

Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship — A
Narrative Analysis

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ABSTRACT

While the story of teaching makes plenty of room for academic and social learning, the telling often leaves out some of the most important details. In this thesis, I tell the stories of four teachers — how they practice and make sense of the caring relationship in the school and how such relationships lead to moral good in people, schools, communities, and the world. The moral is centered in the ongoing dialogue about what is best in schools and the world — the good, and the relationships in which the stories are set. The method is narrative analysis and the format is a series of free verse poems. The characters tell stories of knowing and being known, meaningful dialogue, modeling, authentic care, struggle and tension, individualized attention, hope, and transformation. The conclusion is a deep imagining of possibilities, implications, and outcomes.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Tieg and Mac — the great interrupters of my story; and to Becca — my sweetheart and fellow narrator.

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“We want schools to be places where it is both possible and attractive to be good” (Noddings, 2002, p. 9).

PROBLEM

I have been a teacher for 11 years — rural, urban, private, public, Cree bilingual school, Hebrew bilingual school, high school, middle school, and elementary. Since spending a full year as a graduate student in 2008/9 I’ve been a public school teacher. I’m a learning support teacher and I teach Grades 4 and 5 in a multi-age classroom in an urban school in northern Winnipeg. Here are a few of the educational stories that caught my attention as I began to prepare this project.

In September of 2010 in Pitt Meadows, British Columbia a girl was raped at a rave party. While a debate has ensued over the girl’s claim of rape (“Alleged”, 2010), it is certain that a 16 year old boy took photos of the act that were circulated by other school-aged children to the point that police issued a public appeal to stop the reposting of the photos (“Don’t”, 2010). The photos had become viral.

On the same day as the Pitt Meadows incident the Premier and the Minister of Education announced that standardized report cards and standardized in-service days would be mandated in the province of Manitoba (“Premier”, 2010). A new Manitoba Education assessment document was also introduced in 2010, albeit with little public fanfare —

Provincial Assessment Policy, Kindergarten to Grade 12: Academic Responsibility, Honesty, and Promotion / Retention. (Manitoba Education, 2010).

In February of 2010 two teachers at Churchill High School in Winnipeg were filmed while performing a lap-dance at a spirit rally in front of 100 students (“Teachers”, 2010). By April of the same year one of the teacher’s limited term contract expired while the other teacher agreed to resign from the Winnipeg School Division (Martin, 2010).

In September of the 2011 school year an 11-year-old boy with special needs committed suicide after being bullied in a case in which the bully may stand trial (Kennedy, 2011).

In August of 2011 a group calling itself The Manitoba Education Financing Coalition initiated a campaign in the weeks prior to the Manitoba provincial election to have school taxes removed from property tax bills (“Coalition”, 2011). The campaign, Let’s Pay Fair.com, included such supporters as the Manitoba and Winnipeg Chambers of Commerce, the Manitoba and Winnipeg Realtors Associations, and various agricultural producers’ associations (letspayfair.com).

The story of education is a very public story and it is told by hosts of narrators. While these stories play out in schools, offices, and homes across our country and it seems that everyone has an opinion about them, it is often difficult to engage in a conversation about some of the

basic, central questions of education. What should schools do? How do we know if they're doing it? What's a good kid like? Who gets to decide?

The basic questions of education are not addressed when we charge bullies and standardize school processes, ban cell phones and fire teachers, or redirect educational financing.

Consider two other stories that occurred in the same period.

Aaron

My first meeting with Aaron happened before the first school day of 2009. I was beginning my first year at the school and I was preparing my classroom in the summer. I overheard a fuss outside my room. One of the daycare workers was talking to a child in the hall. The child had done something wrong or questionable. I recognized the name from my classroom list, Aaron. The next time I was passing by the daycare Aaron was in the hallway. I asked him if that was where he spent most of his time when school was happening and I mentioned that I would be his teacher. Aaron seemed to be uncomfortable with my conversation and he adopted a closed attitude that seemed familiar to him.

I tried to apologize and get a little closer to Aaron the next time I saw him. He was with his mom. I noticed that he was wearing a football jersey and I tried to make small talk about football. I elicited a guarded

smile from Aaron but I could tell that I hadn't been able to bridge the gap I'd created with my first encounter.

I had resigned my teaching position at a Winnipeg private school a year earlier in order to study education at the graduate level. I initially intended to focus on assessment and instruction — pedagogical interests. I was drawn instead towards some aspects of educational philosophy — purpose, happiness, teachers as moral people, and particularly the ethic of care and relationality. After having immersed myself in readings and discussion I headed back into the classroom to begin a new, morally informed teaching practice. I took a job as a Grade 4/5 teacher in a Winnipeg public school.

Aaron was the first of my new students and my first meeting with him was a flop. I utterly failed to feel for him, to reach out to him relationally, and ultimately to care for him in that initial encounter. I felt the sting of failure and the tension of maintaining the ethic of care in even the simplest of relationships.

I spent the next ten months bathed in that tension. Aaron emerged into my life day by day and challenged my commitment to the idea of an ethic of care in a real environment with real people feeling real needs. Would I stay true to the idea — I who called myself a caring teacher, who openly expressed the philosophy that schools' purpose was a moral one, to care for children and to lead them into lives of caring.

Aaron was an incredibly needy student, almost friendless, behind his peers academically, bullied by his older brother and father, immature, and unable to make strong connections with almost any other student. He was feeling, by his own description, “always sad.” He would yell out in class frequently, fight during recess, argue with adults and walk away from them, pout, scowl, and cover his head. It was hard for me to care for Aaron.

I urged Aaron to explore his feelings, to talk to adults and other students, and to think the best of himself. I asked him to “take responsibility for his actions” and think about what other people were thinking and feeling when he had an outburst. He whined and huffed, blamed and antagonized. Once in a beautiful while he would smile and his head would tilt back. His face would take on the hot glow of joy instead of fear and anger and he would giggle.

At one point in the year during a long recess conversation, Aaron told me that I might be the only person who cared about him, except maybe his mom. I asked him how that could be true. I listed a long list of teachers that worked with Aaron, teachers that I had conversed and deliberated with about Aaron’s life and learning. “They don’t care,” he stated simply and categorically.

Aaron didn’t learn much that year, if we make a list of conventional educational successes: his writing didn’t improve much; he didn’t master any times-tables or learn the names of the continents and countries; he

didn't emerge from some complex scientific project with a new and original view of the world. He learned a new way to multiply, he finished a relatively easy novel, he began stepping in to help other kids solve relational conflicts, and he challenged me to care for him.

The relationship that I formed with Aaron was successful; it involved learning and assessment; it was unremarkable for me to enter into it. It happens every day in every school, and we rarely question its place and purpose.

Claire

In April of 2010, a former student called me at the same school. She had been in the same class as Aaron. Near the end of the day the school secretary came to my classroom to ask me if I wanted to talk to Claire on the phone. Without pursuing the story any further I said no. She could have an adult call me back and I would talk to her then. I had been involved in a very intense lesson — much of it teacher-centered, was teaching with a co-teacher, and was having a few difficulties with reluctant students. Not long afterwards a support teacher came to tell me again that the student was on the phone; I told her that I had been informed already. I went back into the classroom.

I had wanted to rush to the office and take the call immediately. I perceived that the student needed my help. I had worried about her often since she had left the school. I consider myself a caring teacher.

Later I learned that a responsible adult had monitored the student on the other end of the phone. Claire had asked for me first but she had spoken to the principal and two support teachers. She had spoken about missing the school and had wanted to come back. Claire missed her teachers and friends.

I rushed to the office after the final bell, after my students had left the classroom, but before debriefing about the day with my co-teacher. I found one of the support teachers; she described her conversation with Claire. Claire had been sad so the support teacher had tried to keep the conversation light.

I was overcome by a feeling of disappointment and shame. I felt as if I had failed to meet the needs of my student. I had made the decision to avoid the call because of a calculated sense of professional distance and a concern over some of the details of the relationship that I'd had with this student. The year I had taught her had been a hard one. She was a girl with a tough life. She had been taken from her home, and had made serious, but unfounded, allegations against me. Claire will forever be affected by FASD and her learning gains, in the conventional sense, will be limited. However, she wanted to be heard by someone she

thought cared. She had called because she trusted me and thought I could help her.

My perceived role as a teacher and my relationship with Claire had created an uneasy tension in me. I was unsure of my responsibility to my student. Was she my student? I had no simple answer. My ability to make sense of our relationship was compromised. I was unable to act as a caring adult and teacher should when faced with the perceived needs of a student.

A number of elements emerge as I review this story.

- I had felt unable to leave my lesson; I was the instructor and the holder of the knowledge — French vocabulary in this case, and the lesson would have crumbled without me.
- I felt responsible to my co-teacher to avoid deviating from the plan despite her knowledge of my relationship with Claire and my knowing that she would have absolutely supported my leaving to speak with her.
- I had one student in the hall — a boy with his own troubled life, and two or three students who were unwilling to take part in the lesson in the classroom. Each of the students had a unique presence in my mind and a particular hold on my attention at the moment.
- I wanted guidance from one of my administrators about what to do. I felt unable to make a moral decision in that moment and I had wanted direction from one of the women who, at that moment, I identified mainly as my bosses — both veteran teachers.

- I was worried that Claire would say something on the phone that would compromise my good intention and my desire to be caring and helpful could be twisted.

Questions

It is tempting to simplify the teacher-student relationship; much of the stuff of contemporary education is constructed around the belief, explicit or unexplored, that the primary relational identity of a teacher is a giver-of-information, perhaps a “facilitator,” maybe even a “mentor” or “guide.”

Paulo Freire (1970/1993) identified and described the underlying belief supporting modern education. The teacher “banks” information into the student; the relationship is simple and the transfer is unidirectional, teacher to student. The student is idealized as an empty receptor, moldable and open to the intentions of the teacher. Difficulties arise when we consider that human beings are neither simple nor empty. Students and teachers have complex lives that are full of meaning. The teacher-student relationship operates in a social milieu and not a vacuum, and it is a dynamic and ever-changing phenomenon.

Three significant questions emerge from a consideration of the initial news stories and the two personal narratives. These questions are appropriate questions for qualitative research as they are “grounded in a

philosophical standpoint regarding the nature of reality,” that moral education is inherent in teaching and learning experiences (Hesse-Biber, 2006, p. 57).

What does it mean to care for students?

How does a teacher make sense of the caring relationship in the classroom?

How is a caring relationship between teacher and students transformed into moral good — good people, good schools, good communities, good world?

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE¹

Aims Talk

Should teachers pursue caring relationships with students? Does it matter? What are students supposed to learn and what should they care about? Is the ethic of care an appropriate educational model? Should teaching and learning produce a better world? How should such a transformation be accomplished? The discussion of care is rooted in a discussion of the basic purposes of education, schooling, and teaching and learning.

Much of the purpose of formal schooling has remained unaltered from the 1949 model of Ralph Tyler, centered in intellectual development and changes to behaviour. The Tyler rationale has become the accepted model of curriculum planning. It is a pragmatic approach. The model is developed using four considerations purpose, experiences, organization, and evaluation.

Tyler (1949) reasoned that a purpose of schooling is to change student behaviour and such changes should become the objectives and subject matter of the school program and curriculum. Experiences are the basis for the changes in behaviour. Organizational elements such as

¹ Some of the content of this section comes from a paper that I completed for a course — EDUB 7550, taught by Dr. Yatta Kanu.

continuity, integration, and sequence should be woven through all student experiences. Tyler suggested a hierarchy of organization from broad subject fields to sequentially organized courses to units/topics/lessons. He ended his rationale with a discussion of evaluation, stating that evaluation is necessary in order to tell if the organized experiences are fulfilling their purposes. The assessment of the program is reflected in the assessment of the learners, perhaps planting the seed for the growing contemporary phenomenon of assessment-based teacher accountability policies.

Larry Cuban outlined the lasting effect of Tyler's influence on schools. The demand for "controlling student behavior while organizing for instruction pressed teachers toward a heavy and sustained emphasis on the managerial role" (Cuban, 1988, p. 22), meaning "the conventional means of holding teachers and administrators accountable at all levels of government is through rule-making" (p. 246).

What has happened to the discussion of purpose in schooling? William Doll Jr. (1993) noted that in the Tyler rationale "goals are predetermined as are the experiences and methods for developing those experiences. All are firmly in place before any interaction with students occurs" (p. 254).

Nel Noddings (2003) has insisted that any discussion of education must begin with aims talk. The purposes of education cannot be taken for granted.

Aims-talk is to education what freedom is to democracy. Without freedom, democracy degenerates into a form quite different from liberal democracy. Similarly without continual, reflective discussion of aims, education may become a poor substitute for its best vision. Moreover, just as freedom takes on newer and richer meanings as times change, so must the aims of education change. (p. 76)

We develop our curricula and our understanding from our purposes. A number of thinkers have offered insight into the purpose of education since Tyler's time that might serve to reconfigure our stance on the aims of education and point towards a moral purpose, perhaps towards the ethic of care.

Preceding Tyler, John Dewey (1938/1997) may have been one of the first educational thinkers to suggest that schools' underlying purposes may need to be questioned when he identified two fundamental and opposing beliefs about education. It is either "development from within.... based upon natural endowments" or "formation from without ... a process of overcoming natural inclination and substituting in its place habits acquired under external pressure" (p. 17). He linked these beliefs to what he called the new and the old school and suggested that schools are old school. Dewey applied the terms "progressive" and "traditional" to these beliefs but cautioned us to be careful of acting from extreme

positions. The educator should not impose or dictate purpose but guides students in a “co-operative enterprise” (p. 72).

Philip Jackson (1986) described a spectrum between *mimetic* knowledge and *transformative* knowledge. Mimetic knowledge is skill-based, routine, and independent of personal experience. Transformative knowledge is personal, unprescribed, and connected to lived experience.

Paulo Freire (1970/1993) distinguished between “education-as-banking/systematic education” and “praxis/educational projects” (p.48). Banking involves knowledge that is deposited into a learner by a teacher and controlled by political power. Praxis involves learning as simultaneous reflection and action that changes the world and is carried out with the learner.

Jurgen Habermas has distinguished the “systems-world” from the “life-world”; the systems-world is “oriented to ‘success,’ to the efficient achievement of ends” (Bernstein, 1985, p. 18). The life-world is characterized by dialogue, praxis, self-reflection, and intersubjectivity. It is “oriented to mutual action” (p. 18).

Even if we were to acknowledge that a purpose of education is to affect changes in cognition, a number of researchers have proposed that cognition can be defined in terms other than those suggested by Ralph Tyler — changes in behaviour. Sasha Barab and Wolff-Michael Roth (2006) have written of ecological cognition. Deborah Meier (2002) has written that “trust is intimately connected to cognition” (p. 5). Nel Noddings has

connected cognition to care (Noddings, 1984) and happiness (Noddings, 2003). Ray Barnhardt and Angayuqaq Oscar Kawagley (2008) have described indigenous cognition in their research.

Other researchers have simply defined educational purpose differently. David Hansen (2004) has insisted that schooling reveals an interconnectedness of aesthetic, intellectual, and moral purposes. Jonathan Kozol (2007) suggested that education should honour community. Noddings and Witherell (1991) have maintained, “the teacher teaches by actively pursuing the student’s objective, an objective that teacher and student have together constructed” (p. 7). The purpose of schooling is set within the teacher-student partnership. Noddings (1984) has also argued that education has the purpose of creating and fostering caring relationships.

Neil Postman (1995) has argued that purpose — “ends,” of education can be imagined as narratives. A narrative of the God of the Bible once guided the Western world. Schools, from elementary to university, were unquestionably mandated with the purpose, “to serve and celebrate the glory of God. Wherever this is the case, there is no school problem, and certainly no school crisis” (pp. 4-5). We are mistaken when we imagine that we have emancipated education from God. We have simply adopted new gods and we serve their purposes with our schools.

Postman (1995) has described a number of “Gods That Fail” — new narratives to replace the Biblical one. These are the gods he has suggested we have adopted instead: the god of Economic Utility, “passionless ... cold and severe (p. 27)”; the god of Consumership, “goodness inheres in those who buy things; evil in those who do not (p. 33)”; and the god of Technology, uninterested in “making civilized people” (p. 47). These three gods have run away with the purposes of education and their narratives have become entrenched, unquestioned. He has suggested an alternative narrative,

... a fine and noble story to offer as a reason for schooling: to provide our youth with the knowledge and will to participate in the great experiment; to teach them how to argue, and to help them discover what questions are worth arguing about; and of course, to make sure they know what happens when arguments cease. (pp. 73-74)

David Brell (2000) has suggested, “the most important function of schooling is moral education” (p. 23). Brell has maintained that teachers should, above all, “strive for moral integrity” and strive to develop students who “*live* lives at least partially dedicated to the welfare of all” (p. 28).

Perhaps schools have taken on too much responsibility for education. Coulter and Wiens (2008a) have cautioned, “conflating schooling and education risks confusing means and ends” (p. 11). They

describe a broad sense of education, linked to people's experiences and perspectives. They have argued that "deciding what counts as education ... depends on determining how people live with one another both now and in the future" (pp. 15-16). Education is ultimately tied to a conversation about "the good life." Schools should retain some of their institutional forms and structures but should invite public dialogue about purpose, "to speak publicly and to create opportunities for others to speak, thereby creating again and again, our democratic citizenship and thereby reaffirming the freedom and power of education" (Coulter & Wiens, 2008b, p. 313).

Alfie Kohn (2004) has argued that limiting the mandate for education may be the most harmful effect of the breakdown in the dialogue around aims-talk, "the fact that so many of us *don't* agree suggests that a national (or, better yet, international) conversation should continue, that one definition may never fit all, and ... we should leave it up to local communities to decide who gets to graduate" (pp. 6-7).

Hannah Arendt (1961) has addressed the public crisis over the purposes of education, and schools in particular. She has argued that the school is a unique place and there is a problem for the school in the modern world. The school's interests are not the common interest. "We must decisively divorce the realm of education from the others, most of all from the realm of public, political life, in order to apply to it alone a concept of authority" (195). We, as adults, *are* — we have already *become*

full citizens, capable of taking and wielding authority. We are free to move back and forth between private and public spheres. Children *are*, but they are also *becoming* adults. They are not free to move between the same spheres and schools must protect their purpose — *becoming*.

Before beginning a study of any educational phenomenon, it is appropriate to ask those basic questions upon which all of our educational endeavours are founded. Aims-talk is the often-neglected compass of educational decision-making. Where opinions are rife and reasons are many, discussions of educational purpose restore perspective to a muddy conversation.

Resurrecting the discussion of aims-talk means that we can look at the caring relationship in a fresh light. Is it appropriate to consider the development of caring relationships as a basic purpose of education? Should such a discussion reorient our view of contemporary schooling practices? If our view is indeed reoriented then we will need to have a framework upon which to build and assess a different vision.

The Good

What is good, and how do schools pursue it? We might be able to determine what is good by those obvious qualities our educational system values today. Gary Fenstermacher (2008) has identified the dominant contemporary educational pursuit, “There are two broad policy

goals that seem to have gained attention at this time: academic achievement and educational equity” (p. 286). We could argue that these goals identify the “good” that education offers and pursues. These two goals are instrumental; they are “oriented to ‘success,’ to the efficient achievement of ends” (Bernstein, 1985, p. 18). They are maintained by a number of educational policies and rules — laws. It follows that schooling practices are developed and prioritized in accord with such policies.

Of course, educational landscapes are rarely so uncluttered. Ken Osborne (2008) has described the history of educational policy-making, “Schooling became (as it remains) a contested arena in which different political, ideological, and social groupings struggled for influence and control” (p. 30). Each grouping has maintained a notion of the good, explicitly or implied.

Our question is not so simply answered. The greatest moral question of philosophy concerns the good. What is good and how do we accomplish goodness in our lives? Noddings (2007) has identified the questions that intrigued Socrates.

How do we find truth? What does it mean to know something? How should human beings live their lives? What is evil? What do we owe the state, and what does it owe us? What does it mean to be just?
(p. 6)

David Coulter (2001) has applied the thinking of Jurgen Habermas to the field of education and has found that Habermas “embraces the

challenge and tackles the issues involved in replying to Aristotle's question of how best to live" (90).

According to Habermas, goodness involves claims to truth, rightness, and truthfulness that are debated publicly by all who are affected under conditions that come as close as possible to approximating the ideal speech conditions of symmetry and reciprocity. (p. 95)

While Habermas established difficult conditions for human interaction — ideal symmetry and reciprocity, he has provided us with the starting point to study goodness. Goodness involves continuing negotiation and dialogue on the part of human agents — teachers and students, parents and teachers, politicians and parents. Such dialogue necessarily requires some form of honest relationship between educational actors.

David Brell (2000) has defined morality in terms of the question, "What is the Good" (p. 23)? He has noted that it was Plato's primary philosophical concern. As noted above, Brell has suggested, "The most important function of schooling is moral education" (p. 23).

David Hansen (2004) has written "that serious-minded teachers are moved or quickened to action by the good and expressions of the good" (p. 134) He has suggested that the good is the quality that initiates legitimate teaching by a teacher.

Joan Goodman (2001) has provided 6 reasons that education ought to be concerned with questions of moral goodness: all people have

rights; morality is about how we deal with one another; moral principles can exist without religious doctrines; we want children to care; morality is acquired formally as well as informally — teachers are models; and moral education is being done every day. She has ended by noting,

When we fail to tangle with this topic, we send our children a message of extreme relativism — that moral decisionmaking [*sic*] is entirely discretionary.... We erode further the notion that morality has any special, overriding, obligatory claim that merits the schools' investment, and we lend support to the widespread moral indifference that now afflicts us. (p. 33)

The answers may be different. Plato arrived at the answer, “The Good is Justice” (Brell, 2000, p. 23). Aristotle believed that “good character would furnish the ground upon which future reasoning might be safely conducted” (Noddings, 2007, p. 12). However, the goal is the same. Educational purpose, at its heart, is the pursuit of the good.

The good is at the very foundation of teaching practice, and it makes up much of the substance of learning, whether explicitly or subtly. A discussion of the good reveals a concern for truth, character, serious-mindedness, the reasoning of future citizens, the best conditions for living, and human rights, amongst other topics. It is appropriate, then, to ask how the good is best taught, how it is learned, and whether contemporary teachers recognize its explicit value. Where is the good in the mud of the contested arena?

We can ask the question again. Is it appropriate to consider the development of caring relationships as a basic educational purpose? We must consider how such relationships translate the philosophical idea of good into good students and a good world. We are still in need of a framework upon which to base our vision.

The Ethical and the Moral

A proposal to reorient educational thinking to promote and foster caring relationships challenges contemporary notions of educational purpose. It takes aim at the core of education — its ethical and moral identity. What should education accomplish? What good should education do?

In a comprehensive survey of models of moral curricula, Hugh Sockett (1992) argued that the moral is pervasive in education, subject to changes in political and social agendas and constraints, and that there is a tendency to failure and a gap in the moral preparedness of teachers. He described the historical change in the nature and demand for moral education from the direct character education of the early 20th century to the “moral relativism” of the 1960’s and identified the emergence of a theory of moral education that came to dominate our school curricula — the cognitive developmental taxonomy of Lawrence Kohlberg.

Noddings (2007) has identified the major structures of cognitive-developmentalism — an emphasis on moral reasoning, the primacy of justice, and the identification of the *moral* with the *right* (p. 168). A person moves vertically through the stages of the taxonomy. Noddings criticized the taxonomy: the potential for backward movement through the stages challenges the taxonomy's own paradigm; the validity of a stage theory model of cognitive development, such as Jean Piaget's, does not immediately validate a stage theory of moral development; the large-scale acceptance of the taxonomy has stalled productive research activity in the field; moral learning may be more dependent on experiential context than personal qualities. Is there an appropriate alternative model of moral education?

A discussion on the moral in education must begin with an attempt to clarify what the moral is. Nel Noddings (2007) has defined morality philosophically, and has equated the term with ethics, "referring to how we should conduct our lives and, especially, how we should interact with others" (p. 151). Hugh Sockett (1992) referenced Kevin Ryan's more schools-oriented definition, "What schools do, consciously and unconsciously, to help the young think about issues of right and wrong, to desire the social good, and to help them behave in an ethical manner" (p. 543). John Dewey (1929) insisted that moral education requires us to think of the school as a "mode of social life" (p. 19) and moral education

occurs when we “enter proper relations with others in a unity of work and thought” (p. 19).

David Brell (2000) has proposed that a moral person is guided by a principle of justice, motivated by a caring attitude, and possessed of a resolute character” (p. 24) — justice, caring, and resolve. Brell has connected these qualities to the mental, emotional, and behavioral life of a person and has suggested that they form the universal virtues of humanity.

In education, David Hansen (2004) has described the moral in terms of action — the teacher’s “capacity to discern the salient issues and concerns at stake in an educational situation and to act upon them” (p. 133). The moral requires qualities of “attentiveness” and “critical appreciation” (p. 133). Nel Noddings has tied the moral to caring. She has insisted that caring elicits a strong obligation to be moral. Caring does not make judgment of right and wrong, but seeks to heighten “moral perception and sensitivity” (Noddings, 1984, 90).

David Coulter (2001) has noted Jurgen Habermas’ distinction between ethical and moral forms of dialogue in his discussion of discourse. Habermas maintains a division of the just and the good, “Ethical argumentation is contained within particular contexts or communities; moral argumentation transcends individual social-historical contexts” (p. 94). Ethical dialogue involves the pursuit of conventional

forms of justice while moral dialogue seeks a universal and ahistorical understanding of the good.

Coulter has also discussed Habermas' identification of pragmatic discourse which "entail(s) argumentation about means-ends matches in the objective world" (p. 93). There is a language of functional decision-making amongst people with a "background of shared values" (p. 93). Coulter has noted, "Much of the research discussion about teaching is pragmatic discourse" (p. 93). Noddings (1994) has suggested that Habermas depends on "highly idealized conversation" (§ 8). She has proposed that "ordinary conversation" is the "very heart of moral education" (§ 34).

Burbules and Bruce (2001) insist, "Every act of dialogue is, in fact, embodied and situated" (p. 1113). They have noted that the use of the term "dialogue" itself can be oversimplified. They suggest that dialogue should not simply be contrasted with monologue but should be included in a two-dimensional spectrum, "the degree to which an interchange is *critical or inclusive* ... and the degree to which the investigation is intended to be *convergent* (upon a single answer) or *divergent* (allowing for multiple conclusions)" (p. 1106). The results are various forms, "inquiry, conversation, instruction, and debate as a variety of types of dialogical engagement" (p. 1114). The implication is that moral dialogue is not simply contingent on the number of speakers and the topic at

hand. Moral dialogue can take a number of forms, from conversation to lecture but it is always accomplished in authentic settings.

In a comprehensive review of the literature on teaching as a moral activity, Hansen (2001) has found that teaching is an inherently moral practice. Teaching is at one and the same time an intellectual and moral endeavour; teacher action expresses moral meaning; and teaching involves moral perception, moral judgment, and moral knowledge (p. 826). Hansen has also distinguished between ethical and moral in discussing perception and judgment as a teaching activities. “Moral judgment is a complex, unpredictable affair” (p. 847), “the enactment of what the teacher sees as right and appropriate, guided by a sense or vision of the goods of the practice” (p. 848). He has contrasted ethical judgment as “a detached, reasoned examination of alternative possibilities” (p. 848), answering the question, “How should people live” (p. 849)?

For the purposes of this project, I will use the notions of ethical and moral advanced by Jurgen Habermas, described by David Coulter (2001) and applied to educational settings and questions in the context of David Hansen’s (2001) description of teaching as a moral activity. The ethical involves those guidelines that we can establish through dialogue that we will agree to follow — justice. The moral is centered in the ongoing dialogue in which we participate concerning what is best in

schools and the world — the good, and the relationships in which the action is set.

A reorientation away from cognitive-developmentalism as a way to understand and practice moral education towards the promotion of caring relationships is strengthened by a consideration of the moral and the ethical. We move from the idea of right to the idea of good. How can moral action, moral judgment, and dialogue be addressed in educational settings? We must identify a model for the moral teacher to adopt.

The Moral Teacher

David Brell (2000) has suggested that a teacher must “cultivate ... the disposition of mindfulness” and “strive for moral integrity” (p. 28). The whole person of the teacher is the most effective tool for good teaching.

According to Hansen (2004) the moral teacher is a “perceiver” of the good in students, colleagues, school, and the community and is “moved or quickened to action by the good and expressions of the good” (p. 134). He has noted, “this attraction can materialize in the form of ideals the teacher holds and uses to guide him or her through the often conflicting judgments that teaching demands” (p. 134). Hansen has given us an image upon which to begin a study of the moral teacher and the conflicts that such a teacher faces. In a thorough review of the literature

surrounding teaching as a moral activity, rather than a program of moral curriculum, Hansen (2001) has argued that teaching is “inherently a moral activity” (p. 829), tied to the intellectual activity of the student, and pervaded by the moral. How do I, the teacher, maintain a sense of moral purpose throughout my work?

Nel Noddings has provided two models that can be used to study the nature of moral teachers — the *ethic of care* and the “components of moral education” from the care perspective. The ethic of care establishes the nature of the relationship between human agents in moral pursuit. The components of moral education offer a description of best practice for the moral teacher. We should remember here that the ethical involves the guidelines that we establish and agree to follow in our pursuit of the good while the moral is the ongoing relational and dialogical work that we do.

The Ethic of Care

Noddings (1984) argued that we have developed an ethical notion that guides our sense of the good in our schools — the ethic of discipline, analysis, and intellect. Reason is prioritized in the historically masculine model of education.

So many of the practices embedded in the masculine curriculum masquerade as essential to the maintenance of standards. I

suggest that they accomplish quite a different purpose: the systematic dehumanization of both male and female children through the loss of the feminine. (pp. 192-93)

While Noddings has used ethical to describe both reasoned and caring approaches to moral philosophy, it is worth noting here that she establishes them at two ends of a spectrum of philosophical thinking. It seems reasonable to connect the reasoned approach with that notion of ethical that we described earlier, “a detached, reasoned examination of alternative possibilities” (Hansen, 2001, p. 848). The caring approach more closely follows the notion of moral, “a complex, unpredictable affair.... the enactment of what the teacher sees as right and appropriate, guided by a sense or vision of the goods of the practice” (pp. 847-848).

Noddings has suggested we consider “an alternative to present views, one that begins with the moral attitude or longing for goodness and not with moral reasoning” (p. 2). She insists that her view is the “practical” one (p. 3). It is the ethic of care.

The ethic of care is based in the relationship between *one-caring* and *one-cared-for*. Caring is between real people in relationships and it is not the reasoned and intellectual approach that has overwhelmingly defined traditional ethics. We should distinguish between “caring-for” and “caring-about.”

[Caring] is not simply a matter of principle that compels us to defend one threatened or abused, to aid one who cries out to us

for help, or to respond to one who addresses us. It is an attitude that pervades life and establishes the human bonds upon which we depend upon as a faith. (Noddings, 1984, p. 112)

Caring is concrete instead of idealistic and “refers to an actuality; in the other [caring about], it refers to a verbal commitment to the possibility of caring” (p. 18).

Caring requires a number of actions on the part of the one-caring; engrossment, commitment, displacement of motivation, and act of will. “At bottom, all caring involves engrossment” (Noddings, 1984, p. 17). This is the full reception of the cared-for in the one-caring — the force that turns the one-caring towards the cared-for. Engrossment is acknowledged and action is taken. Such a commitment secures the whole of the cared-for inside of the one-caring. It causes the one-caring to turn her attention to the cared-for. Engrossment “warms and comforts the cared-for” (p. 19). Seeming to parallel Paulo Freire’s (1970/1993) notion that the oppressed can house the oppressor inside of them by “internalizing their consciousness” (p. 48), Noddings suggested that the one-caring can house the cared-for inside of her, but to nurture instead of destroy.

The goal of the one-caring is to see the ideal self of the cared-for and to respond to that person. This goal requires attending to the cared-for and a displacement of the one-caring’s motivation towards the cared-for. An action of will follows. “Apprehending the other’s reality, feeling

what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of one-caring.... I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other” (Noddings, 1984, p. 16). Noddings has painted the picture, “We find ourselves at the center of concentric circles of caring.... we care because we love” (p. 46).

Noddings (1984) has maintained that caring must be completed in the cared-for. “A caring relation requires the engrossment and motivational displacement of the one-caring, and it requires the recognition and spontaneous response of the cared-for” (p. 78). Though the notion of reciprocity is much debated, the completion of caring occurs with the expressed delight of the cared-for when he responds or grows. Unreceived caring may result in a “turning back on the one-caring in the form of anguish and concern for self” (p 74). Receptivity is the responsibility of the cared-for. He may respond in three ways — he may respond authentically to the one-caring, he may receive her care and grow, or he may recognize and assent to the caring and commitment of the one-caring, and choose unauthentically to receive it. Ideally, “the freedom, creativity, and spontaneous disclosure of the cared-for that manifest themselves under the nurture of the one-caring complete the relation” (p. 74).

Brian White (2003) has argued that the rigid requirement of reciprocity is a faulty ideal when we consider the experience of the classroom teacher. “Where is the teacher to get the strength to go on

giving, to keep on caring, even when a particular student does not noticeably reciprocate” (p. 316)? The teacher — the one-caring, also has recourse to things such as faith in order to maintain caring. White has noted that Noddings rejected this recourse approach, calling it ”principled” and “masculine” (p. 316). Noddings (1984) asserted that faith-based ethics lead to justification, and “justification often carries us farther and farther from the heart of morality” (p. 104). For her, morality rests in the practical ethic of the caring relationship.

Aaron Schutz (1998) raised the concern that the caring relationship is limited. It cannot work towards creating a public space because the attention of the one-caring and the cared-for are limited themselves. The relationship does not allow space for others, and thus would be difficult to maintain in the classroom, where interactions and potentialities of relationship are so many and varied.

Noddings (1984) described caring in a number of ways. Caring does not conform to a fixed rule. Caring comes to us as either a natural feeling or it is invoked by the memories of caring and being cared for. Caring elicits a strong obligation to be moral. Caring does not make judgment of right and wrong, but seeks to heighten “moral perception and sensitivity” (p. 90). Caring seeks joy, “It is the relation, or our recognition of the relation, that induces the affect we call joy” (p. 132).

Noddings (1984) has been careful not to reject the principled ethic outright. In fact, she addressed the objections she knew would arise,

writing, “the most fundamental answer to specific objections ... is this: The suggestions are illustrative. They represent an invitation to dialogue” (p. 200).

Noddings (2001) has described the caring teacher, “A caring teacher is someone who has demonstrated that she can establish, more or less regularly, relations of care in a wide variety of situations” (p. 100). She has noted that the study of caring is useful for both research and practice in education and it encourages philosophical exploration (p. 99).

A number of considerations must be acknowledged in the study of the ethic of care — there may arise a conflict between the idea of caring as practice and the sense of professional growth of teachers (Noddings, 2001, p. 101); setting, forms of dialogue, and sensitivity to differences should be considered when studying the ethic of care (p. 103); and continuity in educational relationships is a necessary condition in the establishment of caring relationships (p. 103).

A thorough analysis would have to include an examination of caring over time, caring for more than one person simultaneously, and caring that is in conflict with other legitimate demands and expectations. (p. 101)

The ethic of care establishes the teacher as a moral agent — relational and dialogical, defines the basis for caring as a model of moral education, and offers a researchable phenomenon. The components of moral education provide a framework for research.

The Components of Moral Education from the Care Perspective

Noddings (2002) has provided a researchable model upon which to base a study of the teacher as a moral practitioner and moral education as the basis for curriculum — the components of moral education from the care perspective. Four components are described; “modeling and reflection”, “dialogue”, “practice”, and “confirmation” (pp. 16-19).

Modeling is important because “exemplars constitute the very foundations of moral philosophy” (Aristotle, cited in Noddings, 2002, pp. 15-16). Teacher examples and models of care in teacher practice teach students about the good. Noddings has warned us to be careful of overt focus on modeling, “When we focus on ourselves as models, we are distracted from the cared-for ... we present the best possible model when we care unselfconsciously, as a way of being in the world” (p. 16). Reflection upon our modeling is necessary as teachers “may be persuaded to modify their behavior” (p. 16). Paulo Freire (1970/1993) characterized simultaneous reflection and action as praxis.

The initial narratives of Aaron and Claire contain examples of modeling. Despite my initial failure to act as one-caring, I was able to reorient my relationship with Aaron so that he was aware of my care. Our year together allowed me to maintain a relationship of care and I was able to model commitment and attention in a continuous and practical way with him. I was able to initiate and support a continuing dialogue

with Aaron and he was able to engage in dialogue to solve some of his problems by the end of the year. While I failed to model an act of caring in Claire's story, I was able to model an act of engagement for my peers as I tried to connect with the support teachers around Claire's phone call. I was able to engage in reflection immediately. I continue to review this story with the co-teacher that I was teaching with that day.

"Dialogue is the most fundamental component of the care model" (Noddings, 2002, p. 16). Dialogue occurs between the one-caring and cared-for but also between carers in reflection. Moral dialogue is "not debate, and its purpose is not to win an argument" (p. 17).

Dialogue is the means through which we learn what the other wants and needs, and it is also the means by which we monitor the effects of our acts.... It is our way of being in relation. (p. 19)

Dialogue is the fundamental pedagogy in the moral curriculum. The importance of dialogue in teaching practice has been described variously by Jurgen Habermas (Coulter, 2001), Paulo Freire (1970/1993), and Nel Noddings (1994). Thomas Green (1999) explained the critical moral ability that school dialogue gives students when they enter public life, "The government is formed by law, but the public by public speech" (p. 151). Freire (1970/1993) outlined conditions for dialogue — love for the world and others, humility, faith, hope, and critical thinking (pp. 89-92).

Aaron's story contains evidence that supports dialogue as a component of the caring relationship. After an initial breakdown in trust,

it was dialogue that allowed me to build and maintain our successful teacher-student relationship, based on continued care and trust. Claire's tool for reaching out was dialogue — a hopeful action, also made out of trust. Dialogue in both stories is between carer and cared-for and happens in “unofficial” spaces — a personal phone call and recess conversations. Dialogue has allowed my peers and I to play out and analyze these stories many times. Dialogue has kept the relationships alive.

Practice is the third component of moral education, “developing the capacity for interpersonal attention” (Noddings, 2002, p. 19). Practice is not an intellectual activity. Teachers “must engage in caregiving activities” (p. 19). Caregiving experiences for students should be regarded as mathematical and scientific experiences are now. Students should work together, “not just to improve academic performance, but to gain competence in caring” (p. 20). Community service may offer some of this experience for older children but it is imperative that “the people from whom they learn must model caring effectively” (p. 20). Students should also engage in dialogue about their practice experiences. Practice is not the apprehension of the “what” of caring for others but the becoming of one-who-cares.

Continued engrossment with Aaron and Claire allowed me to continue becoming one-who-cares. While it was a positive experience to retreat from the classroom in 2008 and spend some time thinking about

caring and teaching, it was the engagement with these students as real people that allowed me to engage in caregiving activity instead of intellectual activity. Aaron was able to translate the caring that he experienced through me into an attempt to help other kids solve their problems. It was in that year that some new empathy for other kids was unlocked and Aaron was able to respond through action, albeit often immature or rough. I don't know how Claire responded. Our relationship was cut off midway through our school year.

Finally, confirmation completes the model. Confirmation demands that the teacher sees the "best self" of the student. We confirm others to bring out the best in them (Buber, cited in Noddings, 2002, p. 20). Confirmation is dialogical and results in the "construction of an ethical ideal in ... carer or cared-for" (p. 21). We attempt to recognize and clarify the motive of the student "by attributing the best possible motive consonant with reality" (p. 20). Confirmation strengthens the relationship between carer and cared-for and functions as an assessment and goal-setting strategy within the teacher-student learning relationship.

Aaron and I were able to maintain a dialogue around the changes in his thinking and acting throughout the year. I was able to note and reinforce the good as it emerged in Aaron while he was able to express his very real moral gains and frustrations within a caring relationship. In Claire's case, I was once again unable to confirm any moral change that she may have been experiencing. I had effectively curtailed our dialogue

and I was unable to model or confirm any good with her. However, I believe that Claire's phone call to me provides some evidence of relationship-building and confirmation in her. She trusted me and recognized enough of my care to call me. Above all, the discomfort I feel when considering Claire's story has helped me advance modeling and confirmation in my present teaching.

Perhaps most noteworthy in the stories are the conventional school's barriers to forming and maintaining caring relationships. Intellectual considerations of discipline, curriculum, lesson planning, classroom interruption, teacher-student power structures, and the perception of my official role as a teacher all limited my ability to act out of engrossment and displacement of motivation. Rather than forming the basis for educational decision-making, school-based phenomena hampered my ability to care for my students in practical ways.

Noddings (2002) has addressed a few philosophical issues that arise in the understanding of this model. We must be careful not to become too specific in our notion of caring as a model of moral learning. Any attempt to define exactly what it means to care will erode the meaningfulness of the model because "manifestations of caring relations differ across time, cultures, and even individuals" (p. 21). While caring may be the historic pattern of women and reason the historic pattern of men, there is no reason why "gender difference must forever divide philosophical thinking" (p. 21). While Habermas' notions of ethical and

moral discourses seem to lend a quality of universality to those things that are moral (Coulter, 2001), Noddings (2002) has maintained that we “cannot claim universality for a specific model of moral education” (p. 22).

Moral education from the care perspective should not be mistaken for a program of character education, which relies heavily on carefully identified and defined values. The point of departure, “Care ethicists depend more heavily on establishing the conditions and relations that support moral ways of life than on the inculcation of virtues in individuals” (Noddings, 2002, p. xiii). Care ethicists respond to the call to address cultural and social standards, but “with a respectful uncertainty, encouraging the question *Why?*” (p. 23). The goal of moral educators cannot be to simply develop more moral individual agents but to address the “maintenance and growth of moral relations” (p. 22). Moral learning must serve to change the relational landscape in which teachers and students find themselves in our public schools. We cannot be satisfied with “individual moral agents wrestling in lonely isolation with logically decidable moral problems” (p. 22). Moral teaching and learning must have some effect on the connection of lives that we find ourselves a part of — our classrooms, our schools, and our communities.

This project will pursue a study of teaching as a primarily moral activity with a relational foundation that has the aim of developing caring students. Teachers are moral agents first. Dialogue is the pedagogy at

the heart of this model and it relies significantly on notions of moral perception, judgment, and knowledge. A distinction is made between ethical and moral. Ethical is used to describe those agreements that we can make to guide our pursuit of the common good and moral describes the nature of the relationships that we foster in our pursuit of the common good. A model — the ethic of care, provides a description of the salient features of moral education from a distinct perspective. A second model — the components of moral education from the care perspective, provides a tool upon which to assess the moral teaching and learning of students and teachers.

METHODOLOGY²

The ideas that we, as teachers, cultivate about educational aims and worthwhile pursuits in educational relationships direct our stories — personal and professional. Our stories can be studied for meaning.

I began with the intention of completing a general phenomenological study, with a narrative method, under the misplaced notion that all qualitative studies are in fact phenomenological studies. The project I undertook seemed to qualify, according to the five features that Bogdan and Biklen (2007) attribute to qualitative research and thus, I thought, to phenomenological study. It was naturalistic, it relied on descriptive data, it was concerned with process, data was analyzed inductively, and it was concerned with meaning (pp. 4-6).

I proceeded with this idea and set out. I obtained ethics clearance, gathered participants, held meetings, and collected data. It wasn't until I began to analyze and consider the final format of the written analysis that I began to understand the unique quality of a narrative analysis. While I had gathered the appropriate forms of data, my initial analysis left me unable to write a narrative.

² Some of the content of this section comes from a paper that I completed for a course - EDUB 7420, taught by Dr. Barbara McMillan.

The products of phenomenological research — themes and events, are not appropriate for writing a narrative analysis. Believe me, I tried. Narrative inquiry and narrative analysis are not, in fact, a type of phenomenological research. Narrative research has its own guiding qualities and methods. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify my mistake,

Beginning narrative inquirers frequently worry their way through definitions and procedures of different methodological theories, trying to find a niche for narrative inquiry amid the array of theoretical qualitative methodological frames presented to them, but we do not encourage this approach. Although this may be worthwhile for an understanding of the broad range of methodologies, it is of no great significance for narrative inquiry because ... the place of theory in narrative inquiry differs from the place of theory in formalistic inquiries. (p. 129)

I'm moving out of this niche. I invite you to join me. This is the beginning of my story — the story that parallels the stories you will read in the analysis. I am compelled to offer you the full development of the analysis. Donald Polkinghorne (1988) insists, “narrative studies do not have formal proofs of reliability, relying instead on the details of their procedures to evoke an acceptance of the trustworthiness of the data” (p. 177). I want you to trust that the narratives you will read have been carefully constructed. They are meaningful. They are based in data —

descriptive accounts given by teacher-participants over the course of a number of meetings.

My initial call for four participants in the spring of 2012 was unsuccessful. I had opted for a convenience group in my own school division and I would use focus groups to collect data. The Seven Oaks School Division is an appropriate division in which to study the notion of teachers as moral professionals and people who care. The divisional mission statement reads,

The Seven Oaks School Division is a community of learners, every one of whom shares the responsibility to assist children in acquiring an education which will enable them to lead fulfilling lives within the world as moral people and contributing members of society. (Seven Oaks School Division)

Semi-structured focus groups are an ideal method for exploring the meaning that teachers make of their roles, purposes, and teaching activities. The interviews allowed me to “understand how and what meaning they (teachers) construct around events in their daily lives” (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 26).

The dialogue we developed provided me with rich data for an analysis of teacher held meaning related to moral education. Dialogue is at the heart of moral education, “Dialogue is the most fundamental component of the care model” (Noddings, 2002, p. 16). As I noted in the literature review, dialogue occurs between the one-caring and the cared-

for, but also between carers in reflection. I was able to obtain rich descriptive data, one of the key features of qualitative research (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 5).

Howe and Eisenhardt note, “only broad, abstract standards are possible for qualitative ... research” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, pp. 211-212). Broad and open-ended questions allowed me to probe the experiences of teachers for broad, descriptive meaning. For this reason, the questions for the initial focus group were broad and open-ended.

The meetings triggered teachers’ memories of their experiences and ideas. There were a number of relationships that teachers described at different times during the meetings. At times, one teacher’s story would remind another teacher of a similar story. The focus group was a rich field for descriptive accounts.

The descriptive accounts provided by the participants were key to the eventual analysis, to the common thread that is necessary in the determination of a *narrative plot* — the conclusive form that the analysis was to take. The participants were appropriate because they represented a “bounded system for study” and provided “some conception of the unity of totality of a system with some kind of outlines or boundaries” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 15) — in this case, a group of similar-minded teachers working in the same school division.

I put out the call for classroom, specialist, and support teachers. They would self-identify an interest in moral education. I indicated that I

would participate in the focus group meetings. I did not extend the invitation to teachers that I worked with directly. I also chose not to invite administrators. I was concerned that a real or perceived power imbalance could influence the participants during the meetings.

Participants were solicited through the Seven Oaks School Division's administration. The superintendent permitted me to contact school principals and the principals were supposed to distribute invitation letters to teachers (see Appendices A, B, and C). The letter would fully explain the thesis project to potential participants and formally invite them to participate. Written informed consent would be obtained from all participants and there would be no deception used in the study (see Appendix D).

My initial call for participants in the spring of 2012 was unsuccessful. I received few responses from school principals and only two teachers expressed an interest in participating, in a division with nearly 800 teachers. Following this disappointment, my second son was born in June of 2012. Suddenly far busier, I decided to delay my research until the beginning of the subsequent school year. I was disheartened and overwhelmed. I contacted the volunteers and asked them to consider volunteering again when the call came.

The second call, in the fall of 2012, was successful. I received applications from nine teachers, including the two teachers who had been interested at first. Seven of the volunteers were women; two were men. I

opted to maintain the ratio and did two blind draws. I chose one name from the two men. I chose three names from the women.

Data Collection

We met once each month from December to March of 2013 in a boardroom at the divisional office. One participant missed the first meeting but was able to discuss some of the questions in the second meeting. A different participant missed the last meeting. She had a baby soon after and I was unable to follow up with her.

After the last meeting, the participants expressed regret that we wouldn't be meeting anymore. I have consulted with a couple of the participants on teaching questions since the last meeting and I have had a number of dialogues with some of the participants since then — sharing information at a teacher's association meeting, talking about our children, and sharing plans for the future.

The focus group is the only method I used in this study. Four teachers were invited to participate in a series of four face-to-face focus groups that took approximately two hours — a total of eight hours of data. The focus groups were semi-structured in order to allow for the most natural responses from the participants. According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), open-ended questions will allow participants “to answer

from their own frame of reference.... to freely express their thoughts around particular topics” (p. 3), resulting in rich descriptions.

I assured the participants that their identities and contributions would be protected via complete anonymity — pseudonyms have been used in this project and will continue to be used in any other application of the data. There were no physical or mental risks to participants in this study. Any emotional distress that came as a result of the meetings would be acknowledged and participants would have the opportunity to be supported by the caring teachers in the group. Focus group transcripts were held in a locked mechanic’s toolbox built by my granddad that was kept in my basement. Consent forms and pseudonym documents were locked in a modern toolbox that my dad gave me. Digital information was kept on a password-secured computer. Access to the data was restricted to my transcriber and me. I obtained permission to use a transcriber when my computer transcription program failed. All the data I gathered were shredded or erased after the thesis defence had been completed. Participants were provided with an opportunity to read the finished thesis

The benefits for the participants were inherent in the opportunity to engage in a professional exchange about matters of concern to all teachers. Participants were able to increase their understanding of their roles in the school. Participation in this study was completely voluntary and each participant was free to withdraw from the study at any time for

any reason and without penalty. None did. There was no compensation for participating in the study.

We gathered for two hours after the school day, once a month, four times. We met in a boardroom at the divisional office. Our meetings were intimate. The air was stuffy and we were surrounded by boxes of computer parts and curriculum binders. I believe that the surroundings helped loosen up our dialogue. We felt more comfortable and familiar in the informal setting. I provided refreshments — vegetables, fruit, dips, and my wife’s baking. The mood was light and comfortable. The relaxed atmosphere and the sense of common interest helped to reduce any anxiety that the participants may have been feeling before beginning.

I audio recorded the conversations with Audacity on my laptop. My initial plan to transcribe directly to the laptop using MacSpeech Dictate was confounded by the complete inaccuracy of the program. I used the recorder on my phone as a backup recorder. All of the audio recordings were transferred to my password-protected computer. I also kept notes.

The participants were provided with a list of the questions prior to the first meeting (see Appendix E). They were also provided with copies of three readings — *My Pedagogic Creed*, by John Dewey; *A Poetics of Teaching* by David Hansen; and *The Caring Teacher* by Nel Noddings. The readings formed the basis for the discussion during the first meeting and a common frame of reference for future meetings. Howe and Eisenhardt suggest, “research questions [should] drive the data collection and the

analysis rather than the reverse being the case” (as cited in Creswell, 2007, pp. 211-212). I began each meeting with a script (see Appendix F).

The successive meetings consisted of discussions of particular topics of moral education — aims-talk, the ethical and the moral, and the ethic of care.

At the conclusion of the first meeting, I asked the participants to consider the aims of education. Because narrative analysis depends on diachronic data — descriptions of events and occurrences, I asked the participants to keep detailed notes of 1-2 “happenings” during their teaching lives — incidents both inside the classroom and outside of it, that reflected, challenged, or contributed to their understanding of the purposes of education. These descriptions would form the basis for the dialogue of the second meeting, as well as reflections on the reading, *My Pedagogic Creed* and the questions for session 2. I asked the teachers to do the same for the next two meetings — to consider the appropriate topic, take notes, and complete the reading.

The focus group format was an excellent way to maintain trustworthiness of the data I was collecting. I was able to allow for member checking. Members could correct or clarify questions and descriptions. Participants also frequently asked each other to clarify events and details. It also meant that thick, rich description was provided.

Howe and Eisenhardt question whether “the researcher’s assumptions are made explicit, such as the researcher’s own subjectivity”

(as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 212). As a member of the focus group, my own ideas and opinions on the subject of moral education and the ethic of care were exposed. A transparent platform for discussion was provided. Creswell (2007) notes, “Self-reflection contributes to the validation of the work” (Creswell, p. 206). My personal experiences formed a component of the focus group dialogue. While my personal narrative is absent in the final analysis, some of the details that emerged from my own contributions to the conversations have been included in a few of the poems. The gym teacher, for example, is a hybrid character, composed of details from my account as well as Mr. K.’s.

Prolonged engagement was a factor, “building trust with participants” and allowing me to make “decisions about what is salient to the study” (Creswell, 2007, pp. 207-209). We are teachers who work together in a small division. We met regularly and even talked outside of the meetings. We experienced “value, both in informing and improving practice” (Creswell, p. 212). Teacher-participants experienced a shared sense of purpose and exploration. Reciprocity was assured. As participants contributed to the research process, they benefited from the shared sense of purpose that our dialogue engendered. The considerable number of participants and the open nature of the focus group ensured that trustworthiness was established through the variety of data collected.

Narrative, Personally

Having long been a story teller, a listener and reader; raised in a story telling family; and continually surrounded by rich and diverse stories and tellers, I find that my life is well-founded in narrative experience. The idea of using narratives to present meaningful knowledge is no stranger or less valid and trustworthy to me than any graph or journal article.

My own experience in the classroom has taught me that teaching and learning are often complex and messy events, frequently presented in educational literature as much more calculated and predictable than they really are. I find that narrative is a suitable method of studying the layered and contextual meaning of teaching and learning experience.

Teachers tell lots of stories. We tell stories to our students; we tell stories to each other; we tell stories to parents. We hear stories. Without having to dissect these educational narratives for isolated meanings and numbers to plot, we are satisfied that the telling carries important knowledge and situated meaning. The telling of stories provides rich context for meaning to emerge. I have already noted Maxine Greene (1996) as identifying a “growing interest in narrative as a way of endowing experience with meaning” (p. 36). She has also captured my sense of story as expressing the constant act of creation that occurs in teaching and learning relationships, “To speak of consciousness, too, is

to hold in mind the likelihood that the conscious being (unlike the finished objects of the world) is always becoming, projecting, or striving toward what is not yet” (Greene, 2001, p. 86). Narrative is an essential method of researching, analyzing, and presenting important educational knowledge.

Narrative

In a world more and more united, where people with multiple cultures find themselves knit together increasingly, story is the thread of the shared human fabric. There may be nothing more common to human experience than a story. Lessons are taught, children are soothed, friends are counseled, joy and sorrow is shared, and history is maintained with a story. We might offer strangers stories of our own, and the chance to create new ones. We use stories to share and participate in the experience of being human. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have offered an interpretation of John Dewey’s theory of experience as the foundation of experiential inquiry, “People are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation” (p. 2). Story is a legitimate way of understanding the phenomenon of human experience.

A story is “a text that elicits, guides, and rewards ‘narrativity’” (Scholes, as cited in Carter, 1993, p. 6). It involves a conflict and a

purposeful protagonist. It requires a plot, “a sequence with implied causality” (p. 6). Meaning is constructed when “readers seek coherence and causal connections among those incidents and conventions as they construct for themselves, often retrospectively, the meaning or theme of the story” (p. 6).

In short, we lead “storied lives” and stories increase our capacity for explaining and knowing the complex world that we inhabit (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000 p. 145). Maxine Greene (1996) described stories as vehicles for bridging private and public spaces when she encouraged us, “to shape stories ... and to tell them, to present something of [our] realities in an open space” (p. 36). She also argued that a story is meaningful in its sharing when we participate in “the production of meanings, rather than the unearthing of hidden meanings in texts” (p. 37).

Donald Polkinghorne (1995/2003) has addressed this difference when he identifies the historically entrenched “notion that there is a distinct type of rational discourse appropriate for producing knowledge [that] was the foundation for the advocacy of a single, unified science for all scholarly disciplines” (p. 9). He has challenged this notion by advancing Jerome Bruner’s contribution to the question, that there are two distinct ways of knowing and two types of cognition — two modes of thought. Paradigmatic cognition is the logical-scientific way of knowing. It is characterized by prosaic discourse and paradigmatic inquiry. Narrative

cognition is the storied way of knowing. It is characterized by poetic discourse and narrative inquiry. (p. 9) Narrative is “any data that is in the form of natural discourse or speech” (p. 6). A story is “a special type of discourse production [where] ... events and actions are drawn together into an organized whole by means of a plot” (p. 7). These qualities give a study the naturalistic quality essential for qualitative research (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007, p. 4).

Greene (1996) identified “narrative as a way of endowing experience with meaning” (p. 36). A story offers situated knowledge. It provides a context, it is dialogical, it is relational, it is grounded in shared concepts and language, and it is transformative. Stories invite us to understand the human experience.

The possibility of their being remembered means they can be communicated and can become part of the conversation I have been trying to keep alive — the conversation that ought to illuminate the world of everyday life as it enriches meaning and relationship and as it expands what is to be understood. (Greene, 2001, p. 88)

The storied way of knowing moves us to make connections between human experiences and knowledge. It magnifies the vibrant complexity of people and being together.

Narrative inquiry has unique demands for research trustworthiness, chiefly the acknowledgement of the researcher’s bias. Clandinin and

Connelly (2000) have cited the work of the anthropologist, Mary Catherine Bateson.

Always, for learning to occur, the inquirer in this ambiguous, shifting, participant observation role is meeting difference; allowing difference to challenge assumptions, values, and beliefs; improving and adapting to the difference; and thereby learning as the narrative anthropologist. There is a temporality and a situatedness to the anthropologist's writing; relationships to the "I" of the inquirer that imply the biases, perspectives, and particular learnings that the inquirer was able to engage in. (p. 9)

In this project, as researcher and participant, my bias must be made clear. Dialogue, the primary vehicle of data collection, will afford many opportunities to expose my personal ideas and opinions to the participants. Further, Clandinin and Connelly have offered Bateson's notion, "to do good research, one needs to be a good human being" (p. 17), again linking this method to the subject matter in question, moral education.

Why Narrative?

Narrative cognition contributes to the landscape of educational research. As the dominance of logical-positivism and instrumentalism in the field has been increasingly challenged by such advances as critical

pedagogy, phenomenology, and constructivism, we can begin to argue that an emphasis on narrative cognition and teaching and learning stories can play an important role in explaining and enriching complex human experience.

[They] become a way ... of capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and, thus, redress the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness, and contributing to more satisfying and better classroom teaching. (Carter, 1993, p. 6)

Educational stories are unique in their ability to provide rich knowledge and situated meaning. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have not separated subject matter from method, pursuing “*narrative inquiry* with a rough sense of narrative as both phenomena under study *and* method of study” (p. 4).

Education is a human endeavour. It is experiential, with people as its substance and dialogue and relationship as its form. Narrative allows us to return to the basic sources of knowledge that we share as people. If educational research seeks to contribute to better classrooms and more richly educated students then narrative cognition and narrative inquiry must be recognized as essential. Carol Witherell and Nel Noddings (1991) noted the research potential of narrative inquiry.

Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect. (p. 280)

Storied inquiry in research provides meaningful data and guides us towards better classroom theory and practice. Neil Postman (1995) has summed up the position neatly, “Without a narrative, life has no meaning. Without meaning, learning has no purpose. Without purpose, schools are houses of detention, not attention” (p. 7).

While paradigmatic research has provided guidance for improvement in student learning, much of the knowledge is fragmented and framed in exceedingly simple implications. Education is not a simple practice. Our daily teaching experience dictates to us that one-size-fits-all never holds up in the classroom. In fact, one-size-fits-many or most or some rarely holds up either. Narrative inquiry addresses the “complex, narrative, historical, interwoven, and constantly changing landscape on which, teachers, administrators, and children’s lives are lived out” (Clandinin and Connelly, 1996, p. 30). It seeks to shed some light on the rich and diverse, lived experiences of school people.

I appreciate Geertz’s commentary, “The result, inevitably, is unsatisfactory, lumbering, shaky, and badly formed: a grand contraption” (Geertz, cited in Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 6). Much like the

human experience itself, narrative inquiry does not offer answers and generalizations. It offers a unique perspective of human phenomena in all its uncertainty. Here is a light shining on human experience.

Finally, narrative inquiry serves to challenge the notions of dominance in educational discourse. For example, Carter (1993) argued that the language of research, unavailable to many teachers, denies teacher voice in the educational forum (p. 8). She extended the notion to one of gender hegemony, arguing that teaching has been largely women's work, while research has been largely men's. "Narrative is seen as an especially appropriate form of women's knowing and expression ... [and] story is used as a frame to undercut the dominant mode of discourse on teaching" (p. 8), perhaps linking narrative analysis and caring as research subjects and methodologies.

Narrative Analysis — What I Initially Intended to Do

Narrative inquiry is one method of qualitative research design. Qualitative research is characterized by natural settings, direct data collection, rich narrative descriptions, process orientation, inductive data analysis, participant perspectives, and emergent research design (McMillan, 2007, p. 272) and recognizes that "there are multiple realities represented in participant perspectives, and that context is critical in providing an understanding of the phenomenon being investigated ... the

researcher's biases and perspectives must be understood and used to interpret findings" (p. 271). Quantitative studies, in contrast, "emphasize numbers, measurements, deductive logic, control, and experiments" (p. 10).

Generally, qualitative research continues to explore paradigmatic knowledge. That is, it seeks to obtain categories and themes whereby to classify knowledge. On the other hand, "narrative cognition is specifically directed to understanding human action" (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 11). Narrative inquiry uses storied accounts to attempt to understand some of the complexities that contribute to human experience as well as the meaning that humans draw from their experiences. Nel Noddings (2007) has explained that quantitative research is "theory-driven, proceeds by testing hypotheses, and aims for generalization (p. 139). Narrative research, as a form of qualitative inquiry, "invites interpretation and reinterpretation. It puts far more responsibility on the readers or users of research who must play an active role in constructing knowledge for themselves" (p. 143).

Narrative inquiry can be divided into two approaches — analysis of narratives and narrative analysis. Analysis of narratives gathers storied accounts as data and applies paradigmatic methods to analyze them and draw out themes and categories, and to note relationships (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 14). Analysis of narratives is used more frequently (p. 12). Narrative analysis would be the method I would use in this project.

I would gather descriptions of events as data and narratively synthesize them into a story as analysis. Narrative analysis uses narrative inquiry, contributes to narrative cognition, and is presented using poetic discourse. It cannot be reduced to a method or formula, but it has the following parts.

First, I would collect in the form of “*diachronic* [italics added] descriptions of events and happenings” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 15). This is data that is richly descriptive. It describes events in their temporality and with their effects, as opposed to *synchronic* data, which is categorical and appears more frequently in qualitative research (p. 12).

Second, I would identify the denouement (end) of a story. “By specifying the outcome, the researcher locates a viewing point from which to select data events necessary for producing the conclusion” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 18). The denouement identifies the “thematic thread” (p. 5) that, in turn, identifies the plot.

Third, I would arrange the data events chronologically and sift them for meaningful contribution. This is the process of *emplotment*, or “integrating operation” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p.5). Not all data events would contribute to the plot so I would have to be careful to select events that are meaningful “contributors to the outcome” (p. 18).

Finally, the story would be written. This would be a synthesizing process that would produce a story, “a temporal gestalt in which the meaning of each part is given through its reciprocal relationships with

the plotted whole and other parts ... they must be drawn together into a systematic whole” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 28). This means that the parts of the narrative could not be separated from its form as a whole. An outline would be produced and details filled in. As an “intellectual construction” (p. 18), the outline would be continually updated as weaknesses and gaps became apparent. The final story would be the analysis of the diachronic data. A discussion or write-up would accompany the final analysis, in which I would acknowledge the “dialogical productions resulting from interactions between subjects and the researchers” (p. 19). I would explain the creation of the narrative.

It would be reasonable to expect that a plot and characters should emerge from teachers’ distinct and isolated descriptions, whether or not the resolution is positive or negative. Aristotle describes character as “that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kinds of things a man chooses or avoids” (Aristotle, 1997 version, p.13).

The writing of the story — the analysis, would involve a synthesizing of diachronic data, where the descriptions would be “drawn together into a systemic whole.... to construct a display of the complex, interwoven character of human experience as it unfolds through time” (Polkinghorne, 1995/2003, p. 18). The distinguishing of meaningful connections between seemingly disconnected descriptions from different educators would elicit “the creation of a text [which] involves the to-and-

from movement from parts to whole that is involved in comprehending a finished text” (p. 16).

Narrative analysis is a meaningful way of documenting qualitative experience. “The researcher compiles bits and pieces of evidence to formulate a ‘compelling whole’” (Creswell, 2007, p. 204). While each theme is laid out in a simple way, together they evoke Maureen Angen’s “generative promise” as they “raise new possibilities, open up new questions, and stimulate new dialogue” (Angen, cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 205). The result is not a statement of truth. Instead, meaning is negotiated between participants. Trustworthiness is established through continuing dialogue and the reinterpretation of descriptions through the narrative.

A narrative analysis is not simply a transcription or a chronology. It is a construction that seeks to unmask hidden meaning, make sense of events and interactions, and demonstrate the context and situated knowledge of experience. The prolonged process of analysis and writing would allow for protracted member-checking, as I knit the descriptions into a united story.

Narrative Analysis — What Actually Happened

After March report cards, my transcripts were completed by mid-April. I began reviewing the transcripts in April and continued into June,

breaking for June report cards and year-end busyness. I completed my initial analysis in mid-July.

I missed the mark on my initial analysis of the data. I completed a conventional thematic coding in response to my original research questions. I identified three strong themes— *knowing students*, *modeling and dialogue*, and *authenticity*, as well as two emergent themes — *academics first*, and *kindness*. I coded my transcripts. Thusly, my transcripts became brightly coloured. These themes would have served well in an expository analysis. My intention, however, had been to write a story.

I set out to write a narrative and came to the deflating conclusion that I could not write a narrative based on themes. I faced my first blank page. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have described this unique tension that narrative researchers experience as they negotiate conventional theoretical research practice (pp. 140-143). I was stuck between boundaries. I had expected to begin with a *reductionistic* reading, where I identified and discussed a number of themes that emerged from the reading of a complex and interwoven transcript — field text. I expected to apply those themes to a *formalistic* narrative, where the participants would become “exemplars of formalistic categories” (p. 141). The participants would represent “types” — a hard-working, gregarious type, a soft-spoken, personal type.

Both conventional approaches robbed the participant’s descriptions

of relationships and events of their complex nature. I had already followed the rabbit trail that I had made for myself at the beginning of this project — phenomenology. Narrative research is a multi-dimensional search for meaning and I had already reduced the rich and intimate details of the participants' lives, separating them from their storied persons. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have noted,

The researcher learns that people are never only (nor even a close approximation to) any particular set of isolated theoretical notions, categories, or terms. They are people in all their complexity. They are people living storied lives on storied landscapes. (p. 145)

They have suggested a model for narrative analysis — Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space, and a number of considerations for writing a narrative research text — voice, signature, and audience.

Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have borrowed three terms from John Dewey to describe a narrative practice for research based on experience — *interaction*, *continuity*, and *situation*. They have been careful to explain that they are not attempting to define the term narrative. Theirs is an attempt to explain what narrative researchers do (p. 49). They have reasoned that narrative is the most appropriate way to describe experience. "Experience happens narratively. Narrative inquiry is

a form of narrative experience. Therefore, educational experience should be studied narratively” (p. 19). Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space is a model that is based on experience, allowing me to create a meaningful and trustworthy narrative, “the best way of representing and understanding experience” (p. 18).

Interaction is movement between *personal* and *social*. When considering events and descriptions, within an emerging narrative, I had to move inward, “toward the internal conditions, such as feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, and moral dispositions” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 50) of the participants and the people they described. At the same time, it was necessary for me to move outward, “toward the existential conditions, that is, the environment” (p. 50) The environment is made up of facts, participants’ descriptions, existing ideas, and even ideas that I perceived would guide you, the reader, and the research world in general.

Continuity is movement between *past*, *present*, and *future*. At its simplest, continuity means that you, the reader, can align the events of the narrative along a continuum — emplotment. As such, you can make meaningful sense of the story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have written about moving “backward and forward” and “temporality — past, present, and future” (p. 50). Considering temporality allowed me to construct a series of narratives with chronological reality. The stories that you will read occur at a certain time and have a significant impact on

each other. Researching an experience is to “experience it simultaneously in these four ways” — inward and outward; backward and forward, “and to ask questions pointing each way” (p. 50).

Situation “attends to the specific concrete physical and topological boundaries of inquiry landscapes” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 51). I was guided by a consideration of real places and settings. These stories could not be placed anywhere but in schools. The hallways and classrooms of your memory are vividly present in the accounts of the characters in the stories you’ll read.

The consideration of interaction, continuity, and place evokes a three-dimensional space, “studies have temporal dimensions and address temporal matters; they focus on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and they occur in specific places or sequences of places” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 51). While many of the facts and details that emerged from the transcripts seemed loose and isolated, it would be my consideration of the Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space that would allow me to draw descriptions together into a cohesive and meaningful narrative.

It is true that I found myself like many narrative researchers and, likely, authors in general, “less confident of what they are doing and what they want to say than they were when they entered the field” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 145). Within the tension of uncertainty, Clandinin and Connelly suggest three issues to consider — *voice*,

signature, and *audience*. A thorough consideration of these matters contributes to trustworthiness.

Voice

I knew that the analysis must necessarily present my voice while maintaining the voices of the participants and voices of the people they described. The free verse format that I eventually settled on would allow me to do this. I found that one of the strongest qualities that I exercised was “judgment ... always speaking partially naked and ... genuinely open to legitimate criticism from participants and from audience” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 147).

By presenting a series of voices, I was able to step in and out of characters, maintaining the tension that comes from a multiplicity of voices, but striking the balance that was necessary to provide a trustworthy narrative. I was able to select events with meaningful plot contributions and I was aware of the events that I chose to omit, knowing that the potential to silence important voices also exists.

It is the voice in this analysis that will strike you as most unique — a series of voices speaking together and uniquely at the same time. If the ethic of care places us, as carers, in a position where we must ask, “What does the student need?” before acting, then we must be able to imagine them saying something to us with their own voices. This analysis

presents voices, speaking the needs that have been identified by the participants as leading to their engrossment and the displacement of their motivation, back to the teachers themselves. What better way for me to express my perception of your need than to say it back to you?

Signature

Signature is the consideration of appropriation. Whose story will it be when the telling is done? In order to establish signature, I had to balance the rich and meaningful descriptions of the participants with the need to put my own stamp on the work. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have cautioned against signatures that are too thin, “because other texts and other theories, rather than the writer, sign the work” or the researcher imagines that the participants and their field texts author the work” (p. 148).

The narrative text would have to be one that honoured the facts and details presented by the participants but asked most importantly, “Is this you? Do you see yourself here? Is this the character you want to be when this is read by others” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 148)? The unique format that I settled on meant that the participants would in fact be presented as such, while the work would betray my own “rhythm, cadence, and expression” (p. 148).

I consulted with each of the teachers on their section before

presenting the final analysis. It's necessary for you to know that I consider us as co-authors. While some of the language of the stories is mine, many of the words are presented as they appear in the data.

Audience

This is you, “alive in the researcher’s imagination at the outset of the inquiry, mostly forgotten during fieldwork,” and suddenly towering over me (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 149). You have created a unique tension for me. I want to preserve the voices of my participants and I am reluctant to give up some of our shared moments and our intimacies. However, I have considered you as I have formed the narrative analysis that you will read. I was aware of your standing and authority, but also your sympathy and curiosity. My first audience is the participants but you have been “always in imagination and outside the inquiry” (p. 149). I have had to find a balance between you — reader and participant, and my narrative has proceeded from that balance.

This analysis has become increasingly trustworthy as I have considered your knowledge and high expectations against the richness and personal value of the relationships I have with the participants. I have also considered that this analysis will have a life outside of our treatment of it, larger or smaller.

A New Story

I approached the transcripts with a new intent — to gather rich descriptions of events that would form the plot of a cohesive narrative. I imagined each of the teachers might be part of the same school staff and I could rearrange the events to provide a singular narrative that would provide meaningful insight into the research questions.

My initial coding had been thematic —a reduction of the data. Instead, I would have to narratively code my data,

A narrative inquirer spends many hours reading and rereading field texts in order to construct a chronicled or summarized account.... [that is] increasingly complex as an inquirer pursues this relentless rereading.... narrative inquirers begin to *narratively code* their field texts. For example, names of the characters that appear in field texts, places where actions and events occurred, story lines that interweave and interconnect, gaps or silences that become apparent, tensions that emerge, and continuities and discontinuities that appear are all possible codes. (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 131)

I isolated all of the descriptions of events and commentary that the transcripts would give up while consulting my initial notes from the meetings. I made a list. I noted the details and lifted the passages from the transcripts. I separated the passages by participant and created

documents for each participant listing the events they mentioned during the focus group meetings. I tried to match events that seemed complimentary into plot events.

By now, the people in the descriptions, and the participants, had begun to take on the quality of characters. I also created a second document for each character, made up of meaningful commentary from the transcripts — thoughts, ideas, conversations, musings, opinions, and observations.

One event seemed to roll over again and again in my reading. One participant had described, in a short passage, a secretary who had been taken from the school by ambulance because of diabetes complications. I believed I could use the event as an initiating chapter. The characters would each be present for the emergency and their actions would begin to reveal how they care for students. I would follow each character in a subsequent chapter. I imagined a subsequent dialogue where all of the characters would reflect on the details that didn't make it into the narratives. A denouement would occur as one or more of the characters would visit the secretary in the hospital. I would provide conventional analysis as the narrative progressed, in separate sections. I was considering the format Ted Sizer (1984/2004) used in *Horace's Compromise* — narrative passages followed by expository explanations of experiential phenomena.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggested to a doctoral student that

she begin in poetic form “as she begin the struggle of crafting her inquiry” (p. 100). I did the same, writing a poem about my own experience as a high school student — Poem 1. I was unable, at the time, to connect the poem, or the poetic format, to the narrative writing I intended to do. However, a seed had been planted.

I began to write the story and one participant seemed to emerge as a protagonist — Mr. K. I wrote his story, up to a point, and came to another blank page. There had been such a rich store of significant descriptions of relationships in the transcripts, creating multiple layers of meaning, and they were being carved away to make room for Mr. K.’s story. It was a stiff narrative, bulky and without much insight into the nature of teachers’ caring relationships with students. The voices of the students, reflected so meaningfully in the transcripts, had been lost as I worked out my own voice and tried to maintain Mr. K.’s.

I had been reading Cormac McCarthy’s (1979) *Suttree* and I was deeply upset with the shallowness of my narrative every time I turned back to the novel I was reading. My own writing felt stiff and unyielding, hardly reminiscent of the vibrant relationships described by the participants.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have noted, “The search for form, even the floundering in confusion before even realizing that one is reaching for form, is part of what narrative inquirers do” (p. 153).

Poem 1

I sat
In the back row
Of Mr. Rule's Math class
Because I could reduce fractions
Or apply formulas
Or measure lines
Or remember order of operations
Or do whatever you do to get an A+ in Math when you're in Grade 12
I don't remember
But that's where he put us
And I guess I thought it was important
But I didn't really care
And neither did he

But Randy always sat near the front, long-haired
Even though he could play the bass guitar
And I just wanted to play the strings too
But he couldn't do the kind of Math we did
And I wished I were Randy
From where I saw him every day
Even though
Yelling
And disdain
And impatience
Were his reward
For knowing how to play the bass guitar
But not his times tables
In Grade 12

Who cares

Now
If Madame Stepnuk
Or maybe Mlle. Zimmerman
Taught Grade 12 Math
Instead of Grade 5 or 3
And danced on the way to class
And dressed up for kids
Or told them they knew them and really did
And thought they could do anything they imagined
Hopeful

But they had to learn Math anyway
At least some of it and they would help
Maybe Randy would be at the back too
And I could play guitar then
Maybe that's when
And I didn't know it
I wanted to save Randy
And tell him

I care

But what would it be
If a kid
You never saw
Told you
Already an adult
Three years gone
He thought you were worth it
And deserved everything

But I am and wasn't
A teacher I care then

I'm sorry Randy
If I ever teach Grade 12 Math
You can sit wherever you want

It's important to note that I had begun to develop a deep relationship of my own with each of the people that showed up in the participants' descriptions, as much as I had with the participants themselves. Dale, a student of Mme. M., had been occupying my thinking for months. His father had died in the summer. I needed to capture the resonance of Mme. M.'s voice as she described his reaction to a construction table she had introduced into the classroom to support him. There was immensity to the simple lines,

Madame!

There's a construction table in there!

Oh, is there?

Is that good?

That's great!

Free Verse Poetry

Around this time — mid-August, I had been culling my book collection at home. It was the happiest accident when my wife suggested I get rid of Edgar Lee Masters' (1915/1992) *Spoon River Anthology*. I was shocked that she would even think of it and puzzled that she'd never heard of the book, being a poet herself. I had loved *Spoon River* the first

time I'd read it in the early 1990's and had reread the book countless times since. I immediately answered no. I began to explain the book's unique and compelling format.

In *Spoon River Anthology*, the American poet Edgar Lee Masters created a series of compelling free-verse monologues in which former citizens of a mythical Midwestern town speak touchingly from the grave of the thwarted hopes and dreams of their lives.... no less than 214 voices are heard — some in no more than a dozen moving lines. (rear cover)

The free-verse format that Edgar Lee Masters used to draw together a cohesive story around the citizens of Spoon River would act perfectly for me. Reading his descriptions of shared lives and reflections on the complex web of relationships and actions of others is a powerful experience.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) have explained the importance of referencing your own literary collection during narrative research work.

Paying close attention to the kinds of texts we read is also part of the process of creating a narrative form that fits with our particular narrative inquiry.... Not only extensive reading of many kinds of texts but also noticing the kinds of texts read is part of what helps us, as narrative inquirers, experiment with possible new forms. (pp. 163-164)

I had also been considering my favourite book — *The Collected*

Works of Billy the Kid, by Michael Ondaatje (1970). *Billy the Kid* is also a book that creates a cohesive narrative — the historical mythology of Billy the Kid, through a “remarkable composite of eyewitness accounts, tall tales, facts, and photographs” (back cover).

The purpose of my research had been to find meaningful descriptions of the nature of teachers’ caring relationships with students. What does it mean to engage in care? How do teachers make sense of the relationships? How does good come from them? It was the voices of the students and others in the participants’ descriptions that spoke most meaningfully about the nature and significance of those very relationships, emerging from the participants’ descriptions of significant events. I chose to allow those characters to speak back to the participants, describing the relationships valued so strongly by the teachers.

I decided that each teacher’s descriptions could yield a set of free-verse poems, narrated by the characters themselves. I re-approached each event, isolated from the transcripts earlier, and drew out the most meaningful details — details that gave insight into the research questions. I transposed a number of passages directly from the transcripts into the poems as I worked. This insures that the teacher’s voices, and the voices they perceived in their students and colleagues, were retained, blended with my own story-telling voice — the signature. I reimagined the details from the perspectives of the characters —

students, teachers, and others involved.

I had been working with initials instead of full pseudonyms for the participants in my initial drafts. I found myself uncomfortable with the idea of reassigning them a name. Full names seemed to rob the participants of their identity. The use of initials, unconnected to their names, gives them anonymity without replacing their identities. I maintained the initial format for all the adults in the poems. The children, on the other hand, were unknown people to me. I was comfortable with full pseudonyms for them.

Any relationship is complex, with much give-and-take. Teaching relationships that are characterized by care are especially complex, with many layers of perception and meaning. The descriptions in the poems come from teacher accounts but they contain evidence — meaningful insight into the relationships that these teachers have with their students. They are reframed from the perspectives of the students whose relationships with teachers are being revealed.

The multiplicity of perspectives offered by the free verse format is especially appropriate because teachers must perceive the needs of many students and peers and how they perceive what teachers are doing in order to engage in the caring relationship, simultaneously. Teachers are always involved in a multiplicity of relationships. They are also unable to consider the whole group of students as one person. Their attention and motivation must be attuned in many different directions, answering the

needs of many different voices. When I take on the voice of a student and speak back my need, as a student, I am giving evidence of engrossment — a central feature of the ethic of care.

Some of the events yielded a number of voices that spoke from different perspectives about the same event and relationships. One of the stories in Mme. A.'s section, for example, has four poems — Nick and Dakota, students; Kelly, an EA; and Mr. D., a guidance counsellor, each describing the same event from different perspectives.

I checked with teachers as I consulted the data. Did two different accounts concern the same kid? What were the ages of the students? Could you clarify details? How long ago did this story happen?

The reduction of the analysis to any single plot, or even four singular plots, would rob the narrative of the complex nature of teachers' relationships that had been emerging. Instead of one dominant plot with a single denouement, the narratives each appear as a cohesion of plots, accomplishing the "temporal gestalt" that Polkinghorne (1995/2003, p. 28) described.

Separate voices provide access to the complexity of teaching relationships. Caring relationships are dynamic and teachers find themselves pulled in many directions, fulfilling a multitude of roles, appearing differently to each unique person they engage in relationships. Teachers' motivational displacement, a central quality of Noddings' (1984) ethic of care, is being pulled constantly in different directions and

is spread unevenly throughout their relational field. Teachers are under constant relational stress. This narrative account can be compared to a web or a crystal, rather than a single thread.

I established multiple narrative threads through each teacher's account, synthesizing events that had been separated during the focus group discussions, but which realigned when brought together.

Characters and events appear and reappear, are reimagined through different eyes and harmonize like the separate voices of a choir.

Dale's story, for example, makes the greatest impact when you realize the common sense of commitment other students perceive in Mme. M. It is the gestalt that is experienced by a reading of Dale's story, Sarena's, Chantelle's, Braden's, Anthony's, and all the others that gives us a fuller, more meaningful experience of Mme. M.'s own sense of her relationships while experiencing each of their perspectives simultaneously.

I allowed for checking as I wrote the separate narratives. Each of the narratives was submitted to the participant around whom it was written. I reminded participants of my research questions and asked them to review the narrative. I asked for feedback, reminding them that the purpose was to form a compelling and meaningful narrative that provided insight into the questions. I explained that some of the details wouldn't match the facts that they related during our meetings, but that the goal had been to provide a narrative for analysis that would reveal the

elements of their relationships that revealed care. The participants responded,

“I took a read and it looks good. Very readable and sums up nicely the message I was trying to communicate.”

“It was particularly meaningful since I can picture exactly the situation and person that you are describing in your narrative.... I love that my students’ stories are being brought to life.”

“It reads very true for me. I could identify the stories and incidents you shared.”

“It rings pretty true. I definitely sound human, both successful in my efforts to care, and unsuccessful. There are challenges to things I’ve said and done that also ring true. There are some factual errors, but the essence of each story is there, and I would agree that that is what is most important.... I am quite satisfied that you captured the journey I had at [my school].”

I also submitted the narratives to an outside reader, with the permission of each of the participants. Sarah Swan is a published poet — as Sarah Gordon, and a freelance journalist with the *Winnipeg Free Press*

and *Galleries West*. She provided me with critical technical guidance around format and gave me a meaning check. Her meaning check was especially important as she is not an educator and she is not familiar with the working details and life of a teacher.

I believe that the analysis provided in the narratives should stand on its own. However, the composition and reading of poetry is not a common skill, and the conceptual design of this narrative analysis is fairly unique. Just as many pieces of art are more easily understood when the artist provides some commentary, this analysis might also be more meaningful if I provide you with some interpretation. The commentary will appear in a section following the analysis.

Of course, just as in any gallery, you are welcome to skip this commentary and hold onto your own interpretation if you feel it answers the research questions sufficiently. This is one of the beautiful qualities of narrative — you are entitled to your own interpretation.

A book appeared on my desk one morning during the time I was finishing this analysis, *Teaching With Fire — Poetry That Sustains The Courage To Teach*. I had been quite open with my colleagues about the format that I had been using and I had obviously affected someone enough that they wanted to share their conviction that poetry is important. If you should still question the appropriateness of poetry for an analysis of what happens between teachers and students, let me leave you with a few words from the editor, Sam Intrator (2003).

Our world needs teachers whose fire can resist those forces that would render us less just, less humane, and thus less alive. Poetry, by its capacity to touch the human soul and tap into the deepest wellsprings of our being, opens up opportunities for us to stay vital and alive. If we become too fearful to connect, if we become too isolated to reach out, if we become too preoccupied with the present to dream of tomorrow — we cannot teach or lead a movement well. (p. 210)

ANALYSIS

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Mr. K.

I'm Mr. K. Outside the classroom, I'm a husband and dad of a toddler right now. I'm 30. I'm also a gamer of all kinds — video games, board games, Dungeons & Dragons once a week. I'm kind of an all-around geek. I would like to be a musician. I am not. I am a music appreciator. Inside the classroom, I've always been in River City School Division, so it's always been that division. It's my 8th year. It's my first year outside of 1-2-3 multi-age, this year I'm doing a 4-5. The school that I'm at right now has about 125-130 kids. My classroom right now has 16.

Nicole, 10

I would have slapped Eric in the face ... I said,
I'm going to slap you in the face.
I'm angry.
I don't get to see my parents and I have to go to court and I have FASD.
And Mr. K. stopped teaching and got the kids working and,
Took me in the hall, bending down, and said, You know, I understand
you're having a really hard time,
I understand you're upset and you're angry and you're sad,
And none of those feelings are wrong.
But you need to control your behaviour, regardless of how you feel.
You can't let him push you over the edge,
And hit him.
That's not ok.
I can have that conversation with him.
It seems like he's always stopping something,
To talk to me,
About the same kind of thing.

Garrett, 16

I'm 250 now,
And taller than Mr. K,
But I still go for a hug,
When I pick up my sister after school.
Because he paid attention,
When I was quiet at school.
You would be too,
If 16 mostly different people lived in your house,
That was your house whenever you came back,
In Grade 1 ... Grade 3 ... Grade 5 ...
Even if he is a Mr. and not a Mrs.

Mrs. B., secretary

Here I am, again
Inside and outside of myself
All for the lack of a cookie or a shot of insulin
Administered in a timely way.
Oh diabetes!
How I have neglected you.
Oh shock! Old friend.
Well, there's Mr. K., helping me out again.
And students watching, of course.
They're scared, but someone will tell them it's ok
And explain what happened
But who will tell me that my husband will come back
And my desk will still be mine
When I come to in the emergency room
Alone until someone from the school visits
Before my family even knows.

Mr. N, gym teacher

Leaving the kids in the gym
Without an adult?
Ropes, balls, scooters,
Climb me, tear me, roll me.
Of course I would,
When Nadine goes into diabetic shock the day after she returns from

stress leave,
Her husband having left somewhere, in love with alcohol more than her.
Speaking I, calm-voiced, caring, to kids and teachers, steady comfort.
Even though, later on,
I'll snatch Arthur's toque from his bald head like a football and bellow,
DO YOU THINK THEY'LL LET YOU WEAR A HAT IN MIDDLE SCHOOL!!!

Sophie, 10

Lio called you gay
In the change room,
And gay with Aria,
Who's my best friend,
Admitted Arthur
As if he had launched the word, himself,
A blistering, sweating shock through me,
Like he called me horrible.
But my mom's friend is gay
And he's my friend too.
... me, caught in the net of the word
Like a crystal of meaning with brilliant and broken facets.
But we don't ... we're 10
Like, I don't know who I'm going to be attracted to as an adult
And Mr. K. unweaving the feeling,
People said I was gay in high school and that made me feel bad,
I felt bad because I felt bad and those feelings are normal.
You'll get through that ... It doesn't mean that you have prejudices.
Unfolding the word ...
Back on itself, gently, planting resolve.

Mr. R., principal

What does it mean
When a teacher says,
I know that I can't be the best teacher that I need to be for this child right
now, so I need a break, just that 10 minutes?
And how would it turn out if every teacher
Took 10 minutes
From each child
At the same time?
Would the fine, strong, threads remain?

Angel's mom

Listen.
I work for CFS
So I know what this stuff looks like
When a kid is mistreated.
Angel isn't happy.
And ... Sorry. Pardon me?
Talk to Mr. K.? He wants to talk to me?
But you're the principal. I ...
I will. Thank you.

Hanging up,
Angry.
But not as angry as at
The beginning.

Mr. K.

I apologized today to a kid in front of the class. 'Cause I was apologizing for something that I had said in front of the class. So I said, I know that you and I have said that we're good and you know that it was a human moment of mine, but I want you to know that I'm sorry and I shouldn't have done that. I was not being my best teacher.

And when Africa was really big, it was like, we need to buy goats for Africa. I was like, we need to feed the homeless here. Why don't we help people on reserves in Manitoba because they are living in the same conditions as the people in Africa but they live here.

And then nothing happened. I was like fine, buy a goat for Africa.

Mr. K.'s aunt, also a teacher

Well hold on a second, I said.
Where are teaching the Science curriculum?
What do you mean, It'll fit ... somewhere?
That's what you need to do.
You need to cover your clusters.
That's your mandate, I said.
At a family dinner,

Wondering what the future will be,
If kids don't know what they should know.
And what are you teaching, then?

Lio, 10

I was
Gang-weaned
Group-homed and
Grade 1 found me, burying my puny fists
In the heavy flesh
Of the biggest kid
On the playground.

I found myself inside
Four months
Confined
Though I did not know the word
Or that my parents
Each and all
Were too.

And Mr. K.
Every day
Gave me time
And said it's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It's okay to be angry, but you can't do that
And
It was okay
And
If I needed time
If I needed a break
If I needed to have a side conversation
He would stop what he was doing

And let the class go on their own

But now
In Grade 5
I guess
It makes sense when he says,
Sorry bud, you don't have an excuse this time.
Firmly
When he finds out
I called Sophie and Aria gay.

Custodian

Not I,
A trespassing ghost
Knowing you by your litter, your peels.
Passing,
So many gravelly, angry men
At the corners, scowling.
If you could see my heart when
You say,
Please, just don't clean my room tonight. Just please leave it. The kids
left a huge mess, it's not your job and I know that I want them to do it in
the morning.
Should he steal my care
To fulfill their responsibility?
No!

Eric, 10

When Mr. K. thought about inclusion
Though it's a word I don't know but hear
He didn't just make a plan for me
And Nicole, even if she complained at first about fair
And Ahmed
But everybody so
I can be sitting and doing stuff with counters and counting things
Working on single digit addition and one-to-one correspondence
While they learn their times tables
And it doesn't feel strange
Nobody's calling attention to that anymore

And the kids are okay when I say
I need that rocking chair now

Christine, 9

Small and soft-throated, I
Almost missed
You'd have never known
That I also went to England
If Mr. K. hadn't shown us
His photobooks
Who does the knowing
When the knower is known?
Me

Kennedy, 9

We are gathered here
To remember Sven.
He was a balloon
Man.
Just a balloon with a face marked on
Humble,
And indisposed to puffing himself up.
How ridiculous,
You might say and ask,
Why have a funeral for a balloon man?
Aren't there better things to do with class time?
But haven't we formed a committee?
Haven't we written engaging speeches,
Built a coffin,
Viewed the body,
And held a luncheon
Such as adults would?
And isn't Mr. K. sitting in the seat of honour,
As adults would honour one another?
And so we lay Sven in the ground,
Deflated character
But worthwhile project.

Margo, 11

In between Grounders and Slime-Tag
And sometimes during Social Studies or Art
When we could pick partners
I would be with Aidan
And Kennedy would be with Mutar
And I don't know who said we were dating first
But then we were
And Mr. K. called us out into the hall
One by one
And I don't know if he was the same with the others but
It was like small birds in the summer to me when he said,

I know you girls and I know you've got your heads on right you're smart girls but you need to know as a teacher and as a parent this makes me nervous and so what does dating mean to you?

And I was like,
Well, we're just hanging out with them.

Then hang out with them I'm not telling you can't be friends with them I'm not telling you can't hang out with them the word dating is scary to me and it's not that I think anything is going on that's inappropriate 'cause you're all very aware of inappropriate and you all get Family Life twice in the 4/5 it's not that I think anything inappropriate is going on now I don't think you're hiding out in the back of the school kissing like I don't think I know that's not happening but it makes me nervous and if I was your parent I would be nervous because if dating is what you're doing now and hanging out then what are you doing next year like I'll talk to the boys too can we call it hang out with them be their friend that's fine I'm not I don't tell you how to feel I can only talk to you about how you behave and this is something that makes me nervous is it done?

Yeah ok, it's done, I said. Like, can we have crushes?
And the birds came to rest,

I can't tell you not to have a crush on somebody, that's a feeling. I can't tell you what, how to feel. But I can tell you that the word dating, saying you're dating somebody, that makes me nervous, that makes my skin crawl a little bit.

Mrs. S., substitute teacher

The thing about these teachers
Who have such great relationships with their kids,
And so have discipline.
They take it with them
When they go.

Mark, 9

I said I was sorry
When I broke the stupid wheel-tape-measure thing on his desk
But I guess it wasn't enough
Because he said
Sorry isn't enough
A new one costs \$20
And I'll only make \$4 an hour
Helping Mr. Peters
Empty the garbage
From the classrooms
At lunch
This week
And he made me do the Math
On top of it

Evan, 9

I was angry
When Mrs. H. left to have a baby
After Grade 1 and 2
And Mr. K. came to my classroom
So I let him know
By act and opinion
That he would never be my teacher
And led my peers accordingly
By great influence
Despite my meager frame
Until
And it was just a peculiar thing to see him do
He rode a little scooter
After our conference

While my mom talked to the principal
And suddenly,
He was not cold
And not like a teacher.
But so witnessed
Was becoming my teacher.

Breanna, 11

I had a court date
And without telling Mr. K.,
I knew he knew.
And they said I couldn't go back to my family
But would stay with my foster family,
Feeling lonely,
And angry, walking out of class,
Until Mr. K. told me he liked *Pitch Perfect* too!
And had seen it 3 times!
And would play the soundtrack during writing!
And I guess I knew he cared like he was always saying he did.

Aria, 11

I didn't know how to take it
When Mr. K. told me
That people used to think that he was gay
And he had a friend
Like I have a friend
What does he know
About being me
Today?

Shayna, Mohammed and Mutar's mom

Both my sons box
And they blow off steam
But if I get a call from school,
They don't work hard,
I will pull them out of boxing.

Why does Mr. K. tell me that
It doesn't work to say to Mohammed
You need to work harder
When it works with Mutar
And he the younger?

Arthur, 10

After the fourth
Or fifth test
Though the lady at the clinic
Was kind
But followed me around the classroom
With a green folder
And would ask me questions
Unasked to another child
I retreated.
Because I needed someone to tell me
That I would not die of poison in my food
And growled under the table — so nestled in my habits
I, young
Knew an anxiety disorder

Mr. K.
Became like me to me
Confiding, I don't sleep at night
There are nights where I just don't sleep because I can't shut down
There are things that help me and they might help you
They might not

So when cancer got me
Though I not telling
Everyone was allowed to wear a toque or a hat
And the culture changed
In Mr. B's class

Angel, 10

Girl drama
Mr. K. and the counselor call it
But it's real to me

When the girls call me dirty things
Together
And Mr. K. sits in a small group with them
Writing poetry later
So I tell my mom
The treatment seems the same
And he treats me bad too

Ashley, 9

I can always do the questions
Until the test.
And then,
I can't do this.
I can't do this at all.
How am I supposed to ... I don't know.

So it was better for me
When Mr. K.
Put my test on the bottom of the pile
Opened my book, whispering
Look, you can do this. You did it right there so I know you can do it. Like I
know, you don't take tests well, I get that. You're stressed out because
it's called a test, because I ask people not to help each other. So I can
really see just you doing it. But I can see you can do it right here. So
don't worry, I'm not going to like, mark everything and average it. I'm
going to say, can you do it? Well, right there and right there you showed
me you could do it.

Caring enough to let me know I'm alright.

Mrs. L.

I'm Mrs. L. I'm 29 and I am 5 years into teaching. This is my first year at a new school. The previous four years I was at a K-5 school doing a 1-2-3 multi-age. Class sizes ranged from about 24 up to 27 at one point when I was in the classroom. This is my first in a learning support position. I completed my Post-Bac last year and an opportunity came up to try this position and I thought I had the credentials, so to speak, so I thought I might as well try it out. It's been good so far. It's been very different. I find myself missing my own group of students and my classroom very much. My new school is quite a bit larger than my last school. We're up to, I think, about 537 students. We have a very different population than the school that I was at before but I am enjoying it. I am the learning support teacher for K-4 and I have 11 classrooms that I work with. I guess, 11 teachers that I work with and the students in all those classrooms. That is me, professionally. Personally, I am a mom. My husband is a new teacher as well. I like to read. I like to pretend to be a DIY'er, try to do some stuff myself, and enjoy visiting with family and friends. That's about it.

Staff, Wilfrid Laurier School

If, at the lunch table,
There is no provocateur,
Who will challenge

The way we've always done what we do?
Isn't it the job of others
To determine our purpose?
And ours to teach?
And we are too busy teaching
To attend the Teacher's Association meeting tonight.

Mrs. I, Grade 3/4 teacher

She, saying,
He needs a foundation before he can learn Math.
He has personal and psychological needs.
He needs to know his purpose of education.
Experiences and life lessons are encounters that he needs to succeed.
When I have to write
Report Cards,
And they looming,
Massive,
Never budging,
And me accountable.
What shall I do Mrs. L.,
To account for Preston?
He, absent from me but for 7 minutes of each morning
What am I supposed to write:
Okay for a child with FASD-combined diagnosis
Acquiring self-regulating techniques?
or
I wish he would just quit screaming.
Talk to the support teacher.
He has psychological needs?

Preston, 8

How am I supposed to know what dignity means?
But I knew the missing of it
When I realized
That everyone had seen
Mrs. L. and Mary — my EA, and Mr. M. — the big EA, and anyone else in
the room and someone else too
Hold me down for 40 minutes, 4 or 5 times a day,
Melting to nothing like myself
But tearing voice and small violence

Wanting my mom
But held in care from her
And Mrs. L. maybe the closest thing.
So now, sent home.
I miss her too.

Caleb, 10

I knew she cared
Not at the end of each day
Me telling her to fuck off
Or wildly terrifying students
Me defeated
She defeated
She saying each morning
Ok, we're going to do this again, or
We're going to try again, or
We're going to look at something new, or we're gonna' ...
Her soul right there, wrestling in her eyes
And the slow accumulation of care
Consistent
Reliable
Fragile
Persistent

Bonnie, parent

For three years
While she taught my older son
And three more the younger
I invited Mrs. L. into the house
Whenever she dropped stuff off
Bee books to staple
Laminating to cut
Supplies to organize.
So it was not strange for she and her husband
To picnic in the summer
With my sons and I
Or eat Christmas lunch at our house,
Prepared by my sons.

William, father

I work a lot to pay the bills
I just want to start working.
I don't want to be bothered.
Is it too much to ask,
For you to deal with Caleb yourself?
And not call me to school so I must say
I can't take this shift at work because I have to go to school?
Can you imagine
The number of calls
A father of five
Working alone
Must face?

Mr. L., Mrs. L.'s husband, also a teacher

My family's business is business
And mine alone is teaching
They claim their 12 years
As ammunition
Blanketing
My wife and I
With familiar derision.
I don't claim to understand their world
As they claim to understand mine,
Me student and teacher, one
They student
And not even a metre in my shoes.

Patricia, 8

We do the bucket filler thing
In Mrs. V's classroom.
I learned to say I'm sorry
To fill kids' buckets up.
So why does Mrs. L.
Tell me
It's not enough
And talk and talk and talk about the bad choice
I made.

Geez!
I said I'm sorry a hundred times already.

Mr. A., principal

I was one of those who had hoped
That by teaching about
Love in October
Respect in November
Courage in December
Honesty in January
Wisdom in February
Humility in March
And Truth in April
It would have an impact on their everyday lives.
I hoped it would maybe make permanent changes that I didn't see, often.
So then I was one of those who thought maybe
If we announce
Over the PA
That we've seen students committing acts of
Love in October
Respect in November
Courage in December
Honesty in January
Wisdom in February
Humility in March
And Truth in April
They would continue
But no, it seems
They have not.

Mr. W., Grade 2/3 teacher

It's as if
I had no support teacher at all.
But I know she exists.
I've heard Preston screaming at her
In the hall
When we had planned
To teach Book Club together.

Mr. C., Grade 1 teacher

There is much to a story
So that's how I start,
With purpose.
A book has a message, good or bad,
And I choose mine carefully.

Ms. O., President, River City Teacher's Association

She
And them
Talking about
Moral ideas and democracy
As if we didn't follow Robert's Rules of Order
Isn't that ethical?

Mrs. L.

A teacher's association meeting, surprise, surprise. Ethics and the professional code of conduct was quoted. They tried to reassure us that everything was done ethically and that we had no reason to question that things were not being done ethically. Yet, when we tried to engage in a discussion about educating ourselves to avoid a replay of what had happened, when we tried to engage in a discussion and allow everyone to have a voice, that was not allowed.

It was just not allowed.

But I think to them everything was done correctly, everything was done properly because the code of ethics was followed and it didn't matter how people left feeling that meeting and I think that's what morals is about,

How people leave feeling.

I don't think that it mattered to this group how people left feeling. And I think feeling is a big part of it and I think that's something that perhaps we don't put enough emphasis on because we think, well we're doing it properly, we're doing it right, and so there's no reason for people to not feel good about it.

Our feelings allow us to conduct ourselves. How we leave feeling from our classrooms and our schools should matter, I would hope.

Annie, Preston's social worker

They've cared for him, the school
For 4 years
And now?
After feeding
Nursing
Teaching
Clothing
Diagnosing
Counseling
And caring,
Mrs. L. says
We're stepping back.
We won't make his doctor's appointment for him
Or take him there.
If they don't
Who will?

Mme. A.

I'm Mme. A. I am a mother and a wife — a mother of 3 of my own, stepmother to 2. I'm 36 years old. I have a crazy dog named Buddy. I am an avid reader and a hockey fan. I teach Grade 6 French Immersion at Centre Street School. I have been a teacher for 3 years, all of my experience in River City School Division. My husband is also a high school teacher in River City School Division. Prior to that, I was home with my kids and ran a home-based daycare for many years. I think that sums it up.

Mr. O., principal

It had only been a couple of minutes.
He seemed ready to go back to class
And I had nothing else to say to him,
This being the first time
Mme. A. ever called to have a student taken out of class.
So it was a surprise to me
For her to appear at my door, saying,
You know me as a teacher.
I have needs too,
She said.
And I need you to care for me
So I can care for my student.
I wasn't ready for him to come back,
I needed the space and time.
My needs are legitimate
And I'm not perfect.

Kelly, EA

I had seen nothing
But Nick is my student.
In his plan,
He checks with me
Before going to see the counsellor.
And so,
When he came to me as the victim,
Nose bloodied,
I followed the plan,
And sent him to see Mr. D.

Dakota, 12

Nick is my friend
But sometimes he has a hard time
Getting along.
It wasn't anything new,
When playing basketball,
My pass slipping through his hands,
Bruising his nose,
He shoved me down.
Swearing and punching at the other players,
As they pulled him off me.
He ran off to Kelly,
Like he usually does.
And we continued our game,
Like we usually do.

Mr. D., guidance counsellor

When it started
I asked Nick, as usual,
Did someone send you inside?
A teacher? An EA?
And he told me Kelly had,
His nose bleeding,
He crying.
They grabbed me,
He said.

Dakota threw the basketball at my face.
I had to push him down to get away.
Other kids grabbed me.

And so I began the investigation,
Finding shortly,
The truths of the matter,
And how they were spun together,
Refractively
By Nick.

Nick, 12

They always say something like this to me,

There are lots of opportunities for you
To speak with me if there are things that you need to talk about.
I know things are hard for you at home.
But when there are problems like this,
The answer is not to come to me to try and get yourself out of trouble.
You need to take responsibility for what your behaviours were in this.
And so the next time, this would be something that we would deal with
In more of a discipline way
And then we'll talk about, a little bit, because ...
I'm not against talking about it first, however,
I am against it if you're trying to manipulate the situation.

But never to Dakota.

Mike, WAG instructor — School Programs

It made me feel really good
When Mme. A.'s class
Gave me a framed thank you card
After their last class
Of weekly visits.
No-one had ever done that for me before.

Luke, 12

I know that Mike was happy to get a thank you card from us
And so was the janitor
But I didn't realize how amazing it was
Until Mme. A. dropped a card on my desk
Thanking me for putting away the rulers
Without being asked.
I'll keep this forever.

Desmond, 13

If you asked me,
And it would be strange for you to ask,
If I ever felt out of place,
Because I needed to rub against Mme. A.'s sweater
Or bury myself under the beanbag chair every day.
Or if I noticed that I had a great support group
Parents, teacher, counsellor, peers.
Or they moved my class together to Grade 7, when other classes were
regrouped.
I would probably say no.
But I never told Mme. A. that it was working for me,
Or that I noticed at all.

Amber, 11

In my house
We talk about right and wrong
And not just on Sundays after dad preaches.
So I don't get it
When Mme. A
During circle sharing time
Asks me to tone down my examples
Of things that are important to me.
If they're important to me,
Shouldn't they be important to everyone else too?

Shane, 12

It's not true that I offered my services
To the caretaker
To help with the garbage at lunch
By way of tearing my phone pass and leaving it on the floor.
I would have said, Mme. A
I'd like to help the caretaker at lunch.
But what a surprise it was
To enjoy it so much
And to hear the jealous voices of my classmates.
I suppose
I learned my lesson
And will try not to litter.
But was it the punishment
Or the getting-to-know him
That did the trick?

Daniel, 12

I'm just not that way
I told her.
She talking about
pessimism,
optimism,
and karma all the time.
But for you, I'll be an optimistic realist.
Her miscalculated social Math lesson,
After I made fun of Margaret's accent,
Substituting n for negative comment and p for positive comment
 $-(n) + 3p = p$
The rule for such an equation being that the answer must always be p.
And it not being enough
To say I like your jeans,
And the grass stains on your jeans.
But to think personally and well of Margaret
So how shocking to me
To realize her care
In forcing my care towards Margaret.
And my reward, happiness.

Mme. A's class

Today

Mme. A. asked us if we thought we had a caring classroom.

And unanimously we answered yes.

We're kind.

We include everyone.

We're happy.

We're positive.

Some of us are even happier at school than at home.

She said

Those are moral things

And I care about your lives.

Mme. A.

Who wouldn't,

For a student newly

Diagnosed with ASD,

Talk to his parents daily

Reach out for him to other kids

Buy a dog bed and pillows for him

Make a space in the classroom for him

Allow him to rub against my soft sweater like a cat

Watch him bury himself under the beanbag chair every day

Buy soft pencil cases from Dollarama for him to put under his shirt

Ask him before bringing up his personal needs in a classroom meeting?

Mr. F., Grade 6 teacher, across the hall from Mme. A.

People are always talking about how I yell

And how intimidating it must be.

But how surprised are you

When I tell you,

Truly,

That students say,

You were the only teacher that cared.

Michaela, 14

Mme. A. coached me in volleyball
And I think
She forgot my name
The last time we said hi in the hallway
But you know what?
She always stops to ask me how I am.

Isa, 14

Did you hear, Mme. A.
They're making a movie out of *Divergent*
By Veronica Roth?
I wouldn't even know
How much I loved
That book if you hadn't shared it with me,
And shared how you loved it too.

Lo, 13

She has so many weirdly random things.
Chalk
Stickers
The fancy scissors from Costco
Balloons
She has that stuff all the time.
It might just be stuff
But it's like she's taking care of us.

Leena, 12

Mme. A. isn't even my teacher
But it's loud at home in the morning
And raw.
So at 8:15 I know
Her door is open
And she
Absent

Trusts us.
We know it's against the rules
But the caretaker even lets some in at 7:30
And I know Dakota and Robin sometimes stay until 6:00.
And even Mr. O. knows.

Thomas, 12

I didn't seem to me
Like I had
The same kind of relationship with her
That Desmond had.
We didn't talk the same way.
But I knew
Now and then
Every month or so
When she wrote us letters
That she had been thinking of me
The whole time.

Mme. M.

I'm Mme. M. Currently, I teach a Grade 3-4 class. It's French immersion. I've been in the same classroom. I've done Grade 2, Grade 2-3, Grade 3-4 in the same room. It's been 8 years since I've been teaching. In my classroom right now, I have 23 students and it's a great group this year. Very, very lucky. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy running. I like to travel quite a bit. I suppose this is outside the classroom, but in my own classroom I'm also a student right now and I'm working on my Master's. I'm 30.

Shannon, teacher candidate

I'm not so sure
She knows what she's doing in there
The classroom
I asked
What will you do to build community?
She — Hmm, I don't really know.
Me — What will you do to blah, blah, blah?
She — How about we'll see them
And then I'll do it
And then you'll see me do it
And then we'll talk about it.
Kind of laughing.

Dale, 10

My dad died in the summer
And I wasn't ready
To talk about it
And Mme. didn't ask

So when she was in the hall
Talking to other kids
I spotted a construction table
With tools, each one I loved

Madame!
There's a construction table in there!

Oh is there?
Is that good?

That's great!
Yeah!
Almost like it just appeared,

Dustin, 8

I only thought
Teachers saw me fight
And knew my dad swore at me
And drank
And my mom yelled
But Mme. M. stopped me, saying
Here.
Here's what I've watched you do
Someone dropped their pencil and I watched you pick it up
Or I've watched you kick it
But I've watched so I have a basis in saying
I would expect something different from you.
I saw someone who cares
And because I've seen that exists in you
I expect it from you.
My eyes locking onto hers
My lips mouthing
You expect that from me?

Mrs. M., Mme. M.'s mom

I don't have anyone to bake for anymore
So I baked 23 gingerbread men
All decorated

Thinking my daughter would bring them to her classroom,
No special reason.

Mme. M.'s Grade 4's (from her 3/4 class)

After Mme. M. brought us cookies from her mom
For no special reason
We talked about kindness
And how we, the Grade 4's
Had, in Grade 3
Collected 20 boxes of clothes for the Main Street Project
And Written, calculated, and studied the Science of the whole thing.
Thinking, we should do something like that again.
No one had to say
Don't forget.
Make sure it happens this year.

Ella, 8

Mme. M. just jumped right in first and picked them up
Saying,
Oh, there's grapes.
What do we do?
With all the kids watching
Just like she always does.

Nancy, 83, senior

It's time
That the kids give us
And how precious
I've lived at the home
7 years
And they started the year before
Once a month
We in our wheelchairs, canes
Unspeaking
Or eyes goggling
Asking the same things

A hundred times
They playing chess
Sharing puzzles with big pieces
Reading to us
Playing cards.
The little boy
Eyes wide, wondering
Where was Louise,
Who he had played cards with
These past three months?
Not understanding time's ultimate value.

Corey, 8

It's not just the cookies
That we get after visiting
And even though it smells
And some of the old people
Have lost it
And need a lot of attention
And once,
That old guy ate my Lego
I never say
It stinks in here
And I realize how important
It is to give.
Mme. M. says
She really wants us to be people that care about other people
And I think maybe
I could do it myself.

Tariq, 8

Most of the time I'd come in angry
And blow up on everybody
But Mme. M. never made it about my home
And pushed me to learn
For the first time
So when I found some rocks
And good looking rocks
I just handed them to some girls who had started a project on rocks

Telling them I found them
And thought they could use them
And walked away
Because
On that day
I had all I needed
So here,
I can give something to someone else.

Megan, 8

I was new to French Immersion
In Grade 3
And scared
But I was reading
The same as the other kids
In no time
Like I'd always been in French
And that was where Mme. M. met me

Sarena, 9

Holy smokes!
Mme. M. brought all of this stuff in
Books, magazines, videos
Because I let her know I like dogs.
And she seems to understand where I'm coming from
Though I haven't spoken.
She was shy herself,
But by no means
Does that mean
That I'll let her in.
Not even nodding my head,
When she waves at me,
From her little bench,
By the door,
At the end of the day.

Louis, 7

My dad taught me about justice.
Knowing I had to
Punch this other boy
In the face
Or punch him somehow,
I crumbled after gym,
Crying,
Not wanting to.
Wanting friends
And kindness,
The assault of two really different messages,
Mme. M. finding me,
Softly
Speaking

Chantelle, 9

We started with a story
About a seed that grew and grew
Always wishing it could touch the stars,
Never growing that big
And sprouting flowers and apples.
An apple fell to the ground
And inside was a star!
It had been there the whole time.

So I saw the stars
Of the kids around me.
And though
Poor at writing,
Especially in French,
And scribbling what you might call gibberish,
I wrote their stars.
Because nobody seemed to know their own
When Mme. M. asked them to share
After the story.

Juan Carlos, 9

Mme. M. made a tree
And all the kids made stars for each other.
And I couldn't think of one for anybody else,
Not even myself.
And I was frustrated
And troubled
Because I hadn't been taught to think like that.
Just,
So-and-so is nice.
Or,
So-and-so is a good friend.
Or even,
So-and-so helped the kid in the room across the hall,
Who has trouble walking.

Melissa, 8

We were reading lots of books
About kindness,
Mme. M. called it the Golden Rule,
As part of our lessons.
When I read Hannah Taylor's book — *Ruby's Hope*,
I decided I wanted to be the Hannah Taylor
Of our classroom.
Meeting with Mme. M. at recess,
Looking up all the not-for-profits in the city,
Deciding how to help,
And collecting twenty boxes of clothes
For the Main Street Project,
Was my project.
She never asked,
How was your weekend?
But always,
Seeming to share my passion,
How can we make this happen?
We do productive things.
Where's this going to go?

Mme. M.

It's funny to talk about ethical and moral because I feel like I don't have a very strong relationship to either of those words. I would rather switch them out for something else, and if I was going to switch them out ... like, ethical to me is justice, and I don't think of it as good, I think of it as just justice. Like Louis' family — this has to happen, that's all. Ethical is that side of things. Moral to me is beliefs, and then I just right away think kindness, like I would want to just trade it out for kindness. Goodness, kindness — same thing. That's what moral is to me.

The most ripped away one
I still have his work
This is probably 3 years ago
He left abruptly
We sort of thought he might be changing schools
But then he was just gone
It was near the end of the year
We had all their stuff together
I have his photo on there
I still have all his stuff and we still use his book
We do published books every year
I still have his
It's half finished
I just haven't been able to get rid of his stuff yet
He's not going to come back and collect it
I don't think we were buddies
We had rough days
He was under lots of tables
Lots of times
He ran away lots of times
He didn't have a traumatic life
He would say,
Hey Madame, look at this!
Hey, I wanted to share this with you!
Why me?
He was young enough
You're here, so why not you?
Did we have a beautiful relationship
Comfortable in this room,
Happy to share?

Braden, 9

I asked Mme. M.
Why there was all this plasticine in the room.
And she reminded me
That I made Angry Birds
Out of plasticine one day
And she noticed.
I could make better
Than I could write.
So why not have everybody
Do something with plasticine too.

Anthony, 10

Rough and tumble boy
She helped me unlock my strength
Now there is my book
Published collection of poems
Carpet of leaves on cement

Evan, 8

I think Mme. M.
Knows some things
About my life
That I don't even know.
But she knows that mornings are tough,
Because I tell her so much.
So it's enough for me,
That she knows
And asks,
How can we make the mornings get off a little better?
Is there something I can do?
Instead of
Are you interested in the Titanic?

Dane, 8

I'd miss a couple of days
Every few days,
And then come in at 9:40
When school started at 8:25.
It was so choppy for us.
I was never a part of them,
And they knew so little about me.

CONCLUSION

Commentary

I'm Ross Meacham and I'm 37. This is my 12th year of teaching, including a year off for graduate studies. I've taught in Thompson, I've taught in a private school, and right now I'm teaching at an elementary school. I have two roles. I'm a support teacher and I teach a Grade 4/5 class every second day. My school has about 270 kids and we're a dual track language school. Outside the classroom, I'm a husband, I'm a dad, I'm a long distance runner, and I'm a musician. I have an active life with my church. Mine is the fifth story — the commentary that accompanies the narrative. I am the author of this project and the collector of these narratives.

I'd like to begin with an anecdote. During the research phase of my project, I had the pleasure of dining with Ralph Mason one night. He was hosting a candidate for a position with the Faculty of Education. I complained that many teachers couldn't explain their own philosophy of education and I found it hard to stomach. I thought that every teacher should have an explicit, working philosophy of education. I'm the talking type, always dialoguing about education or creating conversations where there hadn't been one previously, steering the talk to philosophical topics and sharing my knowledge and thoughts. I couldn't believe that people

wouldn't do the same.

Ralph explained that he and his wife would leave Winnipeg to drive west fairly frequently. He would begin to notice ducks and he would point them out to her. There's a duck. There's another one. Look at that one. And so on. At some point on one trip, not too far past the perimeter, she said to him, "Ralph! I see the ducks. I know they're there. I see them. I don't need to talk about them to know that they're there."

Let's talk about ducks.

What does it mean to care for students?

1. Know them.

There are a number of examples in the analysis of teachers knowing important details of students' lives. This allows teachers to respond, when motivation is displaced towards students, with appropriate and meaningful ways of caring. Such a process aligns with Hansen's (2001) ideas of moral knowledge, moral judgement, and moral perception (p. 826).

- Mr. K.'s knows that Breanna appreciates the movie *Pitch Perfect*. He can share that he also enjoys the movie and move into a closer relationship with her.

- Mme. M. knows that Dale has lost his father over the summer and responds in a way that reveals deeper knowledge about him — his enjoyment of the construction table.
- Mme. A. knows that Desmond has a unique tactile need. She uses this knowledge to bring objects into the classroom that calm him and allow him to appear in a better way.

2. *Be known.*

Teachers allow themselves to be known. This might involve sharing details from our personal lives. It might mean acting naturally in front of them or sharing objects. Mme. M. is an exception to this finding. She does not bring her personal life into the classroom, although she brings cookies that her mom has baked.

- Mr. K. shares his photobooks with students — pictures of his wedding and trip to England. Students can connect to him.

-Mme. A. and Mr. K. both share their favourite books with kids. This enriches children's literature experiences and provides them with models of reading. The sharing of preferences is deeply personal and relational. Isa has a personal relationship with Mme. A. based on their shared enjoyment of *Divergent*.

-Mrs. L. spends time outside of the classroom, and even outside of the

school year, with students and their families. This was unique to Mrs. L. in the analysis but mentioned by others in the transcripts — teachers notice when other teachers do it. This is also a deeply personal and relational practice.

3. See to students' needs.

Noddings' idea of care involves personal motivational displacement. The appropriate response is to act towards the need we perceive in students. We act in ways that are meaningful and personal.

- Mr. K. will stop what he's doing in order to have a conversation with Lio. He knows that Lio is the kind of kid that needs it immediately.
- Mme. M. knows that Evan has rough mornings. She makes sure that he has some time to talk to her. She also brings in books and resources for Sarena, a selective mute, in order to engage her in learning.
- Mrs. L. has realized that she has seen to Preston's needs so much, giving him clothes and food, counseling him, caring for him that she needs to step back.

4. Model care.

Teachers recognize that they are involved in webs of relationships.

They know that moral learning is frequently implicit. They act in caring ways in front of students and expect that students learn through their modeling.

- Mr. K. and the gym teacher care for the secretary as she has a medical emergency. Students see adults caring for each other.

- Mme. M. can't explain to her teacher candidate how she builds community — makes and maintains relationships. She tells Shannon to watch her and she'll see it. The students are also witnessing such community building.

- Mme. A. expects her students to be kind and thankful. She expects them to write thank you cards so she writes cards and letters to students on her own, like Luke.

5. Treat some students differently.

There are numerous examples of teachers treating students differently. Inclusive practice and policy certainly plays a role but teachers also perceive unique student needs and offer some students conditions that others may not receive. This phenomenon is often connected to seeing to students' needs.

- Mr. K. confides to Arthur that he's also suffered from an anxiety

disorder. Arthur has a unique relationship with him as a result.

- Mr. K. tells Ashley that he won't count her test. He knows that she doesn't do tests well so he assures her he has a different way of assessing her.

- Mme. M. helped Anthony develop his talent at writing poetry. She helped him publish a book in class and displays it publicly.

6. Think about students.

Teachers frequently think about students but caring teachers think about particular students and reflect on their needs. Some students stay with us even after they've left our classroom or school. A number of cases exist where teachers were unable to recognize if the caring relationship was completed through acknowledgement by a student. These cases might haunt us.

- Mme. M. reflects on "the most ripped away one" — a student who left suddenly. She doesn't know the exact nature of their relationship but she wonders if it was as significant to him as it seems to be to her.

- Mme. A. considers ways to make the classroom more accessible and comfortable for Desmond, even noticing a dog bed at Costco that would be perfect for him.

- Mrs. L. rethought her approach to teaching Caleb constantly. Caleb

came to recognize her care as he saw her commitment to him, formed by thorough reflection on her part.

7. Talk with kids.

It seems like a simple concept but the analysis reveals the unique quality of dialogue. The teachers in this study talk to kids one-on-one about meaningful things and benefit from stronger relationships, are motivated to act, and see acknowledgement from kids. Teachers speak and listen in order to form and strengthen relationships with kids, as well as encourage or reinforce moral change.

- Mme. M. talks with Dustin about what she sees in him — the promise of something good. He begins to act differently in school. She also makes time to counsel Louis when Louis feels tension between punching someone and making friends.

- Mme. A. makes time to talk with the kids she's coached, even though there are dozens of them. She also gives Daniel time and conversation to help him sort out his sense of himself and he, in the end, begins to change.

- Mr. K. does a lot of talking with kids. He knows Nicole very well and he takes time, over and over, to listen to her and help her change her violent behaviour. He talks with Margo about dating and gives her insight. He

counsels Sophie and Aria after they've been hurt by Lio. He also has multiple conversations with Lio, giving him lots of attention.

8. Be real.

The teachers in this study agreed that there is merit to actions that seem authentic. They were universally critical of formatted moral education programs — the Seven Sacred Teachings, *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*, school fund-raising projects, and the myriad of others. The participants reasoned that such programs may very well work for the teachers who initiated or developed them but they rarely translate to other venues. Instead, these teachers gave examples of moral learning that arose out of personal and social situations.

- Mme. M. noticed a seniors' home next to the school and thought that her kids might benefit from caring interaction with such an older generation. Her classroom project to supply clothes to the Main Street Project also came out of classroom activities, initiated by Melissa, but guided by Mme. M.

- Mme. A. uses the well-established school consequence of making a mess — help the custodian at lunch. Shane comes to appreciate the work.

- Mr. K. sheds some of the teacher's authority and makes an apology to

a student in front of the class. He succeeds at caring for students in a number of ways — being real, modeling care, and seeing to a student's needs.

How does a teacher make sense of the caring relationship in the classroom?

1. Moral activity and relationship building are more implicit than explicit.

The teachers in this study remarked a number of times that moral learning happens implicitly most of the time. That is, they don't plan in into lessons or activities but expect that opportunities will arise. A notable exception would be when teachers choose learning materials that lead into moral dialogue with their students, as Mr. C. demonstrated in Mrs. L.'s narrative.

- Mme. M.'s classroom project to support the Main Street Project rises out of one student's acute interest in Hannah Taylor's story. She's also quick to pick up grapes and show students that helping is a moral activity in Ella's poem.

- Mme. A. sees an opportunity to engage Shane in a moral lesson on responsibility when he tears up his phone pass. Mr. K. tries the same

thing with the custodian but is unsuccessful.

- Mr. K.'s relationship with Evan is initiated surprisingly, when Mr. K. rides a scooter.

2. The caring cycle is frequently left unclosed.

In the Literature Review, I noted that this part of the ethic of care creates tension in many teachers. Noddings (1984, 2001) has maintained that the cared-for must acknowledge the activity on the part of the one-caring in order for the caring cycle to be completed. The teachers in this study noted a number of cases where such an acknowledgement wasn't offered, was difficult to perceive, or became interrupted or obscured by other factors. On the other hand, stories like Garrett, in Mr. K.'s narrative, show that the caring cycle can be completed and extended over years.

- Mme. A. and Mme. were both unable to perceive if the students in their classrooms were able to appreciate their activity. Sarena's selective autism created a communication problem that Mme. M. was unable to bridge. Mme. A. wasn't able to recognize acknowledgement on the part of Desmond, a boy with ASD, for all of the adaptations she provided for him.

- Mr. K. is able to maintain the caring cycle with a number of kids but his work with Angel is confounded, perhaps by her mother's influence, or

perhaps by the way Angel sees him. He is unable to see his care reflected in her.

3. Moral education from the relational perspective is more authentic than moral programs — character education, civic education.

This is a restatement of the finding for the first research question. The teachers in this study noted that the strength of their relationships rose out of the time and effort they spent with kids, rather than the quality of their lessons or reflections on school-based programs, such as the Seven Sacred Teachings, Cool to be Kind, or *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*

4. There is a tension between academic responsibility and relational responsibility.

A number of times during the focus group meetings, teachers would state that they always thought about teaching academics first and relationship building and moral outcomes came later. This was particularly true of Mr. K. and Mme. M. These teachers handled the tension differently. Mr. K. was more likely to dive into relationship issues and challenges from a personal perspective. Mme. M. was more likely to find a way for moral questions to be explored during the course of a

lesson.

- In Mrs. L.'s narrative, Mrs. I. feels tension about writing a report card for Preston when she feels that he hasn't been present in the classroom in an academically meaningful way.

- Mr. K. is constantly stopping his lessons to talk to kids — Nicole, Sophie and Aria, Lio, Margo, Arthur, Ashley, perhaps struggling to complete the Science curriculum mentioned in his aunt's account.

5. There is a struggle between supporting some kids over others.

The caring relationship can be built up with some students at the cost of relationships with others. Teachers who devote the time that is necessary to achieve significant relationship gains with certain students may miss the needs of others. A relational way of handling classroom management may also impact children when they move out of the teacher's classroom into another.

- Mr. K. develops strong relationships with Sophie, Nicole, and Ashley. Angel perceives his attention as a lack of care towards her. Aria interprets Mr. K.'s words in a different way than Sophie does.

- Mr. K.'s sub has a hard time in his classroom because many of the expectations that his students have for themselves are built into the

expectations that he has for them, leaving a substitute lacking tools for classroom management tools for the day or so that he might be away.

- Thomas perceives the amount of attention that Mme. A. directs towards Desmond. Nick notices that he is treated differently than Dakota by the counsellor. The counsellor needs to care for Nick but he has a hard time unwrapping Nick's story.

- It's also worth noting that there can be discrepancy between what we expect support to look like for students and the support we experience as teachers. Mme. A. and Mr. K. both experience a lack of support from their principals. Mrs. L. felt tension because he couldn't support the teachers she was supposed to while caring for Preston. Mrs. L. also described a lack of support from the teacher's association, where teachers treated each other in ways that were ethical but not moral — lawful but not caring.

How is a caring relationship between teacher and students transformed into moral good — good people, good schools, good communities, good world?

1. Hope.

Freire (1970/1993) has recognized that hope is one of the necessary qualities for transformative education — praxis, to occur. It is

hope that sustains much of the moral and relational activity of the teachers in this study. Hope doesn't only lead to positive action. Hope might be its own reward and evidence of the possibility of good people, schools, communities, and world.

- Mrs. L. expresses hope that our feelings will matter, in or classrooms and professional spaces. She hopes that her activity will transform her teacher's association.

- Mme. A. has high expectations for Desmond and dives into the challenge. She is unable to tell if her actions are making a difference but she moves on.

- Mme. M. relies on hope when she doesn't receive feedback from Sarena.

2. Day-to-day return.

Sometimes, we see the evidence of our moral work in the day-to-day and month-to-month changes that happen for our students. We expect that our students will take these lessons with them when they leave us.

- Mr. K. sees Kennedy take on the challenge of organizing a mock funeral for the balloon character in their classroom and consider the role of moral reasoning in the adult world.

- Mme. M. is sure to let Dustin know that something as simple as picking up someone else's pencil is evidence of moral activity. She encourages him by noticing.
- Mr. K. and Mrs. L both experience change in their students — Lio and Caleb. They recognize that the dialogue they've put in over time has led to moral and relational growth.

3. Students tell us.

If we are fortunate, students tell us about the impact that we make in their lives. These long-term indicators are rare among the group of teachers in this study, but the relatively young age of the participants could be a factor.

- Garrett returns to Mr. K.'s classroom regularly and confirms the success of Mr. K.'s relationship with him.
- The teacher across the hall from Mme. A. yells but students tell him that they know that he has cared for them.
- This reward is balanced against others who may not value all of the different work we do. Mrs. L.'s husband has a family who seem to have experience little transformation during their education. They are quicker to criticize than support teachers and they tell us about it.

4. Teachers are transformed.

Moral activity on the part of teachers doesn't only transform the lives of students. In the caring relationship, it seems the one-caring may also be transformed. The teachers in this study give examples of cases where they were positively affected during the course of their own relational activity.

- Mr. K. has learned that it's important to apologize to his kids in a meaningful way.
- Mme. A. has her moral work reflected back to her when her kids tell her that some of them are even happier at school than they are at home.
- Mrs. L. finds the courage to attempt to transform the negative culture of her teacher's association.

5. Out of the classroom.

Students engage in moral and relational activity that moves into the public world. When students know that they are care for, they are more likely to apply their own motivation outwardly.

- Melissa uses the lesson provided by Mme. M. to catapult herself into a project to help people with needs by collecting clothing.

- While Mr. K. doesn't agree with the cause, his students are motivated to raise money for a community outside of their own.
- Mme. A.'s class makes an impact in the life of Mike, the WAG instructor, when they send him a meaningful thank you card.

Conclusions

Just as the form of a narrative analysis differs from a quantitative analysis, or even a conventional qualitative analysis, so do the conclusions. As we emerge from the narrative space, it is tempting to consider “contributions to the field” or “areas of further research,” and suggest a case study of one of the teachers in this study, a study over time, research that parallels this research but emerging from students' perspectives of the same relationships, or a study that seeks to measure the effect of care on academic achievement, graduation rate, student engagement, or creativity. Perhaps I might even suggest a quantitative study that would produce generalizable conclusions about the caring relationship. I will not.

Such threads might produce important findings. It might also be appropriate for a school or a school division to engage in professional development that provokes teachers to question their assumptions and perceptions about the caring relationship — implicitly and explicitly, how they engage in moral education, and how such teaching and learning

could be measured. A comparative study of moral programming and caring relationships could give school people useful tools to guide teaching and learning. It would be informative to conduct surveys of adults to gather their experiences with moral education and caring in schools. I won't suggest these proposals.

Teacher's roles are becoming fractured and less certain. Do we need to draw attention to deliberate conversations about care and moral learning? How do we help teachers to form meaningful relationships? Should the consideration of caring relationships have a part in teacher education? Would it be worthwhile to study the impact of inclusion policies and practice in the formation of caring relationships? Again, I will not seek to advance any of these proposals. This analysis is overwhelmingly local and personal.

Instead, I will direct our attention back to the stories. Let's not emerge. Let's go deeper. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest this is the direction we should take, "The narrative inquirer does not prescribe general applications and uses but creates texts, that when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications" (p. 42). Polkinghorne (1988) notes, "Research investigating the realm of meaning aims for verisimilitude, or results that have the appearance of truth or reality.... The conclusions of narrative research remain open-ended" (p. 176).

This is not to say that I should neglect the consideration of

conclusions. However, Sigrún Gudmundsdóttir (2001) puts the issue of generalizability in context, “One has good reason to be skeptical when narrative descriptions of practice — which are always local, provisional, and essentially personal — are used to generalize to situations and contexts where they are clearly out of place” (p. 230). The most important conclusions have already been resolved in the experiences and imaginations of the participants of this study. We have contributed, together, to school practice “by making the teachers involved ... partners in the research” (p. 229). We have aimed “to increase understanding of the central issues related to the dilemmas of school practice among the larger community of researchers who are conducting formal research on practice” (p. 229). We have invited you to participate in the stories in the analysis, to imagine your part in the story, and to imagine the possible implications and outcomes. These are appropriate conclusions for narrative research.

I will discuss four stories that have contributed deeply to my understanding of the caring relationship and moral education and the way I’ve imagined my own practice changing. I urge you to do the same.

Dale

The story of Mme. M.’s response to her perception of Dale’s need is one of the most transformative stories I’ve heard. It is the humble

recognition of Dale's acceptance of her activity that draws me into the story. Mme. M.'s voice on the recording is clear and evocative. The statements are widely spaced and defined by excellent punctuation.

Madame!

There's a construction table in there!

Oh, is there?

Is that good?

That's great!

The dialogue is short but the relationship is thick. The capacity of Mme. M.'s concern is obvious. The time that she must have devoted to gathering the objects and building the table is significant. Dale's response, as related by Mme. M., demonstrates immediate recognition and acknowledgement of the caring relationship. He is satisfied and lets her know.

My critical reader — the poet, made this observation of Mme. M, I can tell this Mme is a good teacher, one of the rare ones, the practical over theoretical type. She just does what comes naturally to her.

Mme. M.'s perspective on teaching provides her with powerful

relational leverage. She does so much of the groundwork for good relationships — getting to know kids’ history, what they like, what interests them, what confuses and upsets them, that she is able to maintain a simple approach.

I have imagined the power of this simple exchange in my own classroom and encouraged such dedication in the teachers I work with. I have examined the elements of my own relationships in the classroom — motivational displacement, concern, dialogue, effort, and I have recognized the challenge to my own practice.

I have imagined the change that must have occurred deeply in Dale when he recognized the activity of Mme. M., and I have imagined the dawning of realization as he grows into an adult that he has been cared for and how his life has been forever changed. The simple, caring actions of Mme. M. seem to have the power to change Dale’s life forever.

Lio

Mr. K. mentioned his relationship with Lio several times over the course of our meetings. It became obvious that Mr. K.’s approach to caring relationships was to go right to the kids — not to prepare a lesson or institute a program, but to engage the very heart of the child in dialogue.

Lio is typical of many of the young, tough boys we see in our

schools. He is desperate for care but he only seems to know how to lash out. The story, as told by Mr. K., reveals two significant phenomena to me — perseverance and failure.

It is Mr. K.'s perseverance that provides the quality to the relationship. It is not a single act of care that provokes Lio to change. It is the deeply human insistence that Mr. K. provides that starts to make sense to Lio — I care. "I care," the statement, must become, "He cares," the conviction. It is not enough for Mr. K. to insist that he has cared. Lio must accept that he has. He does.

Lio's story is no fairy tale. He continues to fight, calls the girls names, and gets into trouble, to the point where Mr. K. tells him that he's not able to give him the time that he once did. "Sorry bud, you don't have an excuse this time." The kid that seems to resound with success is simultaneously Mr. K.'s dearest failure.

I imagine a rough life ahead for Lio. It's hard to turn your back on a violent upbringing. I see hard and cold nights ahead, where he doesn't know where to turn. I see an adolescence where he wonders who loves him. Maybe he finds a gang of his own.

But the hope that fuels me knows that care can be deeply buried in rough ground. I imagine Lio coming back to Mr. K. when he has kids of his own — clean and rough at the same time, full of gratitude and recognition. It seems we must forever hold our doors open in the hope that the rough ones come back.

Recently, I counseled a student like Lio. I've spoken with him often. His parents tell him that he must fight back and defend himself. He's rough and I wanted to punish him for fighting, but Mr. K.'s approach to Lio's roughness has begun to occupy my imagination. I've made room for him to speak and tell me what he does. I stop what I do and make room for his conversation. I've imagined an outcome for him like Lio's — where he knows that we'll listen.

Desmond

Mme. A. didn't stray far from describing her relationship with Desmond during the meetings. She used the relationship to describe the great difficulty we may have in knowing if a student has received our care. Desmond's diagnosis of ASD means that communication is disrupted. Some of the tools we would usually use to perceive acknowledgement of care are insufficient. This didn't stop Mme. A. from pushing forward.

Desmond's story exposes the intersection of inclusive practice and caring relationships. It might be easier for Mme. A. to be motivated to act for Desmond as One-caring because his needs may seem so pronounced. But, the double edge here means that she may not receive the signals from him that allow her to be certain he knows. Mme. A. takes diligent steps to care for Desmond. Such steps also secure an environment where

Desmond has the greatest opportunity to feel included. It's possible that many of her actions are probably as beneficial for the entire class as they are for Desmond. We are all, in fact, unique and individual(ized) learners.

This story highlights the tension many of us feel in addressing a variety of needs in the classroom. It's easy to feel like we are neglecting some or many kids as we see to the immediate needs of students like Desmond. Is my motivation displaced? Should I do more? Did I miss something important for someone else? Am I doing enough for everybody? These are questions that squeeze and challenge us.

Mme. A.'s solution is to push forward and support Desmond in every way. She has no doubt that her actions are motivated by care. She only struggles with knowing whether Desmond really knows. Of course, she wants the confirmation but the lack of it doesn't stop her.

I have been one of the teachers who have selfishly complained about this recent "burden." I have wondered how I'm supposed to "cover" a curriculum while balancing diverse emotional and cognitive needs in my classroom. Being engaged in Desmond's story has refreshed my confidence in the trustworthiness of the caring approach. It is indeed the displacement of Mme. A.'s motivation that makes the biggest difference.

I shared my experience with Claire — the student at the beginning of this thesis, during the meeting when the participants shared experiences like Mme. A.'s relationship with Desmond, or Mme. M.'s relationship with Sarena. We were able to hope together that students

like these would be able to tell us, one day, how we impacted their lives.

Hope seems to have the power to fill in some of the gaps where our tools of communication fail. I hope that Claire will call me at the school again. I hope that Desmond comes back one day and reminisces with Mme. A. I hope that Sarena shares even a smile with Mme. M. to let her know that she's on track.

Preston

Mrs. L.'s narrative resounds with struggle. She seems to feel like every need is the same need. She knows that teachers depend on her as a support teacher but her single-minded focus on kids like Preston and Caleb draw her away from the role she knows is hers. She doesn't have to be reminded that she is falling short. She feels it herself.

In fact, Mrs. L.'s dedication to Preston may be the freshest response to our province's recent efforts to standardize teaching practice — "parent friendly report cards." Preston defies standardized assessment. He is on a reverse integration plan — 7 minutes in the classroom a day. He lives in care — in a group home, separated from his mother. He has been diagnosed with FASD and he has profound psychological needs.

Mrs. L. noted that Preston has dignity and she wanted to preserve it. She had her motivation significantly displaced, displaced enough to

take on much of the responsibility that we expect will be handled outside of school. She didn't complain.

It is in Preston's desperate attempts to identify who he is to himself and work out his own story that Mrs. L. is able to meet him and respond to his needs.

I also struggle with the seemingly overwhelming demands of my job as a support teacher. I know that I should be co-teaching with my teachers and benchmarking struggling readers as I encourage my newest student — a boy diagnosed with ASD and compelled by vivid fantasies, to come out from under the table in the classroom.

Retelling Preston's story means that I can imagine a return to the classroom for him down the road, though I know he'll always struggle. I imagine an entry into a public world where police officers and doctors might redefine their practice by considering unique and pervasive needs and caring approaches to problem solving. There will be many more Prestons in our classrooms and there will be many more programs and plans. Teachers like Mrs. L., with her dedication to his little life, while negotiating personal and professional tension, give me hope.

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Consent for Superintendent

Research Project: Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship

Principal Investigator: Ross Meacham, University of Manitoba

Dear Superintendent,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba and a teacher in the Seven Oaks School Division. I am working on my thesis, Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship. The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

I would like to interview four teachers from Seven Oaks School Division once you have granted your permission. Please review the Consent Form below.

Your signature on the Superintendent's Consent Form will authorize your approval for these teachers to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ross Meacham

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose: This study will examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

Procedures: Four teacher names will be drawn from a pool of volunteers. These teachers will be invited to participate in the study.

Participants will meet for four focus group sessions of approximately two hours each. The group will meet once every two weeks, beginning in April of 2012. Participants will be expected to read three articles and take part in the series of focus groups - they will describe their relationships with students.

The time and location for each meeting will be arranged at the participants' convenience. The initial meeting will be at a common divisional meeting space - perhaps the BZERC. I will provide refreshments.

I will inquire about teachers' perceptions of the caring relationships that they have with their students, how they maintain them, and what effect they expect such relationships to have.

Recordings: Conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed directly to a laptop using MacSpeech Dictate. A secondary recording instrument - a digital recorder, will be used as a back-up device. I will also keep notes.

Risks/Benefits to Participants: There are no significant risks to participants in the study. Teachers will not be asked to share any details of their lives that they wouldn't ordinarily share in collegial conversations. Benefits include expanded discussion and learning about a subject of interest to the participants. A potential benefit could be the institution of a formal group within SOSD to discuss and promote moral education. While it may be unlikely, it is possible that details of abuse of children may surface. Please note that I have a legal obligation to report any abuse of children if such information should surface.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All efforts will be made to preserve anonymity and confidentiality in this study. Pseudonyms will be used at all stages while gathering data and when sharing the results of this study in any form. Any quotations from the transcripts that might identify a participant will be reworded or removed.

Consent forms and forms identifying the pseudonyms of participants will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house. Hard copies of transcriptions and analysis will be kept in a separate locked filing cabinet in my house. Audio data and digital transcripts will be encrypted in digital form on a password-locked computer. The researcher and thesis advisor will be the only people who will see the transcripts.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this mini-study but I will supply refreshments at each of the meetings.

Withdrawal: Participation in this mini-study is completely voluntary, and each participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and without penalty. Participant data will be deleted and removed from the study in the event of withdrawal.

Debriefing: Participants will be debriefed at the end of each focus group. Participants will be asked if there are any details from the discussion that they would like to change. At any point in the study, if participants wish to change or alter their input, they may contact me.

Dissemination: The results of this research will be used for my thesis. Results may also be used in future presentations to groups or in published papers. In no case will information that could identify participants, schools, or the school division be used.

Summary of Results: Participants will receive a brief summary of results for this project in September of 2012. Participants will have the choice of receiving the results electronically or as a hard copy.

Data: All data gathered will be shredded or erased immediately after the thesis has been defended successfully.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so participants should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout their participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Superintendent's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

I would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this study. To that end, my contact email for receipt of an electronic copy is included below.

Email Address: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ross Meacham

APPENDIX B

Letter of Consent for Principals

Research Project: Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship

Principal Investigator: Ross Meacham, University of Manitoba

Dear Principal,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba and a teacher in the Seven Oaks School Division. I am working on my thesis, Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship. The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

I would like to interview four teachers from Seven Oaks School Division. To this end I have gained permission from the Superintendent to conduct this study. I would like to distribute the **Invitation to Participate** to teachers at your school.

Please review the consent form below. Your signature on the Principal's Consent Form will authorize your approval for the distribution of the **Invitation to Participate**. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ross Meacham

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose: This study will examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

Procedures: Four teacher names will be drawn from a pool of volunteers. These teachers will be invited to participate in the study.

Participants will meet for four focus group sessions of approximately two hours each. The group will meet once every two weeks, beginning in April of 2012. Participants will be expected to read three articles and take part in the series of focus groups - they will describe their relationships with students.

The time and location for each meeting will be arranged at the participants' convenience. The initial meeting will be at a common divisional meeting space - perhaps the BZERC. I will provide refreshments.

I will inquire about teachers' perceptions of the caring relationships that they have with their students, how they maintain them, and what effect they expect such relationships to have.

Recordings: Conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed directly to a laptop using MacSpeech Dictate. A secondary recording instrument - a digital recorder, will be used as a back-up device. I will also keep notes.

Risks/Benefits to Participants: There are no significant risks to participants in the study. Teachers will not be asked to share any details of their lives that they wouldn't ordinarily share in collegial conversations. Benefits include expanded discussion and learning about a subject of interest to the participants. A potential benefit could be the institution of a formal group within SOSD to discuss and promote moral education. While it may be unlikely, it is possible that details of abuse of children may surface. Please note that I have a legal obligation to report any abuse of children if such information should surface.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All efforts will be made to preserve anonymity and confidentiality. Pseudonyms will be used at all stages while gathering data and when sharing the results of this study in any form. Any quotations from the transcripts that might identify a participant will be reworded or removed.

Consent forms and forms identifying the pseudonyms of participants will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house. Hard copies of transcriptions and analysis will be kept in a separate locked filing cabinet in my house. Audio data and digital transcripts will be encrypted in digital form on a password-locked computer. The researcher and thesis advisor will be the only people who will see the transcripts.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this mini-study but I will supply refreshments at each of the meetings.

Withdrawal: Participation in this mini-study is completely voluntary, and each participant is free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and without penalty. Participant data will be deleted and removed from the study in the event of withdrawal.

Debriefing: Participants will be debriefed at the end of each focus group. Participants will be asked if there are any details from the discussion that they would like to change. At any point in the study, if participants wish to change or alter their input, they may contact me.

Dissemination: The results of this research will be used for my thesis. Results may also be used in future presentations to groups or in published papers. In no case will information that could identify participants, schools, or the school division be used.

Summary of Results: Participants will receive a brief summary of results for this project in September of 2012. Participants will have the choice of receiving the results electronically or as a hard copy.

Data: All data gathered will be shredded or erased immediately after the thesis has been defended successfully.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Participants are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions they prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so participants should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout their participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Principal's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

I would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this study. To that end, my contact email for receipt of an electronic copy is included below.

Email Address: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ross Meacham

APPENDIX C

Invitation to Participate

Research Project: Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship

Principal Investigator: Ross Meacham, University of Manitoba

Dear SOSD teacher,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a research study I will be conducting. I am a graduate student working on my Masters thesis, **Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship**. I have been granted consent from the Superintendent and Principal to examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

If you agree to participate in this study, I would like to invite you to participate in a series of focus groups. The focus groups will involve four teachers and they will be approximately two hours in length. The sessions will take place after school, in a location that is convenient for you.

I would also like to ask you to read three articles, *My Pedagogic Creed*, by John Dewey, *A Poetics of Teaching* by David Hansen, and *The Caring Teacher* by Nel Noddings.

During the focus groups, I will ask you to share descriptions of the relationships that you have with your students. I will ask you questions about the following:

1. What is the purpose of education?
2. How do teachers form caring relationships and what does a caring relationship look like?
3. What do you hope for in a caring relationship with your students and how do you show students that you care?

4. Are there conflicts between what you believe about education and the way that you do your job?
5. Is moral education important?
6. How do we teach kids about what is good and how to do good?
7. How should teachers be held accountable for moral education?
8. How does teacher care turn students into better people?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will receive the articles and specific interview questions one week prior to the first focus group – the articles will be used to supplement the discussion during the second, third, and fourth sessions. You will be asked to complete a detailed consent form.

The focus groups will be recorded using a laptop with transcription software - MacSpeech Dictate. A secondary recording instrument – a digital recorder, will be used as a back-up device. I will also keep notes.

All efforts will be made to ensure your anonymity and confidentiality. Your name will not be used in any written reports – pseudonyms will be used at all stages while gathering data and when sharing the results of this study in any form.” Paper copies of transcriptions and participant information will be kept in separate locked cabinets in my house and will only be seen by my thesis advisor and myself. Audio data and digital transcripts will be encrypted in digital form on a password-locked computer

After my thesis is successfully defended, all hard copies will be destroyed and digital information will be erased. Upon request, you will receive the summary of this study.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. There are no risks or compensation associated with this study. Refreshments will be served at each focus group. You can withdraw from the stud at any time without penalty – simply call me or send me an email stating your request to withdraw. Upon notification, all of your data will be removed from this study.

Please respond by phone or email by April 30th if you are interested. I will pool the names of interested parties and choose four names randomly. I will contact these teachers to inform them of the selection.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC).

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Ross Meacham

APPENDIX D

Letter of Consent for Teacher-Participants

Research Project: Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship

Principal Investigator: Ross Meacham, University of Manitoba

Dear Teacher,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba. I am working on my thesis, Teaching the Good: Teacher Perceptions of the Caring Relationship. The purpose of the study is to examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

I would like to interview four teachers from Seven Oaks School Division. To this end I have gained permission from the Superintendent and School Principal to conduct this study. Thank you for volunteering to participate.

Please review the consent form below. Your signature on the Teacher's Consent Form will authorize your approval to participate in this study. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ross Meacham

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

Purpose: This study will examine teachers' understanding and experience of caring relationships and moral education.

Procedures: We will meet for four focus group sessions of approximately two hours each. The group will meet once every two weeks, beginning in April of 2012. You will be expected to read three articles and take part in the series of focus groups - you will describe their relationships with students.

The time and location for each meeting will be arranged at your convenience. The initial meeting will be at a common divisional meeting space - perhaps the BZERC. I will provide refreshments.

I will inquire about your perceptions of the caring relationships that you have with your students, how you maintain them, and what effect you expect such relationships to have.

Recordings: Conversations will be audio recorded and transcribed directly to a laptop using MacSpeech Dictate. A secondary recording instrument - a digital recorder, will be used as a back-up device. I will also keep notes.

Risks/Benefits to Participants: There are no significant risks to participants in the study. You will not be asked to share any details of your life that we wouldn't ordinarily share in collegial conversations. Benefits include expanded discussion and learning about a subject of interest to teachers. A potential benefit could be the institution of a formal group within SOSD to discuss and promote moral education. While it may be unlikely, it is possible that details of abuse of children may surface. Please note that I have a legal obligation to report any abuse of children if such information should surface.

Anonymity and Confidentiality: All efforts will be made to preserve anonymity and confidentiality in this study. Pseudonyms will be used at all stages while gathering data and when sharing the results of this study in any form. Any quotations from the transcripts that might identify a participant will be reworded or removed. Principals and superintendents will not know if you agree to participate, and your participation in this study will not affect your working condition in any manner.

Consent forms and forms identifying the pseudonyms of participants will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my house. Hard copies of transcriptions and analysis will be kept in a separate locked filing cabinet in my house. Audio data and digital transcripts will be encrypted in digital form on a password-locked computer. The researcher and thesis advisor will be the only people who will see the transcripts.

Compensation: There will be no compensation for participating in this mini-study but I will supply refreshments at each of the meetings.

Withdrawal: Participation in this mini-study is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time for any reason and without penalty. Participant data will be deleted and removed from the study in the event of withdrawal.

Debriefing: You will be debriefed at the end of each focus group. You will be asked if there are any details from the discussion that you would like to change. At any point in the study, if you wish to change or alter your input, you may contact me.

Dissemination: The results of this research will be used for my thesis. Results may also be used in future presentations to groups or in published papers. In no case will information that could identify participants, schools, or the school division be used.

Summary of Results: You will receive a brief summary of results for this project in September of 2012. You will have the choice of receiving the results electronically or as a hard copy.

Data: All data gathered will be shredded or erased immediately after the thesis has been defended successfully.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the University of Manitoba Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC). A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Teacher-Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

I would like to receive a summary copy of the results of this study. To that end, my contact email for receipt of an electronic copy is included below.

Email Address: _____

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Ross Meacham

APPENDIX E

Focus Group Questions

Session 1

1. What, in your opinion, is the purpose of education?
2. How do you think that children learn to do what is right or good?
3. What is the teacher's moral responsibility?
4. Should there be a moral curriculum?
5. Do you believe that teachers should care for students?
6. What does a caring relationship look like?
7. How does a teacher let a student know that he/she cares?
8. What do you hope for in a caring relationship with your students?
9. How do teachers make and maintain relationships with students?
10. How do caring relationships change students?

Session 2

1. Why do you teach?
2. What are the purposes of education?
3. How do teachers learn about the purposes of education?
4. How have ideas about education changed during your career?

5. How have your ideas about education changed during your career?
6. Are there conflicts between what you believe about education and the way that you do your job?
7. Is the fostering of caring relationships a valid purpose of education?
8. How are caring relationships reflected in contemporary curricula?
9. Describe some ways in which you explain to students why caring is important.

Session 3

1. What is moral education?
2. Is moral education important?
3. Describe the terms moral and ethical in the context of education.
4. How do we teach kids about what is good and how to do good?
5. What are some forms of moral education that you have used?
6. How should teachers be held accountable for moral education?
7. How are caring relationships connected to moral education?
8. How do students learn that moral education is important?
9. Describe some significant relationships that you've had with your students.

Session 4

1. What does caring look like in a classroom?
2. How do teachers form caring relationships with students?
3. How do you let students know that you care about them?
4. How do you know that a student receives your care?
5. What do you do if a student does not receive your care?
6. How do you track and assess a caring relationship?
7. How does teacher care turn students into better people?
8. What are some obstacles that teachers face in forming caring relationships with students?
9. Do you care differently for individual students and groups of students?
10. What happens to your relationships with students when they move out of your classroom/responsibility?

APPENDIX F

Focus Group Script

Hi everyone. Thank you very much for coming. I'm interested in finding out about your ideas and experiences with moral education – specifically, caring relationships. This means that I'd like to look at what you do with your students and how you think about your relationships with them. I have a particular idea of caring relationships right now, thinking of them in terms of the way our motivation is displaced towards our students, how we react to that feeling, and how students react to our actions.

I'm not investigating opinions. I'm interested in finding out about how your ideas are formed by your experiences so I'd like you to think of some very specific experiences. I'm very interested in details and descriptions and small details that come to mind are important too – they may help me understand your experiences better.

There are no right or wrong answers. I am interested in understanding ideas and experiences.

You don't have to agree with everyone in the group if you don't feel the same way. I expect that there will be different perspectives here – it's important that we find out about all of them. If any part of the talk makes you feel upset, you're free to leave at any time.

I want you to feel okay about saying good things and critical things. I'm not here to get you to think a certain way. I simply want to know how teachers experience the caring relationship.

Let's begin by introducing ourselves – who we are inside and outside the classroom, our teaching history, and what we are teaching now. We'll try to talk one at a time so that everybody is clear in the recording. There are specific questions that will follow but we'll also let the personality of the group determine the flow of the conversation.