lower-level classes and all ninth grade classes. Four reported they did not have their own classroom. Although State Board Policy prohibits these practices, in reality this was a practice in every high school that I visited. A recommendation to improve support for these teachers would enforce compliance with the State Board policy, as well as mandate more equitable distribution of difficult classes.

The North Carolina Board Policy QP A-003-4.30—Optimum Working Conditions for Beginning Teachers (2006) states as follows:

Research indicates that beginning teachers are often placed in difficult assignments that do not allow them the opportunity to learn and grow as professionals. The beginning teacher is often assigned the most difficult students, multiple preparations, and multiple extra-curricular assignments.

To ensure that beginning teachers have the opportunity to develop into capable teachers, the following working conditions are strongly recommended:

- assignment in the area of licensure;
- mentor assigned early, in the licensure area, and in close proximity;
- orientation that includes state, district, and school expectations;
- limited preparations;
- limited non-instructional duties;
- limited number of exceptional or difficult students; and
- no extracurricular assignments unless requested in writing by the beginning teacher (p. 2).

The above policy does not state that beginning teachers must have a classroom. It would be reasonable to assume that if you were a classroom teacher, you would have a classroom. In each of these cases where lateral entry teachers were “floating” and teaching from a cart, experienced teachers at each of the schools all had assigned classrooms.

Secondary Question 2: Did these candidates believe that teaching was the right career choice for them?

Of the 12 lateral entry teachers, eight were still teaching at the end of the five-year study. Two of these eight resigned after their fifth year. The remaining six teachers all reported that teaching was definitely the right career choice. They had found success in their teaching careers. At least three had received multiple teaching honors signifying they had excelled.

Of the six no longer teaching, three had gone back to their previous careers. One had found a new career in which he reported being happy and successful. The career path of two participants could not be determined. One was not available for the final interview. The other resigned at the end of the year but did not indicate a future career path.

At the initial interview, all the lateral entry teachers were sure that they wanted to teach. They were sure that teaching was the right career match for them, and they were sure that they would still be teaching for at least the next 10 years. Some participants spoke of going into administration, particularly in curriculum or policy development. By the end of the five-year study, only 6 of the 12 teachers were still teaching. This corresponds to the statistic from the NEA (2003) that half of new teachers quit within their first five years.

Of the six teachers who left teaching, three returned to previous careers, two had their positions eliminated due to a reduction in force based on drastic budget reductions, and one cited that teaching was too time consuming and left too little time for family life.

Three of the 12 teachers were very disillusioned by their first teaching assignment, but after changing schools, found their niche and were happy with their choice. Four of the teachers remained in the same school throughout the study period, were very happy with their decision, and were still teaching at the conclusion of this study. According to Collins (2001), for people to be happy and successful in their career choice, they must be "on the bus" and in the right seat. Consequently, the right fit in the right school is very important for teacher success.

Establishing positive relationships with students was the easiest and most pleasant aspect for 7 of the 12 lateral entry teachers. These seven teachers noted in their first interview, before they began teaching, that they expected establishing relationships to be the easiest aspect of teaching for them. This proved to be true; moreover, it was one perspective that did not change throughout their interviews. It was a gift that they knew they had, and it helped them to be successful teachers.

Birch and Ladd (1997) reported that teachers who had close, positive relationships with students had, in turn, students who were motivated, cooperative and engaged, and also had less absenteeism. Likewise, teachers who establish rapport and kindred relationships with students are happier and more successful in their jobs. This was true with 6 of the 12 lateral entry teachers.

Retention of lateral entry teachers can be increased through support. An important form of support as reported by Ingersoll and Smith (2004) is mentor support. Teachers involved in induction and mentoring programs are less likely to leave teaching (Ingersoll & Smith, 2004). Research indicates that beginning teacher induction programs with mentoring has a positive impact on teacher retention, teacher quality, and student learning. Evidence from the National Center for Education Statistics (2003) suggests that participation in mentor-inclusive induction programs can reduce teacher attrition by 50%. These lateral entry teachers also reported administrative and collegial support to be important to their success.

Six of the lateral entry teachers described instances of strong administrative support, whereas six mentioned lack of administrative support. Interestingly, six of the lateral entry teachers are still teaching, but they are not the same six that noted strong

administrative support. Additionally, 9 of the 12 lateral entry teachers revealed strong mentor support.

The most important support that all but one of these teachers found was strong collegial support. Collegiality among the staff was the most pleasant surprise that 11 of the 12 lateral entry teachers found. As indicated by these teachers, their co-teachers became their friends and family, and they sought help and advice daily. To these lateral entry teachers, this support was even more important than administrative or formal mentoring support.

Strong administrative stability and support seemed to be the most important factors in retaining these teachers. Collegiality in terms of feeling supported by peers also played a role in the success of these teachers. The majority of the teachers felt supported in their schools through the administration, their mentors, and their fellow teachers. Several participants reported schools with weak leadership or weak mentoring, which influenced whether the teachers chose to stay or change schools. Given that the Association of American Educators (2005) calculated cost of teacher attrition to other schools at an average of \$4,400 per transfer, it is prudent for schools to support teachers.

In general, the teachers felt secure in their content expertise, but lacking in the areas of classroom management, discipline and pedagogical skills. Some referred to beginning teacher induction programs and monthly beginning teacher meetings as helpful in obtaining support. Most believed their assigned mentors and subject area colleagues were beneficial for information, ideas and assistance.

Conclusions from the Study

The Education Commission of the States (2003) found key factors important to successful alternative programs to be (a) strong partnerships between preparation programs and schools, (b) good screening, (c) strong mentoring, (d) solid curriculum, and (e) as much training and coursework as possible prior to teaching.

Conclusion 1: Lateral entry teachers are needed. Lateral entry teachers are necessary to fill vital staffing needs. According to Kaplan and Owings (2002), administrators value a variety of qualities that lateral entry teachers possess. They bring maturity, life experience and good work habits, as well as depth and breadth of content knowledge to teaching. They know how to apply their content knowledge to practical situations. Older career changers also have higher retention rates (Kaplan & Owings, 2002).

Among the reasons these lateral entry teachers cited for choosing teaching as a career were better use of their content knowledge, putting experience to use, to give back, and to make a difference in the lives of young people. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2007) cited exceptional expertise of subject areas as the primary reason that lateral entry teachers are hired. Ten of the lateral entry teachers in this study proved to be experts in their content areas.

It can be concluded that the need exists for lateral entry teachers in our schools. Their content knowledge makes them a valuable commodity. Their previous degrees and work experiences have made them content experts. This attribute makes them attractive in filling teacher vacancies.

Conclusion 2: Lateral entry teachers lack pedagogical skills. Lateral entry teachers possess great content expertise, but they lack the pedagogical background that traditionally trained teachers have learned. They are also in a “Catch-22” position in that they need these pedagogical skills immediately; however, they are overwhelmed by everything that is expected of them. Of the 12 lateral entry teachers in this study, only six are still teaching.

Additionally, lateral entry teachers are required to complete coursework while they are teaching. According to the North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manual (2005), a minimum of six semester hours per year from the plan of study must be taken until the plan has been completed. All coursework and the Praxis II exam for their licensure area must be completed within three years. This leaves lateral entry teachers with only two choices: take coursework at night or online during the year while they are teaching or spend their summers completing the coursework. This process is extremely difficult and exhausting for new teachers.

Conclusion 3: Lateral entry teachers find teaching to be harder than anticipated. Data from this study showed that these teachers initially expected their new teaching career to be better than it initially was. They were overly optimistic in their perspectives before beginning to teach. They were not prepared for how difficult it proved to be. Their perspectives changed, rather quickly and over time. Some participants realized that teaching was a good career match, whereas others concluded that it truly was not the right choice. Some participants would still like to be teaching, but economic conditions made it impossible for them to continue. However, all of the teachers recognized that teaching

is a tough, time-consuming, difficult job, even if it can be very rewarding in many ways. All participants indicated that without support they would not have been successful.

Recommendations for Better Preparation of Lateral Entry Teachers

Key factors of successful alternative programs include strong curriculum, strong mentoring, and strong training. In addition, the following should be added:

- Structure a support program that gives ongoing scaffolding of pedagogical skills without requiring additional demands of their time.
- Adhere to the North Carolina State Board Policy QP-A-04 regarding beginning-teacher requirements.
- Use effective screening of lateral entry candidates, including assessing for appropriate career matches before hiring.
- Implement a Bill of Rights for Teachers at the state level.

It is advantageous to the state, the school system, and the lateral entry candidates to create an environment that promotes success rather than failure. To support and retain lateral entry teachers, these recommendations should become enforced mandates.

Lateral entry teachers are desired for their maturity, experience, and content expertise. Good hires have the ability to learn quickly on the job. Lateral entry candidates who can quickly master strong classroom management and good student rapport have a greater potential of becoming successful teachers.

Recommendation 1: Careful screening of applicants for strong lateral entry candidates should be engaged. Personality and career match testing should be utilized before hiring, in addition to the standard application screening process, to attempt to maximize the success and retention of lateral entry teachers.

Lateral entry teachers are often hired primarily for their content expertise. Career personality matches should be considered in hiring decisions. Personality characteristics that are appropriate for the profession should be considered. Assessments based on Holland's theory of career choice would be beneficial knowledge to possess of each lateral entry candidate being considered. As was true with these lateral entry hires, not all were a good match for the career.

Considering career personality matches when hiring lateral entry teachers, as well as content expertise, would help to alleviate unsuitable hires, decrease teacher turnover, and eliminate costly hiring mistakes.

Recommendation 2: Create a "buddy teacher" program by employing retired teachers to co-teach with new lateral entry teachers to (a) model best practices (b) provide support, (c) allow continuity of instruction for students, and (d) allow time away from school during the school day for lateral entry teachers to complete coursework and training.

Lateral entry teachers must complete extensive coursework and accountability requirements. A minimum of six semester hours per year must be taken until the all licensing requirements are completed. All coursework and the Praxis II exam for their licensure area must be completed within three years. This coursework provides needed pedagogical training, but the demands on the teacher's time during their beginning years are often unrealistic and inappropriate. Teachers are faced with the need for skills and the need for time simultaneously. A "master buddy teacher" program could provide a solution to acquiring the needed skills while allocating needed time, concurrently.

Recommendation 3: Paid time should be provided for lateral entry teachers to meet with administrators, mentors, and colleagues of their choice, before and after the regular school day and on a regularly scheduled basis.

Additional support is needed for lateral entry teachers. The lateral entry teachers in this study did not anticipate needing support prior to beginning teaching, but found it to be a valuable asset. They quickly recognized the importance of administrative, mentor, parental, collegial, and even student support. Crosswell (2002) described that “factors that diminish teacher commitment tend to focus on lack of support from colleagues, parents and administration” (p. 6). Darling-Hammond (2008) touted the need for support for teachers from expert mentors. Boyd, Grossman, & Ing, et al. (2009) found that administrative support is important to teachers; moreover, what administration does or does not do, influences a teacher’s decision to stay or leave.

These teachers recognized the difficulties when these supports were not present. After five years of teaching, those teachers that were still teaching now have the experience and status to repay the favor by supporting new teachers.

Recommendation 4: A State Board of Education Policy should be adopted to guarantee that lateral entry teachers and beginning teachers have specifically defined rights. Accountability should be imposed on schools systems to uphold these rights.

In this study, four of the 12 lateral entry teachers did not have a classroom. In Gretchen Portwood’s “A Bill of Rights for Beginning Secondary Teachers” (2010), the first three components are as follows:

1. A one-on-one, competent, caring, and qualified mentor
2. A classroom

3. A single preparation or reduced load teaching assignment

Although Portwood's rights are author created and based on beginning teacher interviews, some states, including South Carolina and Louisiana, actually have a Bill of Rights for teachers in their state's general statutes. This validates the importance of these concepts.

Currently, North Carolina State Board Policy recommends that mentors be assigned early, in the licensure area, and in close proximity to the new teachers. Also, limited preparation, limited non-instructional duties, and a limited number of exceptional or difficult students should be assigned. This is not monitored or enforced. Several of the lateral entry teachers reported being assigned the lowest-level students. Others reported teaching without a classroom. This is very difficult for beginning teachers. Those assigned difficult students also reported that advanced students were assigned to the more experienced teachers simply because they had seniority. To increase retention of lateral entry teachers, administrators must acknowledge that new teacher placement, support, and teaching conditions are fundamental.

Implications for Further Research

A study that builds on Moir's (1990) "Phases of Beginning Teachers" that identifies signs and lengths of phases would benefit the support of lateral entry teachers. It would be helpful to know what indicators to watch for and how long the disillusionment period usually lasts. This would be useful so that beginning teacher support providers (e.g., mentors and administrators) could take steps to analyze and strengthen support for beginning teachers (both lateral entry and traditionally prepared) throughout this critical time.

A study to determine why, in spite of the economic changes that caused a glut of qualified teachers, lateral entry teachers are still being hired at a stable or increasing rate, is important and should be conducted. As the data gathered have indicated, the ratio of lateral entry teachers hired remained almost the same although the number of new teachers hired decreased by over half. Presumably the hiring of lateral entry teachers continues because of their content expertise, but it is important to know definitively.

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APPENDICES

Table 1: Lateral Entry Teacher Demographics

Teacher	Subject Area	Prior Career	School	Status	
Craig	Science	Graduate Student	Large Rural Middle School	Still Teaching	Same School
Pam	Science-Chemistry	Stay at home mom	Large Rural High School	Still Teaching	Same School
Jennifer	Science-Biology	Zoo Keeper	Large Rural High School	Still Teaching	Same School
Connie	English	Sales	Small Rural High School	Still Teaching	Same School
Ginny	Science Earth-Enviro	Environmental	Large Rural High School	Still Teaching	Moved to Foreign School
Dennis	Math	Banker	Small Urban Middle School	Still Teaching	Moved to High School
Britney	Drama	Actress	Large Urban Middle School	Still Teaching	Moved to Elementary
Chris	English	Forest Ranger	Large Rural High School	Still Teaching	Moved to Private School
Dan	Math	Social Worker	Small Rural Middle School	Not Teaching	
Jessica	English	Social Worker	Large Rural High School	Not Teaching	
Ken	Science-Chemistry	Chemist	Large Urban High School	Not Teaching	
Travis	English	Graduate Student	Large Rural High School	Not Teaching	

Table 2: Lateral Entry Teachers' Interviews

Still Teaching Same School	Interview				Still Teaching Changed Location	Interview				No Longer Teaching	Interview			
	Before	During	After	4years		Before	During	After	4years		Before	During	After	4years
Craig	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ginny	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dan	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pam	✓	✓	✓	✓	Dennis	✓	✓	✓	✓	Jessica	✓	✓	✓	NA
Jennifer	✓	✓	✓	✓	Britney	✓	✓	✓	✓	Ken	✓	✓	✓	NA
Connie	✓	✓	✓	✓	Chris	✓	✓	✓	✓	Travis	✓	✓	✓	✓

NA= Not Available

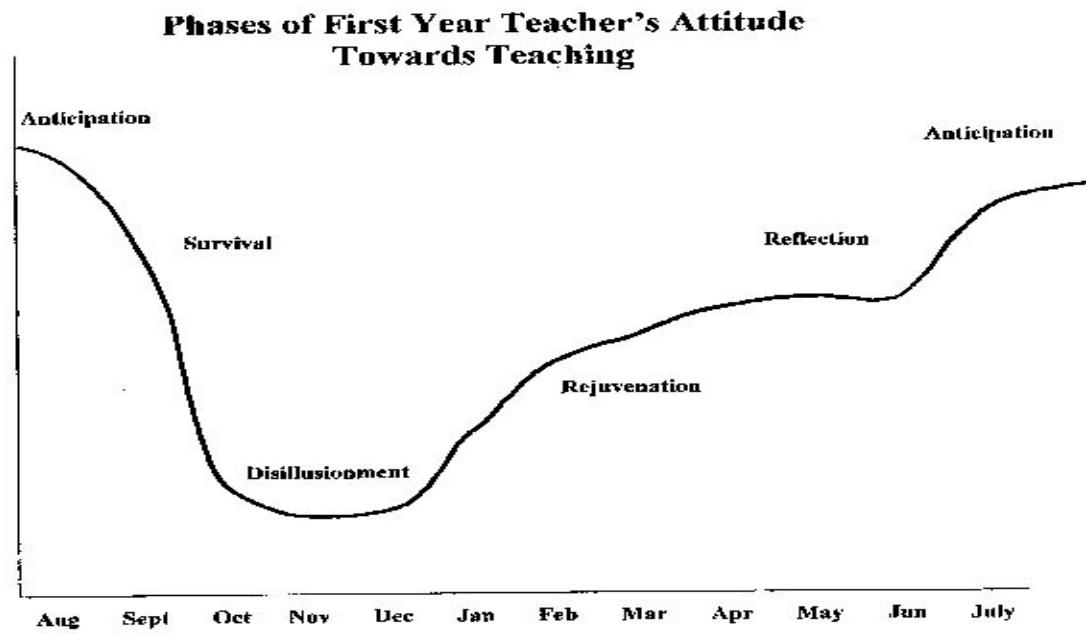
Table 3 - Data Analysis

Name	Gender	Age	Origin	Former Occupation	College Major	Teaching Assignment	School Setting	No. of Student	School Size	Influenced by	Teaching Exposure
Craig	M	25-30	Out of St.	Student	Chemistry	MS Science	Rural	300	Small		Grad TA
Pam	F	35-40	In State	Mom	Environ/Chem	HS Science	Rural	900	large	Husband	Sub
Jennifer	F	25-30	Out of State	Zoo	Biology	HS Science	Rural	1200	large	Teacher	Camp
Connie	F	30-35	In State	Sales	English	HS English	Rural	80	Small	Mother & Aunt	none
Ginny	F	25-30	Out of State	Environmental	Geo/Environ	HS Science	Rural	750	Large	Sister	Camp
Dennis	M	40-45	Out of State	Bank	Math	MS Math	Urban	450	med	Mother & Father	none
Britney	F	25-30	Out of State	Actress	Drama	MS Drama	Urban	1100	Large		Camp
Christopher	M	35-40	Out of State	Ranger	Liberal Arts	HS English	Rural	1200	Large	Mother	Grad TA
Dan	M	25-30	In State	Social Worker	Social. Work	HS Math	Rural	1200	Large	Kids	Sub
Jessica	F	25-30	Out of State	Social Worker	Social Work	HS English	Rural	1200	Large		none
Ken	M	45-50	Out of State	Chemist	Chemistry	HS Science	Urban	1800	Large	Teacher	Grad TA
Travis	M	20-25	In State	Student	English	HS English	Urban	2200	Large	Mother	none
	6F	8<35	4 In State			3Middle School 9 High School	7 Rural		9 Large	Family 6/12	8 Exposure
	6M	4>35	8 Out of St			5 Science 4 English 2 Math 1 Other	3 Urban		3 Med-Sml	Teacher 2 Influence	4 None

Table 3 - Data Analysis (continued)

Name	Chose teaching for Altruistic Reasons	Greatest Disappointment	Most Pleasant	Hardest Aspect	Discipline Issues	Still Teaching	Easiest	Time Commitment	Mid-year Dip
Craig	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Paperwork	yes	yes	Mechanics	yes	Dec
Pam	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Paperwork	yes	yes	Rapport		Oct
Jennifer	yes	apathy	Collegiality	No Facilities		yes	Rapport		Sept
Connie	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Paperwork	yes	yes	Rapport		Oct
Ginny	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Student Motivation	yes	no	Rapport		Dec
Dennis		apathy		Classroom Management	yes	no		yes	Oct
Chris	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Student Motivation	yes	yes	Rapport	yes	Feb
Britney	yes	apathy	Collegiality	No Facilities	yes	yes			Oct
Dan	yes	politics	Collegiality	Expectations	yes	no			Jan
Jessica	yes	apathy	Collegiality	Pacing		no	Content		Jan
Ken		apathy	Collegiality	Student Motivation	yes	no	Rapport		Nov
Travis	yes	apathy	Collegiality	No Facilitates	yes	no	Rapport	yes	Nov
	10/12	11/12	11/12	No Facilities Paperwork Student Motivation	10/12	6 Still 6 Not	7/12	4/12	Oct. Oct-Feb

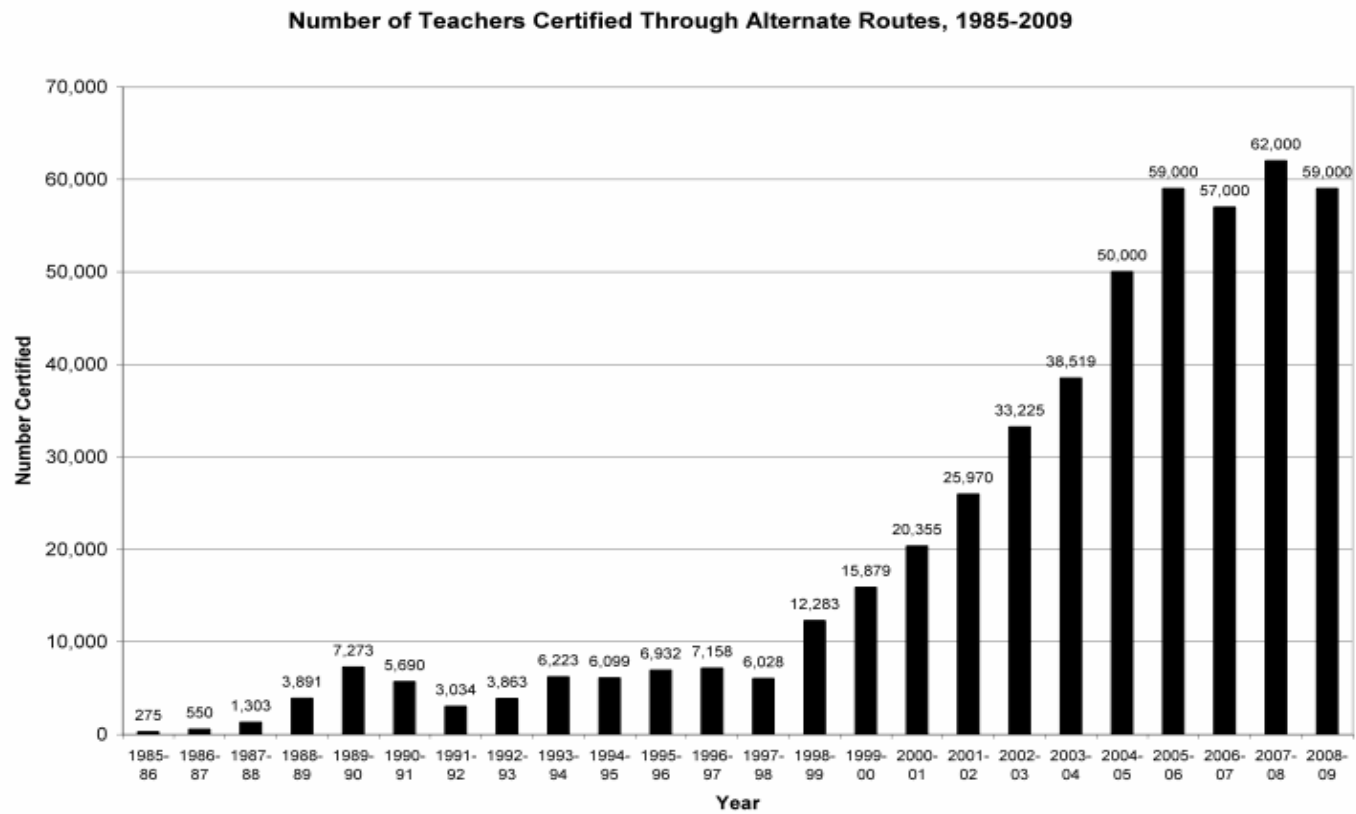
Table 4: Moir's Graph



Moir (1990)

In the analysis of data, these twelve lateral entry teachers' attitudes closely mirror the same phases that Moir's (1990) study outlined

Table 5 - Number of Lateral Entry Teachers



N.C. Dept. of Public Instruction (2009)

	First Interview			Second Interview			Third Interview			Fourth Interview		
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Teacher	Date	Location	Length	Date	Location	Length	Date	Location	Length	Date	Location	Length
Craig	8/09/05	Classroom	11:03 min:	2/27/06	Classroom	11:05	6/01/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	11/03/09	Email	Email
Pam	8/19/05	Administrative Office	10-15 min.	1/26/06	Classroom	11:20	6/14/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	01/22/10	Classroom	10min.
Jennifer	8/09/05	Administrative Office	7:24	2/26/06	Couns. Office	10-15 min	6/13/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	01/22/10	Classroom	10 min.
Connie	8/19/05	Administrative Office	10-15 min.	2/26/06	Classroom	10:51	6/14/06	Classroom	8:30	01/22/10	Classroom	10 min.
Ginny	8/08/05	Classroom	20:08	2/27/06	Gym	10-15 min	6/01/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	2/16/10	Facebook	Email
Dennis	8/12/05	Beginning Teacher Training	9:45	2/23/06	Classroom	10:22	4/30/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	11/05/09	Office	25 min.
Britney	8/12/05	Beg. Teacher Training	12:08	1/16/06	Classroom	10-15 min	6/08/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	2/26/10	Classroom	30 min.
Chris	8/16/05	Administrative Office	10-15 min.	1/27/06	Classroom	19:34	6/13/06	Classroom	19:22	10/21/09	Email	Email
Dan	7/31/05	Beginning Teacher Training	17:10	1/27 /06	Media Center	20-25 min.	6/08/06	Office	10-15 min.	2/26/10	Email	Email
Jessica	8/14/05	Administrative Office	20:33	1/27/06	Classroom	18:22	6/14/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	Multiple attempts thru 6/10/10	Not Available	NA
Ken	8/12/05	Beginning. Teacher Training	6:35	2/23/06	Classroom	11:27	6/08/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	Multiple attempts thru 6/10/10	Not Available	NA
Travis	8/12/05	Beginning Teacher Training	25:59	2/23/06	Teacher Lounge	18:26	6/08/06	Classroom	10-15 min.	3/16/10	Phone	20 min

Table 6 - Interview Data

Appendix B

Interview Questions

Round 1 Interview Questions – before beginning teaching

1. Background Information
2. What did you do before deciding to become a teacher?
3. Why did you decide to pursue a teaching career?
4. Did you have any previous experience with teaching?
5. How did you prepare for this experience?
6. What do you feel will be the biggest challenge that you will face?
7. What to you believe will be the easiest for you?
8. Rate your enthusiasm for teaching at this moment on a scale of 1-10:
9. Rate your anxiety/anticipation level at this moment on a scale of 1-10:
10. Do you anticipate that you will still want to teach next year?
11. Do you believe that you will still be teaching 5 years from now?

Round 2 Interview Questions – During their teaching experience:

1. Has your teaching experience been what you have expected thus far?
2. In what ways has your teaching experience been different than you anticipated it would be before you began this year?
3. What have you found to be a rewarding experience thus far?
4. What have you found to be the most surprising experience thus far?
5. What experience has not been as you anticipated it would be thus far in your teaching experience?
6. What was the most surprising experience that you encountered in your teaching this year?

7. If you had this year to do over, what would you do differently?
8. Do you plan to continue teaching next year?

Round 3 Interview Questions – After the first year of teaching:

1. What was the most surprising experience that you encountered in your teaching this year?
2. Did you feel prepared for your first year of teaching?
3. Name one experience that was exactly as you anticipated it might be before you began this year?
4. If you had this year to do over, what would you do differently?
5. Do you plan to continue teaching next year?
6. Do you believe that teaching will be a long term commitment for you?
7. In retrospect, was your first year as you anticipated it to be?

Round 4 Interview Questions – During year five, if still teaching:

1. How has your perception of teaching changed over the past five years?
2. Looking back, how do you feel about your decision to pursue a teaching career?
3. In retrospect, if you were at that point again when you decided to pursue teaching as a career, what would you do differently?
4. Looking back to your first year of teaching, what do you wish you had known and what would you do differently, if you had it to do over?
5. Where do you go from here - Do you plan to continue teaching? Do you see yourself going in another direction - different career, administration, etc?

Round 4 Interview Questions – During year five, if no longer teaching:

1. Tell me why you left teaching and what you are currently doing.

2. How do you now perceive the teaching profession after having experienced it first hand?
3. In retrospect, if you were at that point again when you decided to change careers and begin teaching, what would you do differently?
4. How has your perception changed about teaching as a career?

Appendix C

Interview 1

Q: Travis if you'll just say your name for the tape first of all.

A: Travis [REDACTED]

Q: Okay. Are you from this area?

A: I am [inaudible 00:08]. I went away to school for five years to [REDACTED]. Not to the University of [REDACTED]. I went to the University of [REDACTED] in Tennessee and just got back.

Q: That's in [REDACTED]?

A: [REDACTED]. Right.

Q: Yeah. I had a couple of good friends that their daughters went there.

A: Great. Yeah.

Q: Did you like it? [Crosstalk]. That's like the [REDACTED].

A: Yeah. Well they claim to be anyway. It's fantastic. I mean it was the best five years of my life, a great, great time so.

Q: What did you major in?

A: English and philosophy, a double major.

Q: Oh neat.

A: That's why it took me so long.

Q: That's good. So you will be teaching English?

A: That's right. Yeah.

Q: High school, middle school?

A: High school, tenth grade world literature.

Q: You sound like you have a good background then?

A: Yeah. Sewanee is, I mean you don't get out of there as an English major without going through it so it's got a great literature program.

Q: Do they have an education program there?

A: They did. I was not involved in it though. It's pretty small. I'm not even sure if they offer a major in education. I think it's mostly student teaching and that sort of thing on the side of whatever else you're majoring in so it's fairly informed.

Q: Did you get your English degree with teaching in mind though or did you plan to do something else?

A: Yeah. But my immediate plan was to go straight into post-graduate education and then sort of my pie in the sky vision was I'd go get my PhD and teach at Harvard. Once I got out of doing all my final exams and all that, I was burnt out that I couldn't stand just to go back into a classroom. I mean I felt like I'd had run a five year marathon and so I said I want to do something relevant, something that's going to keep me on this track without just putting me through the ringer for five more years and then I'll be so burnt out I'll just hate it.

Q: That's a good idea to take a break. I first was a marketing major and then about ten years later I got an education degree and then about ten years later I got my masters and then about ten years later I got another masters. So I'm very old and that's why I'm just doing my dissertation now so but I'm almost through. Tell me what you think your first day is going to be like.

A: Nervous. I'll be the most nervous person in the class. I'm sure they'll all have those jitters that everybody gets the first day of school. To be honest I think if I can get through the first five minutes of each class smoothly, I'll be okay. Once I get talking it's hard to stop me so it's really a matter I think of, because the first day of school is so just hectic and different from all the rest of the days, you've got people that are in the wrong class, you've got people that don't know if they're going to stay in the class. I'm teaching two honors classes where I'm sure I'm going to have kids drop. You've got kids that feel like they got put in a lower level and they shouldn't have who want to move up. It's possible to have parents involved. Hopefully that won't happen but it's possible-

Q: Hopefully not your first day.

A: Yeah. And there's just all sorts of things like that and on top of the fact that they don't even know who I am so and because I'm new at the school I don't have a reputation there yet and just I'm out of the blue to them so I think that's going to be the biggest challenge is just getting everybody in, seated and get that focus right away and if that doesn't happen in the first five minutes I think it's going to be a bad sign for the rest of the class that I'm going to be chasing after them rather than having following me so that's

my main goal is just to; and I was actually reading this book that they've been using the [Wong 04:10?] text, Gary [Wong?]. It has a really good chapter on the first few minutes of class just getting everybody in and going.

Q: It does. And following procedures- -

A: Yeah.

Q: And getting those established and you can probably the first day doing those kinds of things.

A: Oh yeah. And it doesn't help that I'm a floating teacher as well so I'm not going to have that full break between classes to just kind of transition. I'm going to be actually picking everything up and moving to another classroom- -

Q: That's difficult.

A: And unpacking so- -

Q: I've done that before.

A: That's going to make it a little bit more challenging.

Q: Um hmm. And you don't have any place really to call your own or feel like this is my classroom.

A: Right. I think one thing I might try to do to help counteract that is to try to just get to the other class as quickly as possible obviously and I'm sure I'll have seating assignments and things to write on the board. The first kid who comes into the class I'll give him a stack of papers with the names of everybody in the class and the seating charts and say can you do this for me real quick? Have one thing for each of the next few people to write on the board for me. Can you write my name on the board for me? That way I'm able to stand there at the door, meet people as they come in and have that initial interaction and have them working on something already that doesn't feel like work. It's just helping get the class set up so that's something I've been kind of tossing around in my head how I want to do that but I think my biggest challenge honestly is going to be the first little fraction of class, just trying to make that work.

Q: Yeah. You said that would be your greatest challenge. What do you think will come easiest for you?

A: I don't know yet. I think content wise I'm pretty good at what I know so if there's any kind of content issues, I haven't even really worried about that at this point because I feel like I've got a good grasp on it. I think as far as staying on time, keeping on track, things like that, I'm fairly good at it, so far at least from the small amount of experience I've had dealing with groups and things like that in here I can manage that kind of stuff

well so I think that will be fairly easy. Maybe not easy; that might be the wrong word. Not a problem I should say.

Q: Do you think you'll be a tough teacher your first year?

A: I don't want to be a tough teacher in the sense of being intimidating or in the sense of being unpleasant. I do think that I'm not going to be the friendliest guy in the world. I'm not going to be a fun teacher. I mean honestly the content, we've got to get ready for the writing test, you know, the last level that really deal with grammar intensively so that stuff does require a certain amount of focus and a certain amount of repetition so it's not going to be a party everyday for sure. I do have a creative writing class where it's probably going to be a little bit more informal, a little bit more personal and in that environment probably not so much the tough guy but especially in the regular class, I just don't have time to get off track and to have issues of catching up with disciplines and things like that. As far as I'm concerned it's just a matter of get the kids in, make it clear what the expectations are and they've been telling us this entire time, especially in that first couple of weeks, really don't let up on issuing penalties, making procedures extremely clear and if that means tough then that's what it has to mean.

Q: Right. Right now and you all have sort of done this with your [?sense of?] [inaudible 08:02] but what is your level of enthusiasm for what you're fixing to do on a scale of one to ten?

A: I'm very enthusiastic about it. I mean I'm nervous about it but I'm also staying up all night doing it. You know? I'm in that level where I'm -

Q: And that's my next question. Where is your sort of anticipation level, anxiety level? Where are you on a scale of one to ten on that?

A: I think I'm confident that it's going to turn out okay. My biggest fear is just getting a foot in the door. Being as I am younger, I mean I'm only twenty-three, so I'm not that much older than some of the students. If I've got a nineteen or twenty year old in there, they could have gone to high school with me. That's something that I'm kind of anxious about just to establish myself in the school so that the students understand that I mean business. Once I'm through that period where it's not worrying about a nightmare situation, I think I'll be alright. I guess that's really where I'm at right now. I'm at the conceiving nightmare situations stage where I'm just like I'm waiting to get that kid who has no respect for authority and hates the subject. I'm waiting for the lesson to fall apart and just go so wrong I can't stand it and I don't think that stuff is going to happen but I worry about that happening so that's, you know.

Q: So can you give a number one to ten where you would be?

A: In terms of anxiety?

Q: Um hmm.

A: I think I'm probably at a seven right now, a seven or an eight.

Q: And enthusiasm where do you think you would be?

A: Nine.

Q: And those things you just mentioned, the nightmares, how do you anticipate in your mind handling those?

A: I think and this is partly just my personal, the way I go about things is that when I'm approached with a big task, I always immediately think okay what's the worst thing that could happen and how am I going to keep that from happening. That's just sort of the way I work. So my nightmare situation is something like I get like just a gangster in the class who is aggressive and violent and wants me to know that he hates being in here and that sort of thing. The chances of that happening I think are pretty low just because, I mean, people like that don't come along just everyday so the chances of getting one in a twenty person class are not that high. If it should happen, the only thing I can think with someone like that would be just to use administrative and counselors and everything else that I have, you know, mentor and everything else to try to combat the situation because with that there is no way I can handle that myself.

Q: Right.

A: Assuming that it's a more sort of pedestrian problem with someone who is just not on task, talking, things like that, I think it really is a matter of coming in and just making it clear that student might be able to get away with it in other classes, in other parts of life but at least for this ninety minutes everyday, it's not going to go unpunished and as long as it's consistently made clear that punishments follow infractions then I think that will correct that behavior fairly quickly. Maybe it will be annoying but it will correct itself.

Q: Right. You mentioned a mentor. Have you been assigned a mentor yet?

A: I think I have been but I don't know who it is.

Q: You haven't met.

A: I haven't visited the school yet so I don't know who that would be so.

Q: What made you decide, I know you mentioned your major but what made you decide that you wanted to teach high school?

A: Ever since I started thinking about teaching I've known that I wanted to do it at a higher level, not the highest level but a higher level at least. When I was in high school, I really wanted to teach high school. When I got to college, I really wanted to teach college and I never really had that feeling in elementary or middle school that I would be

able to relate to that kind of experience as a teacher so it's just been something that's kind of ever since I started toying around with the idea, I guess I was like seventeen or eighteen, started thinking what am I going to do once I get out of here and I think probably the majority of kids it at least crosses their mind to teach because that's what they've seen modeled. That was always the age level that I had in mind was students who are doing more in depth work, more analytical work and not so much basic skills, working with students who are emotionally more mature and that I can relate to on an adult level instead of elementary level and having room personally to run into new ideas. That's very, very important to me as a teacher is to at least by the end of the year get the students to the point where they're coming out with their own take on these concepts. You know? If we're studying something from one culture and you have a student from a radically different culture, if that student is able to come up with his own interpretation of that, wonderful because that's something that I wouldn't have been able to do myself. So that's important to me.

Q: What process did you go through to get this job? Did you come out of school and say gosh I think I'll do a lateral entry teaching degree or did you talk to someone or how did you, and all the way through, did you interview? Describe that for me.

A: Well coming out of undergrad, like I said, I had been altering my plans from going straight into pursuing a masters to stepping out into the workforce a little bit and then coming back in at some other point and so I mean I had already gone through the process of taking the English subjects' exam, the GRE and requesting information from grad schools stuff like that and so that was where my career services department at Sewanee had been taking me. So I really didn't have them quite on board with me as far as going into teaching so that's been mostly my own research and my own work just for the sake of not having to apologize for wasting their time with other stuff.

When I came home for my last spring break, I took some time to; well the first thing I did was I went to Charlotte Catholic High and I just went over there and saw my old principal and saw some of the people there and said are you guys higher right now, do you have any openings in the English department? They didn't at that time so I went ahead and I just filled out an application and left it with them and said if you do have anything, let me know. I'll be graduating and ready to go. Knowing that they didn't have anything, the next place I looked was to the public school systems. So I just went online. I was concerned that I didn't have any kind of educational background so I specifically looked for on the frequently asked question page what do you do in that situation and it sort of lays it all out, you know, lateral entry, dah, dah, dah. So I went ahead and filled out an application as soon as I got back in, I guess it was late May, filled out an application online and submitted it and I had a lot else going on.

I got married right out of college. We moved. We had all these crazy things happening so during that month where I was getting married and moving and doing all this stuff, I kind of put the job search to the side just because I knew it would drive me nuts to try to do it and it just wasn't feasible. So I filled out the application and kind of forgot about it to tell you the truth and then once July rolls around, I was really starting to look for work

in earnest and I hadn't heard from the school system so I had assumed that they just didn't have any room or I wasn't qualified or whatever. So I started to look for other work. I did some temp work. I went on a thousand interviews at other places, you know, just the whole grueling process of trying to find work and let's see, I guess it was August 1st or so the phone rang and it was Suzanne [?Carpino 16:37?] the HR analyst from uptown and said that they had an opening at East [?Meck?] and asked me if I was interested and I said sure. She gave me a time that I could go over to East [?Meck?] and interview with Mr. Nixon the principal over there which I did.

Ironically, it turns out that the reason they had an opening in their department was because one of their teachers had left to teach at Charlotte Catholic.

Q: Oh that's funny.

A: So inadvertently, Charlotte Catholic gave me the job. They'll probably never know that unless I let them know that but it was kind of funny how that worked out. But yeah, I interviewed with them. The interview went great. I got really positive feedback from it. I was led to understand that there would be an immediate response, like the next day they would let me know whether I got the job or not. It was a week. So I spent a week kind of sitting by the phone saying what's going on and leaving I don't know how many voicemails asking Suzanne what was going on which she probably hated. It turned out that they had had some paperwork that took time to come through. My transcripts had to come through. You know?

At that point, once they finally got everything squared away on their part, they called me. She called me in the middle of the afternoon about a week and a half ago and said can you be on camp tomorrow and that was it. At that point I was sort of in their hands and showed up and I've been doing stuff with them ever since.

Q: I was going to say how many days have you been in the camp?

A: I was here everyday but the first day so I was here from last Thursday on in.

Q: And how many days do you have to do?

A: I've got to make up the original day tomorrow.

Q: And then you're done?

A: Yeah.

Q: Okay. Thinking ahead say a year from now, do you anticipate that you will want to continue to teach high school English the next year?

A: I think so. Yeah. Right now I'm tossing the idea of do I want to go back to school full time at some point down the road or do I want to just take night classes or take

summer classes or something like that and right now I'm leaning towards taking it at night or summer classes just because I really do think this is something I'm going to enjoy and I think it's something that's going to be helpful at the masters' level for me.

One thing that's plagued me throughout my academic career is that I've always been very good English and literature and grammar and things like that but I've never been the hardest working student and I know that and I think being on the teacher side of things is going to give me a much better idea of what a teacher is looking for really from a student as far as work goes and consistency and things like that that before just really didn't matter that much to me to be honest with you.

I think being on the receiving end of having students who are talented but don't work that hard versus having students who are working very, very hard to overcome deficiencies, by the time I get around to getting back into school again, I think I'm going to be a different kind of student than I was before and that's going to be a huge change for me so hopefully I can teach an old dog new tricks.

Q: How will you handle students in your classroom that are very much like you were or are that are very bright but not so motivated?

A: I'm going to really have to be careful not to tell them the whole life story because the last thing I want to tell them is well I didn't work very hard in high school and now I'm a teacher and that's not going to do any good. So I think the main thing is to just try, and it's hard with a fifteen or sixteen year old, to get long term perspective because they're living for the moment, maybe for the week but to try to make it clear and if necessary just to break it down and say, you know, look, here's the statistics. If you go to this level of education, you get this much money per year on average. If you go to this level, you get this much, dah, dah, dah. Here is the GPA that a school like that is going to expect you to have. If you work like this, you're not going to get that GPA and you're not going to have the option of moving on and that's something that I don't think really struck home until later on for me at least was that they just don't care how motivated or how talented you are. They care about how have you performed and that's all they measure it by and a student can be immensely talented but if they're not performing then, you know, then the grad schools are just going to say well, sorry, you know, go find some other line of work.

So really my biggest goal then is to have them perform and to emphasize if you're slacking through assignments that's just not acceptable and it's not going to get you a grade and we've been talking about differentiation about setting different goals for different students which at first I was pretty resistant to. I didn't like that idea that a student should have to work differently than the other students in the class but thinking about it from that perspective, from having sort of the underachievers and the overachievers it makes a lot more sense that we're not looking for, you know, I mean on one hand we are tested to standards but those are standards that are reasonable for any student. I mean even students with serious deficiencies should be able to get to that standard if we're doing our jobs right. The real goal for us is performance. We want to have every student performing at the highest level possible and that's where the

differentiation comes into play and really, I mean, as resistant as I am to that idea that got me through a lot of my earlier education.

I was placed ahead in English and reading. Early on when I was in first grade, second grade, third grade, I'd go ahead of the grade level and it was great. I mean I was flying through stuff. Fourth grade I had a teacher who either, of course I don't know because I was too young to really understand it, but either couldn't or didn't move me up any farther and that was the point where I lost organizational skills, lost motivation and stuff like that and that's affected me ever since and that's why I'm overcoming these problems now I think. Maybe it's just my personality and I'm just lazy but I really do think it had more than any other single thing to do with running into a brick wall in the fourth grade with a teacher who was wanting to hold me back and so I got to where I was doodling during class, doing the assignments everybody else was doing and getting an A.

Q: Finding other things to get you- -

A: Yeah. And at that point I realized I could do this guy's work without really trying very hard so whenever the more challenging stuff came along, I wasn't used to trying hard and that became a real problem so.

Q: Other than being in the classroom as a student yourself and being in college, do you have any experience with teaching kids at all?

A: Personally no not aside from just my own personal education experience. My mom was a teacher [inaudible 24:04] incidentally just by total coincidence. She did her student teaching there for a few years whenever I was smaller so I was kind of exposed to it through that and she's worked at Queen's University ever since then in the development department, not in teaching specifically. So I've always been kind of aware of really more so than teaching itself, the functions of the school and what a school does and what their overall goal is so I'm not so much experienced in the classroom as I am in the school system and the university system and that sort of thing.

Q: So you think in looking ahead you will be happy with your decision to do this?

A: I think so. Yeah. It was something that I was hoping for and for at least a couple of months there had just sort of given up on and was looking at several job opportunities that were just kind of mundane and not what I wanted to do. So whenever I did finally get that phone call that I wasn't expecting saying well we've got a teaching position open, I mean that was like a ray of sunshine through the dark clouds and I think that's part of the reason I'm so psyched up about it right now is because I really was looking realistically at having to take an industrial job or something like that just because there was no job market and doing stuff that I was not trained for, didn't want to do but it was going to pay the bills and that shift in what my future goals were from one day to the next made a huge difference I think in my motivation, my excitement level to do it. Coming close to not being able to do it made more valuable to me that I've had the opportunity so.

Q: Okay. I think that's about it.

A: Great.

[END OF AUDIO]

Interview 2

Q: --ten minutes if that's okay.

A: Okay.

Q: And the first question was, how's everything going and have you hit the dip?

A: It's going well. Actually to tell you the truth, I mean I say that because for the students it's hard and I guess if anything I've think I've kind of been on a high point right now because I'm getting used to the routines and the demands and that kind of thing. I just about died around early November because I was trying to do so much all the time, and eventually I got enough advice, I guess. The dip is really more a matter of just being like, "Wow, next teacher work day, end of March." That get overwhelming, but to be honest with you, I would say things have gotten a bit better since the end of last semester.

Q: Most people I've talked to have said right before Christmas was when it just really hit, but then after Christmas break they kind of came back revived a little bit and felt better.

A: Its good to kind of hit the reset button and just kind of start over again. You don't get new kids, but you at least get a new semester.

Q: That was one advantage that I hadn't thought of with the block schedule, which I understand you all are going to next year, was that the new first-year teachers I've talked to have said that second semester is great because it was able to start over with new kids and I didn't make the same mistakes I made in the beginning. I learned from that. I thought that was interesting because I hadn't thought about that.

A: I would imagine also having only four preps at a time for a newer teacher would be a big difference. Even though it's got to be difficult and I know I've got colleagues who are starting this year who've got, especially the freshmen level, just some rotten classes that they have a hard time with. And it's frustrating for them because they do see those kids every day because they're double blocks and when they spend hours getting ready for these classes and then they just go poof within five minutes I know it's real frustrating for them. But nevertheless I think having only four preparations.

A: And knowing that you can basically plan for a whole week at one time because you're not having to think about well, what about Tuesday when I have this different class kind of thing.

Q: What level are you teaching of English?

A: Tenth grade. I'm teaching Advanced and Honors. Excuse me, two Honors and four Advanced.

Q: Okay, now when you go to the block schedule will that be a year-long class or will that be a true block class?

A: We're doing it -- they're still sorting out some of the details with this, but what they're thinking about doing, because the writing test is in March and it's so important for them and it's so important for the school that we do well on that kind of thing, what they're thinking about doing is having an English class and a composition class. So that they will take English one semester and composition the other semester. So then no matter what, regardless of whether they have their 10th grade English class first or second semester they will still have been doing writing within the last several weeks before that test.

Q: That's interesting, that's a good idea.

Q: Now I understand you're a floater, and I imagine that's pretty challenging.

A: It is in ways. I have been disorganized.

Q: What's been your biggest challenge?

A: Getting to places on time has been a huge issue. Especially at the beginning of the day when there's the largest number of demands from the students, who are rushing to get their things done, I'm trying to get in the door. I kind of cut it close most days anyway just getting here on time and that kind of thing. But then all it takes is going down the hall and one folder to fall off the cart and that's a mess, an absolute disaster. Dealing with the start of any class is always a challenge because a lot of teachers wisely just keep the same information on their boards from one period to the next. I can't do that; I have to do things on transparencies and that involves set up and take down so that's been a huge issue also.

Q: That is hard. What's come the easiest for you?

A: That's a good question. I guess just handling the classroom in terms of getting to know the students, developing a relationship with students. I think largely because I am only five years out of high school, I still see things in a lot of the same ways that they do. I mean, I watch the same shows that they do, I listen to the same music. So they say things around me that they think go over my head that I come right back at them with and they have no idea that I wasn't born in 1925 and I get that a lot. I think they sometimes even have a hard time realizing that I am part of the same generation that they are and I can make the same connections to pop culture especially. So that's been really easy to

deal with for me, aside from the kids who are not that nice and of course there is always some. I'm hesitant to say that its come easily because there's been a lot of kids that are just hard to get along with.

Q: Now, you said getting places on time was your biggest challenge and that the easiest was establishing these relationships. Were either one of those surprising to you? I mean, is that what you would have predicted would have been the biggest challenge or the easiest?

A: I think I saw the-- I mean, I'm not a morning person at all. I'm a night owl and so when I set out to do this thing I knew already that the biggest issue for me was going to be just getting myself started in the morning and getting this going. That doesn't surprise me very much. As far as classroom rapport, I think it's come more easily than I thought it would. I had a lot of nerves in the first couple of months as far as what could I say, what couldn't I say, what backgrounds these kids had. I had no idea where these kids were coming from and that kind of thing. I had a lot of concerns as far as just sort of getting to know what I was working with. And as we've gone along, 90 percent of these kids are coming from at least a comparable background of mine, same part of town, same part of the same town, those kinds of things. And that's been probably easier than I expected it to be.

Q: And that's one thing I wanted to ask about. You have a mentor here?

A: That's right, yeah.

Q: Okay. Here at the school?

A: Yeah.

Q: Same subject?

A: Yeah. Same subject; same grade level.

Q: That's wonderful. That's ideal; that doesn't always happen. And how's your relationship been with your mentor? It's working?

A: Generally good. She's actually the tenth grade lead teacher now; she's moved into that position since we lost someone. So she's very much involved in the goings on, especially at that grade level, and of the department. She's been here a while; she knows the ropes really well, and she's a very, very organized individual and that helps a lot to kind of see how she puts things together in a way that's not just kind of haphazard. Because, you know, I'm not the most organized person in general, but I can't stand to be running around with papers flying everywhere, and it helps to see somebody else's system.

Q: Is that who you generally go to when you have questions or to other teachers on your team?

A: I really go to a variety of different people. The planning periods are a good time for that kind of thing, because I have two different planning periods naturally and so always just different people around. That provides a lot. I have a roommate since I'm floating; I have my desk in a room but there's always been someone else in the room. Now unfortunately the lady that was in the room was the lead teacher who left.

Q: So she's gone now so you can't --

A: She's not there anymore but she's been replaced by someone else. But I would talk to her and to my new roommate, you know, just kind of go through something to see if it made sense. Being a floater I see three or four different teachers a day just moving in and out of rooms, so that helps. And so I feel like I've had a lot of different networks to go through.

Q: Good, good. That's great. What's been the biggest disappointment for you?

A: The bureaucracy of the system has been difficult at times to really -- I mean, I mentioned that we're doing this review for the state writing test, and that was while I felt like their OV period was acceptable, the way it was done was to stop everybody's plans cold and put down sort of a mandatory, "This is what you're going to do each day of this period. Here's materials, here's your stuff." And also with the pacing guide, so it's a similar approach of, "Here's what you're going to teach on this day. Here is the page numbers; here's this, that and the other." I just don't think that works, honestly. I think it's great to have pacing guides; I think it's great to have coordinated lesson planning, all that kind of thing. But when it comes down to saying, "Okay, everybody in this room is going to do the same thing on the same day," I mean, I don't teach that diverse a range of students. But even within that range I've got kids who are, I mean, sort of quasi -- illiterate. I was thinking legible and legitimate, and I was thinking I'm not saying the thing I want to say. You know, quasi-illiterate, really. I mean, I've got ESL students and EC students and kids who have a hard time just reading instructions on prompts, and now I've got kids who are in the creative writing club and doing newspaper stuff and yearbook stuff and trying to go to college and this sort of thing. And to sit there with both of them and do the same activity to me is just, it's not serving any of their needs.

Q: Exactly.

A: That's been really disappointing to have to deal with that so much, and it was much more than I thought it was going to be as far as the micromanagement, the grand schemes that they come up with that frequently don't get followed through on or they just sort of fall apart because they don't work real well in the classroom. That's been a pain in the rear; I mean, that's been a real problem.

Q: Now, I asked you this at the beginning when I talked to you. On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your enthusiasm right now?

A: Well, right now I'd probably say at about a seven, and it's gone up and down a lot. You know, just depends on what day of the week it is sometimes. It's a Friday and I'm done with classes so right now it's a seven. I'm having the time of my life.

Q: And you mentioned November,. what would you say it was then?

A: Boy, probably down to like three or four, you know, something, not real happy.

Q: On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your frustration level?

A: Five.

Q: And again, in November?

A: It would be higher around then. I've found a lot of the time that my frustration level and my enthusiasm level don't seem to intersect. I'm frustrated with things that have nothing to do with why I'm enthusiastic, you know. I'll have great lessons and kids will do great and I'll be really happy about that, but something in a meeting just really gets to me and frustrates me that has nothing to do with why. And so they don't always seem to pair up quite.

A: I've got to go.

Q: OK, thank you for meeting with me. I will be back at the end of the year.

[END OF AUDIO 26:02]

Interview 3

Q: So you've almost finished with your first year now, how has it been?

A: It's been OK.

Q: Has it been a good experience?

A: Yes it has. There have been some rough spots, but overall it's been good.

Q: What was one of the rough spots?

A: Well in January I had a really bad incident where a student became violent in the classroom and it had been a bad day anyway. I mean, I had to really talk myself into coming back the next day after that. That was one of those real low points, but it was real high around break times, real low in between break times. But at that point I was

seriously considering not coming back, and that got taken care of. Again, the administration moved the kid out of the classroom, so they took care of it on their end, and I haven't had that kind of a problem since then. But it's hard to have that kind of thing happen and still feel like you should be here. It's difficult.

Q: Looking back on, this is the first semester now what would you do differently?

A: I would probably spend a lot less time at the beginning of the year stressing out over things that I now realize that I did not need to stress out about. I was sure at the beginning of the year I was going to get ruined because I was going to miss some critical piece of paperwork that I had to have and I guess because of the volume of it at the time it just took me off guard. And I was sure I was going to lose my job because I didn't turn in a form on time, and I haven't had any issues with that at all maybe because I obsessed over it. But grading stuff, I mean I was being meticulous about grading things. I felt like I really needed to look at every word on every page. And I found a lot of ways to prevent that kind of thing, you know, from happening.

Q: That's good.

A: Just the stress level, planning, figuring out that I don't need to come up with my own lesson plans every single day, just out of my own mind, scratch. Finding resources that would kind of lay them out for you, using other people's ideas and things like that.

Q: Good. How's the administrative support been?

A: Very good. Actually I was just talking about this the other day. I was at the Y; I just signed up for a YMCA membership. And I was registering and the lady that does the registration there is a teacher at one of the other -- I think she's at a middle school -- but a CMS school. And one of the things I mentioned when she was asking how the school was, I said, "The administration is really supportive," and her jaw just dropped. She's like, "Really?" And she said, "You never hear anybody say that about administrations at CMS. They're always complained about." And I didn't really realize that until she said that, but it did occur to me the administration is pretty helpful.

Q: That's good; that's very good.

A: And of course, there's always griping and groaning about anything, but when it comes down to it, and when it comes down to sort of brass tacks they do what they can do and they're behind us.

Q: Most people that I've talked to have said the student apathy. Do you see that as a problem?

A: I expected that, though. I'm not disappointed by it; I knew it was going to happen.

Q: Okay, but that's good.

A: You know, there are times when to be honest with you I don't think it's the student apathy; I think it's the parent apathy that gets to me. Hearing parents say things like, "What am I supposed to do with him? I can't get anything better from him," and I'm a parent. I have a child; he's in school. He gets grades and stuff like that and I have no problem laying it down saying, "This is going to change, pal," and that's it. And the problem gets solved. This happened yesterday; he got a progress report that said his handwriting wasn't good enough. He came back; his homework was pristine. I mean, it looked like a different kid because I really laid it down to him on the way home. I don't see how that is so hard for some of these people to do, and I know what it is that they just don't get enough attention to be able to do that kind of thing. But that's been maybe not disappointing but disturbing sometimes to see how many of these kids are literally on their own. My roommate got an email from a lady the other day saying that -- your child hasn't been in school for seven consecutive periods. What's going on? And she writes back and says, "Well, it's hard for me to monitor that because I'm in New York. So I'm going to be back later this month and we can talk about it." It's like so who's with him? If it's hard for the parent to monitor it, well who is monitoring this? That's kind of scary.

Q: Do you think you'll continue next year?

A: Yeah, I'll be here next year.

Q: And how about 10 years from now; what do you see yourself doing?

A: Long term my goal is to get back to grad school. I'm actually looking at right now trying to lay out sort of a three or five-year plan, something like that, for getting back -- my real aim is to deal more with literature in critical terms, and not so much in teaching terms. So I would like to get some position in a college or a university level, where I could do research and that kind of thing as well as doing some teaching. I love teaching; I don't know that I would necessarily be making the best use of my particular talents here. As much as I love doing it, I feel like there are some things here that are just kind over my head in some ways, I mean, the pedagogue, and things like that, that I just don't always get.

Q: That will come with experience.

A: Right. And there's some things that I would really love to do that I know that I'll never do here, just because it's just not part of the curriculum. So in that respect I think I'm a better fit for maybe a college position or something like that where I'd be doing more of a research-type thing.

Q: So will you still be teaching 10th grade next year/

A: I'm really not sure. I would imagine I'll end up teaching tenth grade like I have this year or whether it's going to be all English classes I doubt. It will probably end up being largely composition classes.

Q: Okay. When do you all get out for the summer?

A: We finish June 8th. That will be the last day of exams.

Q: Okay. Do you mind if I ask how old you are?

A: Twenty-four, just turned 24 from 23. Don't mind me hesitating.

Q: Okay. And I appreciate your help and I appreciate you getting back in touch with me and I will --

Interview 4

██████ taught for two academic years before he left to return to ██████ to work in Development. He stated that the reasons that he left teaching were because of all the paperwork and because it was so time consuming. "Often I was working 60 plus hours a week. I was not prepared for that." "I was leaving work at 4:30 am to go to work and getting home at 5:30 in the evening." Thomas said, "Those who are not in education don't realize how much time and effort the job requires."

The job is not conducive to family life, so he now works in development.

Working in development is more "fluid" than teaching. There is some travel, but the work load is much less than teaching. You make your own schedule. The main thing is that you get out what you put in it. The reward is much more immediate and easy to see.

Another aspect of the profession that helped to make his decision to leave was the lack of tangible rewards for the job. Thomas felt that you really can't see, especially short-term, that you are making a difference. There is "very little reward for the job."

Thomas still misses the people that he worked with and the relationships. He doesn't miss the negativity, politics especially with testing, and the work load.

1. I decided to leave teaching at the end of my second year. I was really worn down by the workload, realized that I had a long way to go before I could be certified (a condition of my employment at East), and the reality had hit home that I could support my family much more effectively in another field.

2. In my new position, I have **THIS WAS WHEN YOU CALLED!** a great deal of control over my goals, tactics, and general workflow. I travel occasionally, which is nice, and my job brings me into contact with a lot of truly interesting people from all walks of life.

3. I think it was the right decision for me at the time, because I had thought about it for so long. In retrospect, though, I regret that I rushed into it directly out of college without any intermediate training. 4. I would wait longer to jump in (of course, at that time I really needed the paycheck...) Ideally I would begin certification before starting work in the classroom, or wait to take the job until that process was finished. I'm not sure how much it would have impacted my teaching, but it just wasn't feasible for me to take a heavy workload while teaching AND raising a family.

5. I never realized how challenged many students are, and I didn't realize just how ineffectively schools are managed at the district, state and federal levels. I now have much stronger opinions about the actual needs (as opposed to the perceived or political needs) of urban school districts. In particular, I strongly resent the use of standardized tests as a way of judging the worth of schools and the people in them. I feel badly about the amount of turnover in the faculty and administrative ranks, and that I was a part of that turnover. I have a better understanding of urban youth, but I can't say that a better understanding has led me to a sense of optimism about their futures.

6. I regret that I did it so young, as I was often in a state of culture shock having come directly out of a small, private, rural university environment. I regret that I went into it with the mentality that I was there for academic purposes, which made me a poor teacher at times. My main regret about leaving is that I still occasionally miss the relationships and insights that grow out of the classroom environment. I think about my students frequently.