Military Children and Holistic Education: A Narrative Reflection on Classroom Practice

Edith Allison

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MILITARY CHILDREN AND HOLISTIC EDUCATION: A NARRATIVE 
REFLECTION ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE 
by 
EDITH ALLISON 
(Under the Direction of Delores Liston) 

ABSTRACT 
This dissertation uses autobiographical narrative inquiry as a source of knowledge-generating reflection to examine how the educational needs of military children might be met through the use of holistic educational practices rather than a (well-intentioned) traditional, standardized curriculum. Data were gathered through observation; personal experience as a military child, military member, mother of military children and teacher of military children; journal entries and vicarious experiences shared by students, parents, educators and other invested in this population of learners. Experiences were compiled into fictional composites to protect the identity of all parties as well as national security. These composites were then represented graphically in a series of cartoons, a “teacher handbook” and a faux journal article all buttressed by current research. Issues examined include teacher/student roles in the learning process, meaning-making and education as transformation.

INDEX WORDS: military children, military families, DODEA, student mobility, deployment, war, holistic education
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REFLECTION ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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REFLECTION ON CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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DEDICATION

To military families and teachers of military children
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Chapter 1

My Own Blobby Liver Spot
INTRODUCTION

Let me preface my introduction by saying that I didn’t want my dissertation to be seen as only a blobby liver spot.

In explanation:

When little ones are learning to paint, they put a great deal of time and effort into exploring the way things work in the world called “painting”. They test the brushes; try different strokes and amounts of paint. A child may even abandon the brush and paper all together to see how far the painting experience can go. But, for the most part, they paint. They paint and paint and paint. They paint strokes on top of other strokes and colors on top of colors until the paper can hold no more paint. What they have then is a blobby liver-colored spot. Preschoolers make dozens of these liver spot paintings and show them to adults who see only the final product and ask “What is it?”

That’s what had me worried. I wanted to be like that little painter in exploration; I wanted to see how things worked and try different ways of approaching what I saw. I didn’t want to produce a final product and be asked by scholarly persons, “What is it?”

In fact, I don’t want to produce a final product at all; I want -- a living, breathing dissertation in which part of a personal journey is glimpsed by the reader who had come along for part of the ride.

Still, I knew that there were certain expectations associated with the production of an acceptable dissertation and will use this introduction to explain how I worked to remain within the spirit of those guidelines while staying true to a rather non-traditional approach to inquiry.

I wanted to call myself an holistic educator. I’d done a great deal of reading on the subject and recognized its merits. I’d even had a proposal approved to “go holistic” in my second grade classroom. I just wasn’t there yet. So this was where my journey began. I wanted to explore the
hows, ifs and where is in fully adopting an holistic philosophy with my particular population of students.

These students are affectionately known as “brats.” They are the children of active duty members of the United States Armed forces and are attending schools under the authority of the Department of Defense Education Activity (DOE DA). Because of the very specific needs of their student populations, these one hundred and ninety-nine schools are run by the Department of Defense rather than the Department of Education like those of their civilian counterparts. The DOE DA schools use their own set of educational standards rather than adopting those of their host state or nation to aid the transition of the highly mobile student population who will be transferring between these schools. The use of a standardized curriculum such as this, while efficient for accountability and record-keeping, only ensures that students will, at sometime or another, receive the same instruction as the rest of their DOE DA counterparts; all the schools will "cover" the same set material. This standardization does not account for differences in pacing, learning styles or even the interests of the students. The expectation that arriving children play "curriculum catch-up" or that they wait for the receiving class to reach the point at which they were when they left their last school not only wastes valuable learning time but sends an unrealistic message that learning occurs in a linear fashion and that everyone will arrive at the same conclusions at the same time in the same fashion. Rather than standardizing learning, this dissertation suggested a swing in the opposite direction toward a more open-ended holistic model. This type of model allows for multiple entry points into learning as well as a more realistic, relevant and brain-friendly education that would incorporate rather than exclude their experiences as military children.

Military children are becoming famous for their ability to adapt to the frequent moves
associated with their highly mobile lifestyle (Jensen, et al. 1995; Jensen, Lewis & Xenakis, 1986; Marchant & Medway, 1987; Lyle, 2003; Tucker & Marx, 1987). Still, while these children are better at adapting to mobility than their civilian counterparts, they face stresses that can affect school outcomes. Stutzky and Barratt (2001) draw attention to: loss of support system for the family, separation from parent (s), parent in endangered situation (war) and political unrest in the country in which a child resides. Biernat and Jax (2000) add inappropriate placement in the receiving school to the list. Wertsch (1991) adds: inability to join extracurricular activities mid-year, falling behind in schoolwork, losing credit for completed schoolwork, losing credit for in-progress coursework. Still others (Witt & Hunt, 2002; Verberg, 1990; Brett, 1992) note difficulties in establishing peer relationships, gaining acceptance from civilian populations (McClure, 1997; Vernberg, 1990) and reassimilating in American culture after living overseas (Smith, 1991).

Even with all the assistance provided to military families to deal with the stresses related to the adjustments inherent to military life, it’s just never an easy task to pick up and move and the stress continues to show up in the classroom and the classroom performance (Stutzky & Barratt, 2001). While having a worldwide standardized curriculum and standardized assessment in all of the 199 schools run by the Department of Defense was designed to ease academic transition from one school to the next (DODEA, 2004), the system uses the archaic definition of “curriculum” to include only academic subjects and academic performance. Adherence to this definition fails to recognize the need to nurture all the human aspects of learners. Still, the standards used by DODEA are quite generous using words like “explores” and “understands” and “observes” leaving it up to the individual instructors how the standards will be met. This leaves the door wide open for the implementation of non-traditional approaches to educating
these military children in a more holistic fashion. Instead of a standardized curriculum, a more individualized one that addresses the human needs of the students rather than just the academic needs could serve to ease some of the stressors of the military lifestyle that may be left unmet by traditional education programs. An holistic curriculum could allow for the inclusion of issues specific to military children such as frequent moves and issues related to war without taking away from the academic needs of the children; they would be able to see the interrelationship of their own lives with those of others and where academics fit into the pictures as well. The cooperative/collaborative nature of holistic education allows them to share their own stories as well as hear others voices from similar backgrounds without being viewed as a name-dropper or braggart as might happen in a civilian school. Wertsch recognizes the importance of bringing the voice of the "brat" into the classroom, "The single most important thing a teacher should do for brats is...to validate the military child's experience and his or her feelings about that experience” (Britten, 1999, ¶ 34). This is not always easy for students to do in civilian schools, "It is hard to discuss our lives with those and for whom it all seems so exotic. Sometimes they resent our lifestyle, sometimes they think we are bragging, and sometimes they simply have no interest in where we've been and what we're doing" (Eaken 1999, p. 13). So, while civilian schools may not have a place for the narratives of military children, the DOD schools do and that should be exploited to the fullest. Being excluded by civilian culture in the schools only serves to instill a sense of detachment in military students which in turn hinders learning (Thorpe, Minter, Lu-Chivizhe & Smith, 2004, p.13). The connection these children experience with the DOD schools ("They often feel more at home with other [military students], with no regard to nationality, rather than those of their passport culture" (Kidd & Lankenau, undated, ¶ 3) and the generous learning standards in these schools that could easily allow for holistic practices provide an
opportunity for a truly meaningful learning experience for military children.

But would it?

This curiosity about what would happen if I mixed “chocolate” with “peanut butter” led me to pick up my own paintbrush and begin my inquiry. I was guided by the question of what experiences and stories would emerge in bringing holistic education into a class of military children and wanted to paint of picture of just what I experienced on this journey.

Of particular interest to me were the stories relating to those students who I just couldn’t reach because they were only “doing time”. The knowledge that their days in our school were numbered until the next set of military orders had them out the door to another state or country, kept many a student from connecting with their education. I was interested to see if they found holistic education any more appealing and if its existence helped these students to become more engaged in their own learning.

A problem arose, however, in the recording and reporting of the results of my inquiry into the use of holistic education practices with these children putting me toe to toe with some pretty strict gate keepers. The approval process for conducting research in their schools is guided by DODEA Regulation 2071.2 (DODEA, 1998, Appendix 1). While I understood how a process needs to be in place for their own protection and that of the subjects involved, and that exposure of too much information could possibly be a threat to national security, this regulation doesn’t seek to make friends of qualitative researchers. It requires the submission of all questions to be asked in advance along with data collection methods with timetables, the method of analysis to be used and a description of how the research aligns with their Community Strategic Plan (DODEA, 2004). Hey, whose painting is this anyway? I had no way of knowing what information I would find relevant in advance any more than I would know which color or brush
to use on a painting until I saw what was already there and having someone direct me to color between the lines isn’t inquiry; it’s censorship. Cultural anthropologist, James Clifford (1986), notes

Cultures do not hold still for their portraits. Attempts to make them do so always involves oversimplification and exclusion, selection of temporal focus, the construction of a particular self-other relationship and the imposition or negotiation of a power relationship. (p. 10)

In addition, the approval committee for research conducted in DODEA only meets three times a year. The school in which I teach had a turnover rate of 66% last year (Stone, 2005), which means that the subjects I would have described to the approval committee may not have even been in my class anymore by the time the research was approved.

Another problem presented itself in the form of the DODEA Legal Counsel and Public Affairs. They have the final say on what can and cannot be published -- no matter who wrote it. In 2004, another teacher and I wrote a children’s book, *While You Were in the Faraway Place* (Appendix 2), about children coping with the deployment of their parents to an unnamed hostile territory. We received a letter from the DODEA Legal Counsel and Public Affairs forbidding us from publishing or even copyrighting the book. I was concerned this incident may have led to me being under closer scrutiny in the approval process.

Again, I recognized the merits of having a research approval process. I agree that there should be one in place; the agency that runs the school in which I teach needs to know my intentions as a researcher before they can approve what I’m doing but the current process in place for DODEA didn’t really allow for the kind of inquiry in which I wanted to engage. We aren’t born knowing ourselves and the finding out is where all the fun lies. Knowing where I’m going before I get there just isn’t the way to get a really great blobby liver spot.

What I did then was to write about myself. I used my own experiences as a teacher, former
military child and soldier and the meaning I took away from those experiences to guide my inquiry. I analyzed my personal observations; my impressions of what I saw, heard and sensed as I identified the areas in which holistic education might serve to facilitate meaningful learning with my students. This use of narrative inquiry makes no attempt to separate the researcher from the research, instead, recognizing that ‘self’ is understood not as a monolithic scientist-observer, but as a multifaceted entity who participates, observes and writes from multiple, constantly shifting positions" (Pratt, 1986, p. 39).

In particular, I engaged in what is called "Autobiographical Writing" (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; Grumet, 1988, Pinar, 1981) as the framework for my narrative inquiry. This was not an act of self-absorption but rather a view from the inside by a card-carrying member of the culture. As Clifford points out, "Insiders studying their own culture offer new angles of vision and depths of understanding. Their accounts are empowered and restricted in unique ways" (1986, p.9).

An aspect of this dissertation that strayed even farther away from the traditional idea of research was that it was a work of fiction. Although based on factual experience, the dissertation was in the form of a story made up of composite experiences and characters, borrowing from the style of interpretive or phenomenologically-based standpoint of storytelling which "would emphasize socially constructed realities, local generalizations, interpretive resources, stocks of knowledge, intersubjectivity, practical reasoning and ordinary talk” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997, p. 318). This storytelling approach fell under the umbrella of what Clifford (1986, p. 6) calls "true fiction."

Although this may sound like an oxymoron, true fiction provides a slice of reality through a work of fiction such as seen in Biblical parables, poetry and satire. Clandinin and Connelly (1996) refer to this as "storying lives" or "storied landscapes" and note that "Humans are
storytelling organisms who, individually and collectively, lead storied lives. Thus, the study of narrative is the study of the ways humans experience the world" (1990, p.58). Using a fictional story in my inquiry not only served to protect the interests of national security and the privacy of the families but it provided a structure through which the "data" could be presented.

The source of this data, as mentioned earlier was my own experiences and memories as a military child, soldier, military wife and mother, and teacher of military children. Unsolicited anecdotes from teachers, parents, administrators and students also served as a source of data. No direct interviews were conducted and all data were blended to protect from any identifiable information from being revealed. This methodology mirrors one used by Ming Fang He (2003) in her book, *A River Forever Flowing: Cross Cultural Lives and Identities in the Multicultural Landscape*, to protect the identities of her subjects --women coming out of the Grand Cultural Revolution. She calls this more specific form of narrative inquiry “composite auto/biographical narrative method” (2003, p. 24).

The structure of my dissertation consists of freestanding segments drawn together by the fictional story (which was told in comic book format). The story follows the process of inquiry of the fictional main character, a teacher in search of ways to help her students find meaning in their educational experiences, as she constructed her own meaning of what constituted a "valuable learning experience." Each segment represents a different stage of her inquiry. There is also an analysis and discussion section at the end of the dissertation to tie the whole thing together. The dissertation, which is written in twelve chapters rather than the traditional five, begins with a foreshadowing event related to the research in the form of a faux journal article (Chapter 3). A comic section follows which introduces the characters of the researcher and her mentor and lays the groundwork for the research question. Chapter 5 is a literature review
dealing particularly with military children and is followed by another comic section in which the researcher engages in some rather unorthodox field research. Chapter 7 is another literature review outlining the ideas behind traditional instruction methodologies and is written in the form of a faux faculty handbook. Chapter 8, another comic section, has the researcher questioning the validity of these methodologies and being introduced to holistic education which leads to a literature review of holistic education in Chapter 10. Chapter 11’s comic section follows the researcher as she tries to get her holistic program up and running and the stories that come out of that program are represented in the Chapter 12, the Results section. The final chapter is the aforementioned Discussion section which serves to consolidate all of the information presented in the dissertation.

Since the dissertation involved an exploration of holistic education, the research was conducted through a lens of holism. The non-traditional approach to research described above, with its free-flowing form, fit right in with the beliefs of holism as described by Tyler: "The holistic moment is neither textually determined nor the exclusive right of the author, being instead the functional intersection between text-author-reader" (1986, p.132). I was striving for a full and contextual understanding of the children I serve and their situation as well as what educative significance could be drawn from my own experiences with these children. This was very much in keeping with Miller's explanation of how "meaning emerges in context, in experience; holistic education is therefore essentially a responsiveness to a wholeness of experience as we live it in particular times and places" (2000a, p. 4).

The definition of a dissertation has come far beyond the static picture of an objective, sterile piece of empirical research. The academic world is coming to accept the idea that inquiry can be chock full of messy human participation and emotion. In her essay, “Painting Lessons”, Oullette
(2002) makes a direct comparison between narrative inquiry and the creation of a painting noting that both require “recursive exploration until an image emerges” and both are based on inspiration, passion and conviction. Like a painting, my dissertation was true to that which I was studying while representing my own impressions. Even the most vicious critic of art recognizes that no woman actually looks like the subject in Picasso’s *Girl in Front of Mirror* but they also recognize that it is not a misrepresentation of the human form; it is Picasso’s way of representing a woman. In the same way, my dissertation was my way of representing my own situation in searching for the best way to serve my students.
Chapter 2

Seeking Membership as a Noodle
METHODOLOGY

“Why are we doing this again”? A child asked me during a visit from representatives from Georgia Public Television.

“Yeah, how many times do we have to do this?” asked another child holding up the paper he’d been given by one of the visitors.

I dutifully shushed the children and reminded them quietly that it was very kind of these people to come visit us and bring people dressed as characters from their television programs like *Arthur* and *Seven Little Monsters*. I told the children that we would politely participate in these activities they made for us and then we would thank them for their visit.

The children were referring to an activity page they had been given. They were right. We had done this before. It was a page with blank lines surrounded by patriotic symbols. They were instructed to write down something they wanted to say to their deployed soldier. While not this exact paper, each well-meaning social service agency that came to visit or that we went to visit pulled out a paper like this and invited the children to write down something to say to their soldier.

“Don’t they think I write to my daddy all the time?” asked a frustrated girl. “Why I gotta do it here again?”

With the war raging in Iraq, military children are on the radar again and people want to do what they can to help them with the unique needs they face. Whether it’s with the donation of military-themed coloring books or a DVD with Elmo talking children through deployments or even a more standardized curriculum to facilitate the mobile military population, people want to help. I did too.

While all of these measures recognize and validate the needs of military children, I wanted to go further. I sought to give these children a “place”. It’s something they never have. No matter where they go, they are the outsiders. For some, they are even outsiders in their hometown (Hometown for these children is often merely a Home of Record [HOR] that exists for them only on paper or the hometown of either parent). I wanted them to have a place for their voice to be
heard and their narratives to have a home in the curriculum. I thought holistic education may have built into it ways to do just that and wanted to explore the possibility.

The purpose of this study was to examine how the use of holistic education methods in my classroom might serve military children in finding meaning in their lives and their learning as well as leading me to a fuller, contextual understanding of my students and their situation. My study took place in-classroom and in-context. I drew meaning from the events and experiences that occurred during my research based on my own interpretations, colored by my frame of reference as a military child, a soldier, a military wife and mother and a teacher of military children.

Although some quantitative data were produced during this study, it was nonetheless a fully qualitative study in methodology. The holistic nature of qualitative research was a perfect match for a study exploring the outcomes of holistic education practices in the classroom. Borg and Gall (1989) state, in reference to the holistic nature of qualitative research: “The researcher must attempt to perceive the big picture rather than focusing on a few elements within a complex situation as is usually done in quantitative educational research (p. 389). Patton (1990) concurs “The whole phenomenon under study is understood as a complex system that is more than the sum of its parts, focus is on complex interdependencies not meaninglessly reduced to a few discrete variables and cause-effect relationships” (p. 40-41).

I’d been in this place before only I had been there as a thief. I had been stealing story.

We took turns reading the microfilm because it made one a little cross-eyed if done too long. It was my turn. I was reading newspaper and magazine articles about them while the other intelligence analysts, linguists and imagery interpreters were translating and transcribing their radio and television broadcasts or making summaries of photographs and texts of conversations -- “data” (We called it
intelligence) obtained through covert means. Our small research and analysis team was compiling data on the East Germans. They were the current “them.” Just before my arrival, “they” had been the Iranians. Before that, they had been the North Vietnamese. They could have been someone else soon; depending on the world situation. Our team’s mission as part of a psychological operations unit was to write about what was going on “over there.” We weren’t looking at specific variables but trying to get a sense of the mood, the trends, the attitudes and what all of that meant to us. Were our troops safe where they were? Could civilian attitudes be used to sway military operations? Were their soldiers tired of fighting? Where might we find advantage through all this? What might be exploited?

Our team gave a sense of the enemy to our army; we took the pulse of the people and tried to draw meaning from all the data to assist commanders in making decisions for their troops in the field. We published our findings in what we referred to only as The Document. As soon as The Document was published, we began again in our cycles of deliberation to prepare for its next publication.

Although there were no cloak and daggers involved in my study, this was the direction in which I was headed. I wanted to put all the pieces together to get a sense of “What’s going on?” in my classroom in the absence of traditional objectivist practices and what that meant to me as educator. What were the students’ reactions? What was the general climate of the experience? How did they feel about what we were doing and how did all of this relate to what I was doing or could be doing?

The very nature of this kind of search for meaning excludes quantitative methodologies as attitudes, feelings and general “vibes” are too slippery to be quantified. The exploratory nature of this study also called for the use of qualitative research methods. The study was designed as a “what will happen?” study, driven by these sub-questions related to the research question:

1. How can holistic education practices be used to help meet the unique needs of military children?
2. Can holistic education practices co-exist with the Department of Defense educational standards?

3. What changes do I note in the classroom atmosphere while using holistic education practices including my own attitudes and perceptions?

Quantitative methodologies would not have given the rich bricolage that I was seeking and would not allow for my full inclusion as participant-observer. Since I was ultimately examining my own practice in this study, isolating myself from the research would have produced a false reality and voided all findings. Ratner (2002) recognizes the importance of researcher as participant, “In qualitative methodology, the researcher is encouraged to reflect on the values and objectives he brings to his research and how these affect the research project.” (¶ 1) as does Gergen (2001) “To do science is not to hold a mirror to nature but to participate actively in the interpretive conventions and practices of a particular culture” (p.806).

This strong desire to participate actively led me to narrative inquiry as my qualitative design. It’s basic tenet that narrative is the fundamental way that we make sense of experience (Polinghorne, 1988) and Connelly and Clandinin’s advocacy of its use in classroom inquiry -- “Life’s narratives are the context for making meaning in school situations.” (1991, p. 124) -- struck a responsive chord in me. As with qualitative research in general, narrative inquiry is in step with holistic education and the principles that drive it. Five examples came to mind.

First, the focus on the “big picture” rather than minutia is shared by both philosophies as is explained by leaders in the narrative inquiry field, Connelly and Clendenin (1991) “…narrative inquiry [is] driven by a sense of the whole and it is this sense which needs to drive the writing and reading of narrative” (p. 135).
Also driving holistic practices and narrative inquiry is a belief that learning is a non-linear experience. Connelly and Clandinin offer explanation again, “Once this narrative process takes hold, the inquiry space pulsates with movements back and forth through time and along a continuum of personal and social considerations” (2000, p. 65). This is a direct rejection of the dominant practice of checklist-type information transfer in schools today.

Another notion rejected by both holism and narrative inquiry is the deficit theory of education in which a learner is seen as “lacking“ and in need of information and knowledge from an authority figure (such as a teacher or researcher). Clandinin and Rosiek (2007) clarify “for the narrative inquirer, a person’s experience must be listened to on its own terms first, without presumption of deficit or flaw and critique needs to be motivated by the problematic elements in that experience” (emphasis added, 50).

The fourth commonality linking narrative inquiry and holistic education is the absence of the authority figure all together. With a holistic viewpoint in the classroom, the students and teacher are seen as partners in the learning process. Similarly, “A sense of equality between participants is particularly important in narrative inquiry” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1991, p. 126). This is in attempt to prevent the “Othering” of subjects in the research.

It has been argued that the relationship between the researcher and his subjects, by definition, resembles that of the oppressor and the oppressed because it is the oppressor who defines the problem, the nature of the research and, to some extent, the quality of interaction between him and his subjects (Ladner, in Fine, 1998, p. 136).

A sense of equality serves to close the gap between the self and other as “Distance or separation does not characterize connected knowing” (Connelly and Clandinin, 1991, p. 127).
Because of this focus on equality, the holistic teacher is a full participant in the construction of knowledge in the classroom. She doesn’t just have her thumb in the soup but is one of the noodles floating in the broth adding the flavor of the learning experience. Harasim, Hiltz, Teles, & Toroff (1995) explain, “The teacher-learner hierarchy is broken down. Teachers become learners and learners become teachers” (p. 14-15). This fifth example of similarities between holistic teaching and narrative inquiry is reflected in the role of the researcher as well.

As an equal, the researcher is expected to “accept and acknowledge their own role in constructing the social realities they describe in their research reports; for this reason, they often include their own experiences in what they write (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 1999, p.14). Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 67) even see this as a way to frame research, “one of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher’s own narrative experience, the researchers autobiography.”

It was my intention from the beginning of this study to be a full participant and write about my own experiences as a full-fledged “noodle” in the soup.

This idea of autobiography as inquiry was extremely appealing to me, first, because it would be invaluable in examining my own practice but also because I wanted to share. I was sure there were others with questions similar to mine. Books and Brooks (1999) cite research demonstrating that classrooms focusing on test preparation do not foster deep learning, “This evidence has led many school districts to question the philosophical underpinnings of the long dominant pretest-teach-posttest model of education” (p. viii).

We stood looking at each other wondering who was going to be the one. We were all curious about what was inside but just too uptight to step over the threshold. What did they have in a sex museum, anyway? It wasn’t part of our tour of Amsterdam but we’d spotted the small storefront “museum” with the blacked-out windows while out shopping.
“I’ll go”. One of the girls stepped up to buy a ticket.

It seemed like she was in there for hours as we waited on the sidewalk in front of the museum wondering what on earth she was seeing in there. When she returned, we listened, eyes wide in awe, as she described her experience in the sex museum.

The rest of us shrugged, bought tickets and went inside.

Johnstone (1999) describes autobiography as inquiry as “an account of the lived experience of the self that advances sharable understanding of the common human experience” (p. 24). That’s what I wanted to do. I wanted to gain understanding but I wanted to share understanding too. I wanted to buy that ticket and go into academic “girlfriend mode” and say “Here’s what happened, you guys” to those wondering about letting go of traditional methodologies. I wanted to be the Oliver Twist holding up my bowl for more while others who wanted more too (more meaning, more insight, more understanding for themselves and their students) watched to see what would happen. I wanted to generate theory for myself and those knowing that there was more out there than what they were being shown. In order to do that, I needed others to see themselves in my autobiography. McMillan and Schumacher (2001) explain “A good narrative is one that may be read and lived vicariously by others. Plausible narratives provide meanings that make sense and shape readers’ thinking and practice” (p. 417).

In reference to autobiography, Connelly and Clandinin (2000) suggest “…reaching across autobiographical storied boundaries is possible, perhaps even necessary for the creation of narrative insight” (p.64). Also, Pinar and Grumet, two of the earliest theorists to use autobiography as inquiry (Contemporary Curriculum Discourses, 1999 and Bitter Milk, 1988, respectively) advocate the use of both oral and written autobiographies in the study of education (Barone & Eisner, 1987).
What strayed slightly from the traditional meaning of the word “autobiography” in my study was that it was a work of fiction. Because of my need to protect the identities of my students and even some of their stories for reasons of national security, I followed the suggestion of Clandinin and Connelly (1994) of fictionalizing my study. This isn’t to say what I wrote was untrue but rather a work of “true fiction” (Clifford & Marcus, 1986) in which a truth is represented in a fictional story. The truth comes from the plausibility of the story or as Connelly and Clandinin (1991) put it “…while fantasy may be an invitational element in fictional narrative, plausibility exerts firmer tugs in empirical narratives” (p.136). Narrative inquiry itself is not an exact science reliant on strict fact. Riley and Hawe (2005) summarize Ezzy, “Narrative inquiry takes as a given that people may exclude details of events or exaggerate aspects of a story. What is of analytical interest is why these exclusions or exaggerations exist” (p.230). Grumet (1999) concurs, “The selection of some events and exclusion of others, the repudiation of some feelings and the acknowledgement of others, remind us that these accounts never exactly coincide with experience” (p. 25).

What I did was to develop fictional composites in a story to represent actual, lived experiences. He (2003) calls this “composite auto/biographical method” (p. 24).

My role as researcher as in all of this was to use that fictional story to generate theory and to interpret the stories in order to analyze the underlying narrative that the storytellers may not be able to give voice to myself. A story comes to mind: my statistics professor described an experience in doing quantities research with children. The children were given a questionnaire on which they were to circle a happy face if they agreed with a written statement and circle a sad face if they didn’t. One of the children responded to an item by penciling in a face between the two other faces with a nondescript straight line for a mouth. This girl had something else to say,
she had a story about the statement but the nature of the research design didn’t allow for it. By not following the design, her data were not included and her voice was lost. It’s hard to give a “wrong” answer in autobiographical inquiry and all voices have a place.

Still, I worried about some issues that might have affected outcomes in my study. I wondered if having grown up a military child might have led to some unintentional bias on my part. Would I favor narrative that showed the children in a positive light and neglect equally valuable stories that didn’t? I’d be doing pretty much the same as throwing out “straight face data.”

Another concern presented itself in the third week of the study; I was diagnosed with cancer and had to begin immediate and aggressive treatment which included surgery, chemotherapy and radiation therapy. With much support from the administration at my school, I was able to be at school pretty much every day for the nine months I was in treatment and continue with my research. My classes were given specials at the end of the day so I could leave early for treatment and colleagues donated leave so I could continue to support my family. The problem came in the analysis of the experiences I had been documenting. While I kept a journal the whole time, that was pretty much all I could do. When I got home from work every day, I was down for the night. My son woke me up to eat some dinner and then I was out again. This exhaustion kept me from addressing the stories in the journal until nearly the end of the school year when I came out of treatment. My concern is whether addressing “stale” experiences rather than “fresh” experiences would color my reflection of those experiences and produce a different result than I would have gotten looking at emerging stories on a daily basis like I had planned. Also, I worried that I might not be seeing authentic behavior from children who were being extra nice to their ailing teacher.
Design Specifics

The unit of analysis for this study was the experiences of a community of learners in a holistic classroom. This included the students, myself, staff members, and any others with a stake in this community. The community was actually formed before I started collecting data for this study but since examining my own teaching experiences in a class of military children using holistic education practices was the primary goal of this study; this provided the perfect “laboratory” for the inquiry. I didn’t consider this a hindrance to my study since, as action researcher McKernan (1991) states in summarizing arguments from other educational researchers, “…curriculum inquiry and theory should deal with practices, with classrooms and with other curricular and should be done by practitioners” (P. 309). Although I hadn’t intended to do action research (since our ultimate goals differed – storying versus improvement of practice), this being immersed in study and reflection in my own classroom, where I had no control over which students were assigned to my class, mirrored the methods of the action researcher.

The way students are assigned to a particular class in our school involves an activity that resembles a game of “Go Fish.” At the end of each school year, the teachers of a particular grade are given cards to fill out on every child in his/her class. These cards ask for information on the child’s gender and race and an estimation of their academic ability. The teacher is also asked to indicate whether a child is a “behavior problem,” ADHD, on medication, or has been retained. The teachers come together one afternoon, cards in hand and the fun begins!

“Does anyone have a black, high, girl?”

“I need a low Hispanic boy.”

“Do you have any Native Americans? I don’t have any.”
The teachers attempt to spread out the students by gender, race and academic ability in equal numbers for the classes in the next academic year. After this has been done, class lists are made, documenting the number of students in each of the categories (Parents are not allowed to request a certain teacher for their child and no one knows which teacher will get which class list until arrival at the beginning of the school year and when new children arrive in the school, they are assigned to the class with the fewest students.) With this process in place, I felt that the students assigned to my class were a good representative sample of our student population. Of course, exceptions are made but this is the basic placement process for our students.

There were nineteen children assigned to my class during the study. Nine were female and ten were male. The racial make-up of the class was four Black students, twelve White students, three Hispanic students and no students that were Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander or of declared mixed race. Seven students where children of army officers and twelve were children of enlisted soldiers. One hundred per cent of the students had a soldier in Iraq or Afghanistan during most or all of the school year. Twelve of the students were with me the whole year and the other seven either arrived late in the year or left early, all due to military transfer.

Data were collected by letting the experience “happen” or as Clandinin and Connelly (1998) call it “experiencing the experience” (p. 152). They note, “In the process of trying to understand and make meaning of the experiential situation, it is the internal and existential whole that is ultimately of interest” (p.156).

Even though I was trying to gain an holistic vision of experience, I didn’t neglect documenting the details in the study. Field notes were taken throughout the process as well as a personal journal entries, document examination and even some quantitative test scores were
included as well. This is what Lincoln and Guba (1983) and Stake (1995) refer to as triangulation of data. This representation of data through multiple sources aids in increasing the validity and credibility of the inquiry. I took the advice of Denzin as described by in Adler (1998) in recording as much detail as possible in my field notes “…all observational notational records should contain explicit reference to participants, interactions, routines, rituals, temporal elements, interpretations and social organizations” (p. 86). I took field notes on the classroom “pulse” daily and wrote in my journal as well. Reflections on documentation and test scores were noted as they occurred. I kept notes on events, conversations, interactions and anything else that caught my attention.

All field notes and journal entries were kept on my computer at work (I got permission to keep all dissertation data on this computer since it was in the interest of improving instruction for military children and thereby deemed “work related.”) Backup copies of all notational data were kept on a flash drive and transferred to my home computer. Original notes were also kept and maintained in my personal files at home. This raw data remained in these locations until after my cancer treatment was completed.

While I would have preferred to engage in continuous analysis while I collected data and this is the recommend method (“Good qualitative research requires simultaneous data collection and analysis” Gay, 2000, p.214), my health during data collection did not allow for this and I had to approach stale raw data during recovery. I dubbed this gap a “marination period.” The way I approached my analysis was to read through all my field notes and journal entries and let them “speak” to me. This doesn’t sound very scientific but as McMillan and Schumacher (2001) point out, “Analyzing data is an eclectic activity--there is no one ‘right’ way and data can be analyzed in more than one way…each analyst must find his or her style of intellectual craftsmanship” (p.
463). What I mean here is that, if the lived experience had been a textbook, I selected those experiences for which I would have removed the cap of my highlighting pen. Still, the analysis of the data was not fully haphazard; Huberman and Miles (1998) explain “Qualitative studies ultimately aim to describe and explain (at some level) a pattern of relationships, which can only be done with a set of conceptually analytic categories” (p.185). So, I engaged in reduction and interpretation of the data; I reviewed the data using informed hunches to select those aspects of the research that were meaningful to me and really answered the question of “what happened?” I inscribed summaries of those selections onto index cards and began searching for emerging themes and patterns. These cards were then sorted into piles with memos on each card indicating which of the themes the idea was addressing. These piles were bound with rubber bands until I was ready to address that particular theme in my narrative. Low tech but effective.

Verification of Interpretation

Although narrative research doesn’t really address itself to validity since so many variables can distort findings, I did try to remain aware of issues of validity while engaging in research. I used multiple sources of data from which to draw my interpretations. I used field notes, a journal, documents (such as the journal writings and drawings of my students) and quantitative test scores. I also informally asked colleagues to review my writings and drawings to ensure that they were representative of the experience (as far as they could tell as an outside party). I didn’t feel the need to address external validity in this study since the belief of both narrative inquiry and holistic education is that experience occurs in context only (Dirkx, J.M., Mezirow, J. & Cranton, P., 2006; Clandinin & Connelly, 2004).
Rather than looking at internal validity, qualitative research looks at credibility, plausibility or how closely the data represents the reality in which it was collected.

Still, Elliott (1990) notes

I would certainly want to argue that experiential case studies, employing a symbolic and holistic mode of description, can be externally valid. And I claim that here validity rests on their usefulness as project models for others in exploring their own unique situations. (p. 59)

This could also be said for narrative inquiry.

The Final Product

In completion, my studies resembled a story. It contained freestanding segments of research, description and analysis containing factual information as well as fictional interpretations of the data. All of these segments were drawn together by a central fictional story involving a teacher addressing the research question. This story was presented in comic book format in recognition of the place of popular culture in the classroom. In keeping with the holistic nature of the research, these comic sections, as well as the literature reviews and other sections, were not only used for setting the story and describing research but were an actual part of the story itself. An attempt to keep sight of the big picture was attempted throughout the dissertation.
Chapter 3

A Seed is Planted...
The Debate Continues

Qualitative versus Quantitative Research: Which is More Appropriate for Educational Research?
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Numericle
Teacher/Researcher
Fall 2008
The Debate Continues: Quantitative or Qualitative?

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Methodology Issue

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No numbers or words? Photographs as discourse? P. 140
Held against his will since Thursday by militant school teachers, this researcher calculates his options.

Hostage to Science

Our third grade teachers took a university professor/researcher hostage on Thursday afternoon after and apparent disagreement on the methodology to be used on an upcoming research study.

The teachers, all from Maxine Greene Elementary School, are also members of what they call the Holistic Educators Action Research Team (and Bowling Educators All-Star Team) or HEART(BEAT). “They all met on the school bowling team and found out they had a mutual interest in action research” explains a co-worker at Greene Elementary.

It is reported that the teachers, Patsy Baily, Jean Allison, Bertha Reade and Elizabeth Bennett, were angered during a planning meeting for a research study on holistic education (a philosophy to which all four subscribe) when it was discovered that it would be a quantitative study related to standardized test scores.

“We didn’t come here with the intention of causing any trouble much less taking anyone hostage” explained Bennett in a telephone interview. “We just weren’t being heard and got sick of it”.

The women took hostage Dr. Poindexter McNumerator, the researcher hired by their school district to conduct the study. McNumerator had been charged with designing the research study which was being conducted to compare the effectiveness of holistic teaching practices to those of traditional (direct instruction) practices.

“The women were excited about the study and eager to participate” reported an unnamed source inside the district office. “They were chomping at the bit when they got here”. The enthusiasm soon waned when the methodology of the study was revealed.

“We just couldn’t believe the way they were going to conduct the research” stated Bennett. “Holistic education has nothing to do with numbers on a test. It would be like testing the efficiency of a piece of
The HEART(BEAT)s: Patricia Baily, Jean Allison, Bertha Reade and Elizabeth Bennett in yearbook photos from the elementary school where they are all teachers.

music by how many people can master the piece”. Famed holistic educator, Ron Miller, agrees with the woman

A holistic way of thinking seeks to encompass and integrate multiple layers of meaning and experience rather than defining human possibilities narrowly. Every child is more than a future employee; every person’s intelligence and abilities are far more complex than his or her scores on a standardized test (2000b, p. 3).

So, why go with standardized test scores in the study? Professor McNumerator explained his choice in a telephone interview, “This is the language people speak. These test scores mean more than just how a child did on a math problem; school districts use them as ‘evidence’ that learning has taken place in an effective manner, politicians use them to demonstrate that their school district has the best schools, realtors use them as selling points for properties in the district to attract high end buyers and businesses to the area. There is a lot riding on these scores so, naturally, the school districts don’t want a radical teaching method in the schools unless it’s going to help test scores.

While a popular choice in the 1970’s, holistic education suffered a blow after the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 report A Nation at Risk showed declining standardized test scores. A nationwide back-to-basics movement snuffed out the promise holistic education offered students.

Still, many today recognize the shortcomings of a traditional education and are

…deliberately saying ‘No!’ to the dominant worldview of the modern age, which values standardization, materialism, efficiency, profit and power; instead they affirm an alternative or ‘postmodern’ worldview that recognizes diverse human needs and the moral, cultural and ecological contexts within which these needs arise (Miller, 2000b, p.2)

“Our ultimate goal for our students is self-actualization” sated Bennett. “How can that be shown on a test?”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Holistic Teaching Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Student-led learning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Free Inquiry</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cooperative Learning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Problem-based Learning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Interest-driven Learning</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Play</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Imagery</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Role-playing</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Social Responsibility</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Experiential Learning</strong></td>
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</table>
The research design submitted by Professor McNumerator that set off the hostage situation.

A Comparison of Holistic Teaching Practices and Traditional Teaching Practices on Elementary School Outcomes (Grades 3-6)

Poindexter McNumerator
Mathematical Institute of Numerology

Recent studies in learner-centered education (Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences, and brain-friendly learning) has led many educators to embrace some highly non-traditional methodologies in their teaching practice. One of the most radical of these is known as holistic education. The focus for the holistic teacher is to have his/her students “transformed” personally, socially, globally and even spiritually (Clark, 1990). While this is a noble goal, most traditional educators cling to an objectives-based curriculum (Chung 2004) as a proven way to produce an “educated” child and don’t really envision themselves as the “living link on the epistemology chain (Palmer, 1983, p. 29) as holistic educators do.

Most research into the effectiveness of holistic teaching has been qualitative in nature and using their own definition of “effective” (Forbes & Martin, 2004), but just how does it hold up outside its own cosmic realm in a world driven by test scores. Some studies have shown holistic education relating to an increased interest in school (Bragow, Gragow & Smith, 1995 and McComas, 1993) as well as a more positive attitude toward school (McIver, 1990 and Jacobs, 1989). In addition, research compiled by Vermette (2004) showed students in holistic programs had higher reading growth than those in traditional programs. Still, little empirical evidence of the academic success of holistic education programs exists. So, the purpose of this study will be to compare the effects of holistic teaching practices and the effects of traditional practices on the academic outcomes of third through sixth grade students. It is hypothesized that the students in the holistic classrooms will show lower levels of achievement than those taught in traditional classrooms due to the lack of direct focus on academic activity in the holistic classrooms.

METHODS

Participants
Teachers and students in Georgia and South Carolina Department of defense Schools from grades 3-6.

Preliminary Preparation of Participants
Teachers will be given a brief description of holistic education to read (Ron Miller’s What is Holistic Education by Ron Miller, 2002) and then asked to identify themselves as either “holistic” or “traditional”. Those choosing neither distinction will not be included in the study.

Instrument
The Terra Nova Standardized Assessment Instrument- a standardized assessment used by all Department of Defense Schools worldwide. It yields scores in math, language, science and social studies.

Procedure
Teachers will conduct instruction in a manner consistent with their educational philosophies and the Terra Nova will be administered in March of that school year.

Research Design
A causal-comparative design will be used since the purpose of the study is study is to investigate existing differences in the two groups. It is also less intrusive than an experimental design since no change is required in the normal routine of teachers or students (teachers teach in their usual manner and students are administered the same standardized test in the spring that they are used to taking).
Data Collection and Analysis
Scores from the Terra Nova will be compiled and compared between the two groups of participants. The mean of each group’s scores will be determined by subject area (as well as the standard deviation to determine whether the scores are homogenous or heterogeneous around the mean). A t-test will then be performed to determine if there is a significant difference between the means of the two group’s scores.

Control Procedures
Since all of the participants are from Department of Defense Schools, they will have originated from all 50 states and several foreign countries thereby preventing regional bias. Also, since every child has an equal chance of being placed in any class (based on date of arrival), the groups of students should be reasonably homogenous.

The core of the argument between the holistic teachers and the district goes back to the seemingly endless debate among researchers-quantitative or qualitative? But can all this really be about whether or not numbers are needed in a research study? McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 21) explain how the two forms of research exist deeper, at two levels of discourse, “At one level, quantitative and qualitative refer to distinctions about the nature of knowledge: how one understands the world as the ultimate purpose of the research. On the other level of discourse, the terms refer to research methods—how data are collected and analyzed—and the type of generalizations and representations derived from the data”. “This is not just about numbers” stated Bertha Reade in a telephone interview. “It has to do with completely ignoring our take on the world and the nature of learning. A test score can only give you a picture of a child at the moment s/he took the test”. Gay & Airasian (2000) explain Mrs. Reade’s statement in terms of qualitative research: “Qualitative research does not accept the view of a stable, coherent, uniform world. It argues that meaning is situated in a particular perspective or context since people have different perspectives and contexts, there are many different meanings in the world, none of which is more valid or true than the other (p.9).

Kinchloe & McLaren (1998, p.271) expand on why quantitative research can’t provide all the answer: “The reigning conviction that knowledge is knowledge only if it reflects the world as it “really” exists has been...

Still the best tool a researcher can have

University Pencils
For field notes. For calculations. For everything.
## Major Distinctions between Quantitative and Qualitative Research

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>QUANTITATIVE</th>
<th>QUALITATIVE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach</strong></td>
<td>Deductive</td>
<td>Inductive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
<td>Theory testing, prediction, establishing facts, hypothesis testing</td>
<td>Describing multiple realities, developing deep understanding, capturing everyday life and human perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Focus</strong></td>
<td>Isolates variables, uses large samples, is often anonymous to participants, collects data using tests and formal instruments</td>
<td>Examines full context, interacts with participants, collects data face-to-face from participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research Plan</strong></td>
<td>Developed before study is initiated, structured, proposal is formal</td>
<td>Begins with an initial idea that evolves as researcher learns more about participants and setting, flexible, proposal is tentative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Mainly statistical, quantitative</td>
<td>Mainly interpretive, descriptive</td>
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(Gay & Asarian, 2000, p.10)

annihilated in favor of a view of the world in which reality is socially constructed or semiotically posited.”

“How will we know what is happening below the test scores, below the bulls**t level of the ‘official’ account of the state of education unless we talk to people; we hear their stories?” asked Reade. “We want to hear from all those involved, not just those who hold the power. We want to hear from those who have not had a chance to talk, those who are pushed to the side, marginalized, ‘othered’. That research study has a chance to reach far and wide. We don’t want to waste it on just one more opportunity for those who own the microphones to reproduce the power structure.”

Curriculum theorist, Michelle Fine (1998, p.149) elaborates, “Qualitative teachers have begun to interrupt Othering by forcing subjegated voices in context to the front of our texts.”

“The district office. “Before we went to the meeting, we had been reading something bell hooks said about challenging the status quo “This “we” is that “us” in the margins, that “we” who inhabit marginal space that is not the site of dominance but a place of resistance. Enter that space (hooks, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 130). We had decided long ago to enter that space and came to the meeting ready to occupy that space but it became evident that we weren’t being given that space so, we were forced to take it.”

“Holistic education works the same way” continued Allison. “It doesn’t play into the power reproduction game. So, those in power who try to push it aside the same way they discount its way of communicating – through the narrative of qualitative research. It’s not given a place at the table; it’s regarded as a joke.”

Reade: This is not just about numbers.

“Force is necessary sometimes” explained Allison, who was interviewed through a window at
Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p.5) agree, stating, “Qualitative researchers are called journalists or soft scientists. Their work is termed unscientific, or only exploratory, or entirely personal and full of bias.”

“That’s the problem I have with it” stated McNumber. “There isn’t even a ‘way’ to do it. It’s just kind of do-your-own-thing approach; no control.”

Denzin and Lincoln (1998, p.5) admit some truth to this statement about qualitative research, “It has no theory or paradigm that is distinctly its own…nor does qualitative research have a set of methods that are entirely its own.”

“That doesn’t mean it’s without structure” explained Reade. “There are procedures for the different modes of inquiry that fall within the realm of qualitative research. It’s driven by the research question just as in quantitative research. The boundaries of the approaches are just much more porous so we think of them as more general approaches.”

McNumber spoke in his own defense in a telephone interview, “It’s not like I’m a mad scientist experimenting on children or anything. It’s not even an experiment; it a causal-comparative design. I won’t even see any children. I haven’t had to see a child in all my years as a researcher. Frankly, they creep me out.”

A causal-comparative design involves comparing the differences between two groups. An experimental design would involve making a change (manipulating an independent variable) to track the effect the change had on the group. The other two major approaches used in quantitative research are descriptive research (collecting data to answer a question about the
Reader Quiz:

**Can You Tell the Difference?**

Rate each of these studies “Quantitative” or “Qualitative”

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<th>Study A</th>
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<tr>
<td>(Wilson-Jones and Caston, 2004)</td>
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<td>The researchers of this study sought to document the academic success gained by African American males in rural Mississippi. They cited research showing the advantages of employing cooperative learning activities in the education of African American males demonstrating a match between the people-oriented style of this group of learners to the social nature of cooperative learning. No hypothesis was made as to the expected outcome of the study.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 African American males were interviewed during a three month period and asked to describe their feelings toward school, teachers, parents and themselves. There were six 30-minute interviews over a three month period. The students in the study participated by invitation. The results showed that cooperative learning was the preferred method of classroom learning. There was no test instrument related to academic achievement. The researchers recommended further research to include a) African American males in other parts of the country, b) longitudinal study to observe and changes in learning style, c) increased number of participants and d) employing cooperative learning as a teaching strategy. This study offered no evidence of academic achievement in relation to cooperative learning in this group, only learning preferences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Chung, 2004)</td>
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<td>The researcher in this study was interested in comparing the effectiveness of two teaching approaches -- traditional and constructivist—in the teaching of multiplication to third grade students. 71 third grade students in Saint Louis public schools were grouped into two sections (each consisting of two classes) Two classes were taught using a constructivist approach and two with traditional methodology in the area of math instruction. Three pre/posttests were administered to the students: a) The Stanford Diagnostics Mathematics Test, b) A Diagnostic Inquiry of Essential Mathematics and c) an open-ended survey designed by the researcher with 10 questions in which the students were asked to explain mathematical ideas related to multiplication. Although no direct hypothesis was made in this study, the researcher gave heavy praise and attention to constructivist principles of learning. Results showed that both groups improved multiplication skills and concepts with no significant difference between the two groups. The researcher still viewed the study to be of use to educators since other research had shown a negative attitude toward constructivist practices by teachers. He made recommendations to teachers in the proper use of manipulatives. The need for further research was indicated in the areas of increased sample size; inclusion of factors such as gender, learning styles and retention rates; the influence of training teachers in constructivist practices and the inclusion of an interview asking students about their perceptions of mathematical ideas.</td>
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**Study C**

(Sinor, 2003)

This semi-autographical examination of the lives of military children attempted to justify their right to speak from their own experience. The healing aspect of sharing experience through writing was also explored. The researcher pointed out that almost all writing about military children has been second-hand or removed, coming from the parents, health care workers or grown military children. Through the examination of a newly discovered childhood diary of her own, she demonstrated how her memories of life as a military child differed greatly from what she actually wrote as a child. She recommended the concentration on narratives from the children themselves in research. She included writing, drawings, recordings and interviews as her definition of narrative. She was especially adamant that military children write about “ordinary trauma”. She defined this as traumatic events that are part of everyday experience for military children (war, separation, geographic mobility) that don’t seem to be stressors to them. She used examples from her own diary to illustrate how these ordinary traumas do effect military children. She stated expectations that the firsthand accounts from other military children would do the same.

**Study D**

(Mitchell, Reilly, Bramwell, Solonsky & Lily, 2004)

This study examined the degree to which attitudes about self-directed groupings in group work shifted after participation in teacher-selected or student-selected groups. Students of varying abilities were assigned to teachers-selected or student-selected groups for six weeks during a high school science class. The students were administered the Classroom Life Scale (CLS), a questionnaire on which students register their attitudes toward group work on a 5-point scale. A focus group was also used at the end of the study to understand in greater depth the responses given on the survey. After working together for half the time, the students were required to change groups either by student-selected change or teacher-selected change. The researchers hypothesized that the students who were able to choose their own groups would have a negative shift in attitude toward group work and that they would feel obligated to choose their own friends when choosing groups. The students were administered the CLS after the switch. The second CLS revealed a negative shift toward student-selected groups though a positive attitude toward group work remained. Interviews with the focus group revealed a discovery among students that a good friends and good group members were not necessarily the same thing. The students reported difficulty in being able to reject friends and in not being able to determine who would make a good team member. The researchers recommended a balance between teacher and student selection in groups as that would be the best replication of what would occur in the workplace.

**Study E**

(Reilly, Rinkel & Lily, 2003) 86 mother-child dyads were studied to determine the effects of frequent relocation and maternal variables on the psychosocial adjustment of the children. Mothers and children were administered standardized questionnaires assessing their current state of adjustment. The mothers filled out a second questionnaire assessing the psychosocial adjustment of their children. The researchers hypothesized that the children who reported more positive attitudes toward their mothers and maternal reports of marital/family stability would be related to better psychosocial adjustment in children. A correlational analysis showed positive relationships between a) lower self-esteem and difficulty making friends in children, b) mother and child reports of difficulties in psychosocial adjustment in the child, c) longer time in current residence with better psychosocial adjustment and d) mother and child level of stress and depression. Researchers suggested that parental time and attention be given strong focus in since mobility rate was out of the control of the families and that since maternal adjustment was an even stronger indicator of child adjustment than any factors related to geographic mobility, the strengthening of this relationship should be of primary concern. They suggested further research to include more non-traditional military families such as dual military couples, single soldier families and those headed by female military members.
way something already is, e.g., taking a survey) and correlational research (finding a relationship between two variables, e.g., freckles and intelligence),

McNumberator continued “I even offered to meet them halfway with a mixed-method research study. That’s not against any laws, you know.” McMillan and Schumacher (2001, p. 16) concur, “many of these distinctions between quantitative and qualitative research are not absolute when one conducts research. Experienced researchers can and do combine both quantitative and qualitative research methods in a single study in order to investigate a single research problem.”

When asked about the possibility of a mixed-method study, Patsy Baily, HEART(BEAT)’s newest member, came out onto the steps of the district building to conduct her telephone interview. She was met by the hundreds of supporters who had gathered in the group’s support. She waved happily to the crowd and called out to fellow researchers in the crowd.

“It was very diplomatic for him to throw us a bone and let us participate in the study but we knew if we did take part, it would look like a seal of approval for what they had lined up in the first place” said Baily. “Standardized test scores don’t say anything about learning, they only test how well one takes a test. Our kids deserve more. We couldn’t let them speak for us, we are holistic educators. How could they possibly relate to our experience? How could they do it with something as irrelevant to holistic education as standardized test scores? It’s like a whole different language.”

When asked about the condition of their hostage, Baily responded, “Oh, he’s fine. We didn’t tackle him and tie him up or anything. We just locked him in with us and threw the key down Bertha’s shirt. He’s being a pretty good sport about it all. He knew we were seeking publicity for our cause and either way, the study is going to get a great deal of attention. That works to benefit both of us. Dex is a pretty good guy; he just doesn’t see things the way we do. There’s room for both forms of inquiry—just not in this situation. We’re going to take him bowling after all this is over and make him an honorary HEART(BEAT).”

References


In Our Next Issue...

What are we “feeding” our brains?
What “diet” is best for learning?
Are current practices serving as “junk food”?
Chapter 4

A Brat Comes Back
DOD teacher, Edith found herself in the midst of an inner crisis. She was not meeting the needs of her students as she felt too much stress and needed to seek the wisdom of the great educator. On the next long weekend, Edith began her search for answers.
A traditional offering is given to the Great Educator.

It's so good to see you. But I can tell something isulling you, Honey-Pie.

In failing them, are you a bad educator? My students have special needs that I can't seem to meet.

I see problems and I don't know how to deal with them. Can you help me?

Well, tell me what you need to be.

I teach the children of members of the military services. I used to be one of these children so I guess I should start with my own experience.

Little Tom is signing in to her new school. It is her third new school this year.

She'll do this 14 more times before she finishes elementary school.
Other phrases also became familiar...

You've got quite a bit of catching up to do, young lady.

We won't be on what you were studying for weeks. You can work on these dittoes until then.
And we lived in civilian communities.

CLASS, THIS IS EDITH. SHE WILL BE WITH US WHILE HER FATHER IS IN VIETNAM.

WHY IS HER SKIN SO PALE? IS SHE SICK?

SHES COMING TO US FROM THE ARCTIC.

Of course they did their best but...

WHERE WE WERE A BIT OF AN ODDITY.

DOES YOUR DAD KILL PEOPLE?

WHAT'S VIET NAM?

YOU LIVED IN A TURTLE?

WHATS WITH THESE CLOTHES? ARE YOU WAITING FOR A SNOWSTORM?

There are kids with different skin colors.

I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

I'M FROM KOREA...

I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

I'M FROM KOREA...

I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

I'M FROM KOREA...

I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

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I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

I'M FROM KOREA...

I'M NOT RACIST.

I'M FROM KENTUCKY.

I'M FROM KOREA...

AND WE WERE ALWAYS RUNNING, INE PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED WHERE WE LIVED.

WHY DO YOU THINK I KNOW YOU IN CLOVER CHAPEL, EIGHT YEARS AGO?

OF COURSE, 1 WANTED TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

WE REMEMBER YOU FROM KENTUCKY.

WE REMEMBER YOU FROM KENTUCKY.

WE REMEMBER YOU FROM KENTUCKY.

WE REMEMBER YOU FROM KENTUCKY.
and had similar experiences!

This is us at the Berlin Wall

I found out at teachers college that we were seen as a bit of a nuisance.

I guess it did seem a little "irregular" at times...

Now, in this placement, you'll find that we have some military children.

They come and go so quickly - you should really just concentrate on the "regular" student.

What's the name of this place we are going again?

Georgia.

What language do they speak there?

English ... sort of.

Is it in England?

No, it's in America.
ARE YOUR EXPERIENCES TYPICAL? WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT MILITARY CHILDREN?

WELL, YOUNG LADY, IF YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT HELPING YOUR STUDENTS, I THINK THE NEXT STEP ON YOUR PATH IS CLEAR.

YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT WHERE DO I START?

THEN YOU READ. YOU ASK QUESTIONS. YOU LISTEN. YOU WATCH AND YOU WRITE.

COME BACK AND SHOW ME WHAT YOU FOUND OUT.

HERE'S YOUR HAT BUT YOU GO SOOT!

So Erin embarks on the next leg of her journey.

...and did research.
...and listened

---

DON'T WORRY IF YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM THE NEW CROSS. IT MEANS YOUR DAD IS OKAY.

---

...and finished it just right on the computer.

---

...and returned to the Great Educator to share her findings.

---

...and listened

---

...Last name coming through initial. Dear Husband, please...

---

Edith, get yourself up off that floor! Why do you always have to be so dramatic?
Chapter 5
Moving Targets:
A Literature Review on the Education Of the Military Child
Figure 5.1 Military Brats Cartoon 12-6

I felt like I was doing parlor tricks.
“Come on, say it again.”
I repeated the phrase.
“Are you using natural intonation?”
“Of course I am.”
The discussion began again among my classmates and then more questions.
“The Midwest?”
“No.”
Are your parents American, then?”
“One is. One isn’t”
“Canada?”
“No.”
My university class in phonetics was engaged in an activity in which we were trying to identify regional accents based on certain words and phrases. They were having a tough time with mine. I felt like they thought I was trying to trick them.
“Well, you’re not from around here.” (How many times had I heard that said before?)
“No, I’m not.”
“Okay, then, where are you from?”
There was that question; the one that we all hated; the one that gave us that weird feeling in our stomachs because we didn’t know how to answer it. Do you mean originally? Or do you mean where did I live before I came here? Or do you mean where have I lived? I was born in Boston but had come to this place from Germany and before that...well... This was my third college in three years.
“My parents were in the military...”
“You’re a brat?”
The question came from a girl in the back.
“Yes.”
“No way! Me too”.
I smiled. Someone understood.

It was only one word but it explained it all - the frequent relocation, the new schools, the loss of friends and social status, the life within the fortress, the sense of isolation outside the gates, the looming sense of imminent danger. Brat. I didn’t know the girl who had “outed” me as a brat but felt an instant bond with her (We actually became good friends after that); she was like me, a global nomad, one of the tribe of children who populate military installations around the world. Former army brat, Michelle Greene, explains this instant bond, “It’s like being in a foreign country and stumbling on a fellow countryman and there's just a connection you make that crosses culture and age and race” (Musil, 2005).

These children, although located in numerous geographic locations worldwide, all have this bond (commonly known as “brat culture”) that binds them as a single “community” of students and I am now their teacher.

Even though I grew up in the same culture as my students-- a (literal) card-carrying member of the tribe-- I sometimes feel that I’m not reaching them in all the ways that I could. I refer to academics, of course, but there’s so much more to educating a child than can be offered by academics alone and there’s so much more needed than academics.

Five years ago, the infantry division from the military installation where I teach deployed to Kuwait to await invasion of Iraq. In our training as teachers of military children, we are taught to keep the school experience as normal as possible during a deployment since the home life will undoubtedly be going through some serious turmoil.
The day after the major body of the division left was like trying to teach with an elephant in the middle of the room. Everyone knew it -- the deployment -- was there but no one was saying anything about it. Who cared about irregular verbs or addition with regrouping or anything else in the standards when kissing mom or dad goodbye this morning had heralded the beginning of Gulf War II? Still, didn’t these kids know that I had a schedule to keep? Didn’t they know that I had carefully allotted a certain amount of time for each lesson which had been aligned with the requirements in the Department of Defense Education Activity standards? Didn’t they know I was forcing “normalcy” on them for their own benefit? Why weren’t they paying attention? Was I actually doing them a disservice by not addressing what was foremost on their minds?

Being sensitive to the “brat experience” is critical in understanding how to meet the needs of my students. Despite the fact that I grew up in the same lifestyle, the military child of today is a different child that s/he was thirty years ago the same way that the military of today is not the military of thirty years ago. In serving my students fully, I need to start with an examination of who my students are and what kinds of challenges they are facing in today’s military life.

The frequent relocation of brats due to military transfers coupled with the unique trials of military life can make completing an elementary school education a trying task for these children (My own education as a brat took me to seventeen elementary schools). In particular, I would like to identify those factors that make the transitions for these students the most difficult and the effect the frequent relocations and stressors associated with military life has on their academic achievement and social adjustment. Since I teach in a school run by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA), and the
number of civilian schools that service military children\(^1\) is enormously unwieldy, I will have to keep my focus on the DOD schools and how I can improve my work within this system.

Let’s start there.

**THE SCHOOLS**

I always had trouble with those toggle buttons on my jacket. I was having trouble getting my coat off so I went to the grown-up lady and stuck out my chest and asked her for help. The teacher started to unbutton my jacket for me and then stopped, realizing she had no clue who I was.

“I’m Edith” I said. I’m new.

“Oh” she said and then she finished unbuttoning my jacket for me. She showed me where to hang up my coat and asked me about my last post. Fort Devens? Yes, she knew where that was. What a nice lady my new teacher was. She gave me a seat and I gave her the papers from the office.

She looked at the papers and made a funny face. “Oopsie! You’re supposed to be in Miss Parent’s room. I’m Miss Young.”

“I know. The girl told me”

“What girl?”

“The girl who brought me from the office. She said that she thought you were nicer than Miss Parent so she said I could be in your class and she brought me here.”

She smiled. “Is that so?”

This could have been a really embarrassing entrance to a new class for me but this teacher didn’t blink an eye. She acted as if new kids were coming into her class here at Fort Richardson every day and she just unbuttoned their coats and gave them nice smiles without demanding that they justify their existence. This was exactly the case.

It’s just good business. The military wants to keep its best members. The more replacement troops that have to be trained, the greater the cost to the military. Military

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\(^1\) Not all children go directly from one Department of Defense school to another. Some will attend civilian schools until they can get on-post housing or attend schools in the hometowns of their parents until travel orders arrive for overseas transfers or while the service member is deployed overseas on an unaccompanied tour of duty. This proves especially difficult in the transfer of children due to the many different curriculums involved and the differing educational requirements of the systems. Also the Department of Defense has no authority over these schools so the quality of the programs cannot be guaranteed. Even though the same children from the same military families may attend these military-impacted, civilian-run schools, they do not have access to the same resources and funding as the Department of Defense schools and cannot gain the benefits designed for the military students in their population.
members want to be with their families. It’s good for morale and makes for a more solid military. For this reason, the Department of Defense Schools were developed in 1946 in occupied Germany, Austria and Japan. The first stateside schools established for military children showed up in the segregated southern states after President Harry Truman desegregated the military in 1949.² (DODEA, 2008)

![Image of Department of Defense Schools](image1.jpg)

*Figure 5.2/3 Department of Defense Schools*

Many early DOD schools were made from leftover buildings like these Quonset huts. The school in which the author first worked was a converted horse stable that was left over from the German SS. It still had the rings for tying reins on its outside walls (DODEA, 2008)

The establishment of these schools allowed soldiers to be with their families and their children to attend the same “local” school system no matter where they were stationed in the world. This school system has the reputation of being one of the best America has to offer. The students score well above the national average on standardized tests and the teachers go through a rigorous screening process before being hired. The schools are well-staffed, well-supplied and well-protected (Smrker, et. al., 2001). Still, that doesn’t

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² There had been a school at West Point since 1816 operated privately that was later put under DODEA authority. There is also a school at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba (the only DOD school in a Communist country) that has been in existence since 1931.
change the fact that every school experiences about a one third turnover rate every year due to military transfers (DOE, 2008) and all the school transfer headaches that go with them. If one considers that a good deal of these transfers occur during the school year, it can be seen that this has got to be especially difficult for the children involved. The Department of Defense Schools are operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DDEA) which has two divisions, the Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS) which operates DOD schools in the United States, Cuba and Puerto Rico and Department of Defense Dependent Schools (DODDS) which operates schools outside the Continental United States. There are 199 schools under DDEA in 12 foreign countries, seven U.S. States, Guam, Cuba and Puerto Rico (DOE, 2008). The schools serve children of all the military branches and qualified DOD civilians (mostly overseas) as indicated below:

![Affiliation of DDESS (stateside) Students](image)

**Figure 5.4 Affiliation of DDESS (stateside) Students**
Figure 5.5 Affiliation of DODDS (overseas) Students

Although my school serves almost exclusively children of the US Army, a transfer by me or a restructuring of the installation force could change the branch of service of the students I teach.

According to the DODEA 2008 Fact Sheet, 88,000 students are served by 8700 teachers resulting in a 1/12 teacher student ratio (the national average is 1/16). 65.4% of the DOD teachers hold master’s degrees or higher (DODEA, 2006) compared to a national average of 51% (NEA, 2003). DOD teachers also have many years of teaching experience (see below) and out of field teaching is extremely rare (Smrerkar, et.al. 2001)
The graduation rate of DODEA students is 97%, well above the national rate of 68% (DODEA, 2008). The student population is 52% minority (national rate is 41%) as indicated below:
Figure 5.7 Racial Make-up of DODEA Students

The scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show that Black and Hispanic students have scores putting them first and/or second in the entire nation year after year with DODEA as a whole scoring between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 8\textsuperscript{th} in the nation in 2007 on the 4 subtests (DODEA, 2008). Also, the annual expenditure on students on DOD schools is 22% higher than the national average -- $13,500 per student compared to the national average of $8287 per student. (NCES, 2008).\(^3\)

\(^3\) Admittedly, DODEA runs into some expenses that might not be necessary in civilian schools including housing and living expenses for staff working in overseas schools. Dr. Joseph Tafoya, director of DODEA, elaborates “When the football team at our Naples base has to play the team in Aviano [Italy], I have to fly them to the game…Our charter says we must provide our students with a comprehensive American education” (Rosales, 2007).
Despite these advantages, the schools have a particular challenge due to the transient nature of the student population. The average turnover rate for DOD schools is 37% every year (DODEA, 2008; Smerker & Owens, 2003) meaning that over one third of the students are new to the school during a given school year. About half of these students arrive mid-year due to inability to get into military housing or concurrent travel with the sponsoring service member; a situation which tends to compound the effects of changing schools (Wright, 2000). Transition issues typically associated with the mobile military child include:

- Social and Emotional Needs
- Special Education Needs and Services
- Incompatible Graduation Requirements
- Redundant/Missed Entrance and Exit Testing
- Transfer of Coursework and Grades
- Transfer of Records
- Exclusion from Extra-Curricular Activities

(Department of Defense, 2004)

THE STUDENTS

“Dear, God!! What was that??”
“What?” asked the children.
“That noise” answered the civilian contractor who was talking to my class. “It sounded like an explosion. It rattled all the windows. Don’t tell me you didn’t hear that”.
“That’s just artillery” answered a child. The class members looked at each other as if this woman were crazy.
“Artillery? Well, where is it coming from? Are we safe?”
“It’s from the range. We’re okay here. It happens all the time.” It was somehow amusing to see the children comforting the adult.
“How can you concentrate with that going on?”
“I dunno. I guess we don’t even hear it anymore.”

It was a reversal of roles of sorts. A civilian had entered their world and found herself the one guessing at what was “normal”; she was the one getting the funny looks from the “locals”. She was getting a peek into what it was like to be one of them.

They are called “brats”. This isn’t a statement to their disposition but a holdover from the old British Army whose accompanying children were called British Regiment Attached Travelers (BRATs). They are the children of the United States military forces and they experience a childhood radically different from the average American child. It is a lifestyle of frequent loss (friends, activities, extended family, ethnic identity, school credit, and a sense of security) that brings with it a unique set of needs. In particular, the frequent school transfers associated with membership in the brat culture can be both disorienting and destabilizing. Since most members of the military service members did not grow up in the brat culture (Wertsch 1991) and are unfamiliar with the hardships it poses for children, it rests on the teachers of these children to ease the transitions to a new class and school setting.

So, just who is the military child today?

The Department of Defense Office of Personnel Support, Families and Education (2001) report that there are 1.2 million military children associated with the four military services. 73% of these children are 11 years old or younger and 39% of them are below age 6. 34,732 of these service families are dual military (both parents in the service) and 83,564 of the families are headed by a single parent meaning that during deployments, the children in these families are left without a parent. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2001) reports
that 50% of military children qualify for free or reduced lunch and that 94% of the parents of military children have no more that a high school education (NCES, 2001). An average military family relocates every two to three years (DODOPSFE, 2001) which results in at least one new school change. If housing is unavailable on post at the time of arrival, students may attend an off-post school until housing is available and then change to the on-post school. Also, in the event of deployment, although authorized to remain in military quarters, many families choose to return to hometowns or children may be sent to live with other family resulting in another school change. So, a single transfer may involve more than one school change.

![Military Brats Cartoon](image)

(Courtesy of Todd Clark)

**Figure 5.8 Military Brats Cartoon 9-6**

The on-post schools are run by the Department of Defense rather than the Department of Education and have come to earn a reputation for excellence due to high standardized test scores (especially in minority students), quality of teachers, and practically non-existent drug/gang activity (Smrerker, et. al. 2001). Since
occupying on-post quarters is a requirement for attendance at these schools, the availability of housing dictates whether or not a child will be able to take advantage of attendance at a Department of Defense (DOD) school (in the US schools). In fact, 85% of military children are not enrolled in DOD schools and are attending public or private schools or are being home schooled (a choice made by many military families to ensure continuity in education) (Minority Staff House Appropriations Committee, 2003).

THE EFFECT OF MILITARY LIFE

Moving Targets

The military brats of America are an invisible, unorganized tribe, a federation of brothers and sisters bound by common experience, by our uniformed fathers [sic], by the movement of families being rotated through the American mainland and to military posts in foreign lands...we passed though our military childhoods unremembered. We were transients, billboards to be changed, body temperatures occupying desk for a short time. We came and went like rented furniture, serviceable when you needed it but unremarked after it was gone - Pat Conroy (Wertsch,1991 p. xvii).

Relocating to a new school is difficult for all children whether military or civilian. In general, frequent moves result in greater difficulty making friends (Brett, 1992), more emotional/behavior problems than those who move less frequently (Simpson & Fowler, 1993) and more school related difficulties (Temple & Reynolds, 1999). The school-related difficulties associated with frequent moves include lower academic achievement, lower graduation rates, lower attendance rates, and higher grade retention rates (Popp, Strong & Hindman, 2003, Wood, et. al., 1993). One study of highly mobile students found frequently relocating students to have below level reading scores, higher retention
rates, a higher rate of nutrition and hygiene problems and the greater likelihood of being placed in special education classes (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1994). Lopez (2002) reports that highly mobile children are less likely than stable children to participate in extracurricular activities thereby losing a valuable avenue of socialization. These extracurricular have been found to be instrumental in raising student achievement and lowering drop-out rates (McNeal, 1995) as well as serving as a catalyst for engaging at-risk students, improving both academics and social skills (Mahoney and Cairns, 1997). In addition, the World Health Organization lists frequent residential moves as a child a high risk factor for future suicide (2000).

Stutzky and Barratt (2001) report a sense of resentment surrounding highly mobile children in the schools they attend. Teachers are forced to disrupt the regular teaching schedule in order to accommodate new students (Stover, 2000) and peers of students in schools that serve non-stable students are affected as well due to the adjusted academic pacing required in serving the mobile students. The schools typically lag up to a year behind those of stable students (Stutzky and Barratt, 2001 and Kerbow, 1996).

The administration feels the burden as well, in the form of increased paperwork in transferring the highly mobile students in and out of school and may even be required to hire additional staff that wouldn’t be needed in a school serving students who don’t move as frequently. Although none of this resentment may be expressed overtly, children can still sense being regarded as a nuisance (Stutzky and Barratt, 2001).
Despite the negative impact associated with frequent residential moves, military children have fared well. Studies by Jensen, et. al.(1995) and Jensen, Lewis and Xenakis (1986) actually found lower levels of psychopathology and severe conduct problems in military children than in the general population. Smrekar, et. al. observed that, at Department of Defense schools that serve exclusively children of the military, “drugs, alcohol and violence are almost non-existent” (p. 27) due the threat of the loss of housing privileges which results in a loss of the right to attend the DOD school. (A child overseas who engages in such activities can even be sent on “early return” which means that they have to return to the United States without the sponsoring service member). Since research indicates that parents value the quality of the DODEA schools (Booth, Segar and Bell, 2007), they are less likely to tolerate delinquent behavior.

Military children seem to be affected only minimally if at all in the academic arena due to household relocation. Marchant and Medway (1987) and O’Brien (2007) found no significant affect on children’s academic outcomes despite the frequent transfers. (Lyle, 2003) found only a slim difference (one tenth of a
standard deviation) in test scores and in the case of the lower scores, any
detriment seemed to be localized to those children of single parents or with
mothers in the military. Tucker and Marx (1987) similarly found no more school
or behavior problems in military children than that of civilian populations as long
as the children lived with two parents.

Surprisingly, Marchant and Medway (1987) found that the more moves a child
had made, the more socially adjusted they appeared to be. These children engaged
in more social activities attributing this to the advantage eventually shared by
most military children -- the ability to adjust to new situations more easily than
their civilian counterparts.

**Figure 5.10 Military Brats Cartoon 10-04**

This lack of as severe reactions to frequent residential relocation in military
children led Popp, Hindman, and Stronge (2003) to the conclusion that “mobility
alone does not prevent school success” (p. 59).

So what factors are present in military culture that allow these children to ward
off the negative effects associated with moving?

One answer found in the *Kids Mobility Project* (Beurkle and Christenson,
1999) was that relocations that resulted in more fruitful employment of parents and better housing actually served in improving children’s development and school performance rather than degrading it. In the case of military transfer, a promotion is generally involved qualifying the family for an upgrade in housing.

Popp, Hindman and Stronge (1993) point out another factor to well-being in these students in the presence of two parents, reporting that 90% of children in DOD school are in two parent families. Tucker, Marx and Long (1998) agree that the major negative aspects of moving exist primarily in the single parent families. Coleman (1987) and O’Brien (2007) attribute this to the fact that two-parent families have more “social capital” that helps them overcome the negative effects of frequent moves.

The corporate culture of the military itself provides another answer. In order to retain good soldiers, the military invests heavily in the education of the children of those soldiers. Wright (2000) cites an example of this concern “military leaders, primarily in Europe, were concerned about reports that military members, especially senior officers turning down assignments because of their concerns related to the quality of education in DODDS” (p. IV45). It’s just good business to keep good people happy; it pays for the military to support good educational programs.

Part of this support is mandated parental involvement in school even to the point of making the child’s school the service member’s place of duty when it is warranted (Raezer, 2003) or allowing soldiers time to volunteer in the DOD schools (USGAO, 1994). Numerous studies have found a significant link between
parent involvement in the school and student achievement (Epstien, 1994; Fantuzzo, Davis & Ginsburg, 1995; Phillips, 1992). Mandated or not, parent involvement makes a difference.

Another difference in the DOD schools can be attributed to the small school advantage. Research shows that small schools (Smrekar et. al., 2001) are “conducive to trust communication and a sense of community” (p. i) as well as being linked to higher achievement rates and fewer behavioral problems in the students. (Fowler and Walberg, 1991). Most DOD schools (about two thirds) are classified as small schools (DODEA, 2003) and enjoy the small school advantage.

The staff at the DOD schools also makes a difference in combating the negative effects of frequent relocation as well. The teachers are paid higher than average salaries (DODEA, 2003) and as Smrekar, et. al.(2001) point out “The teachers in the DOD system have many years of experience and high levels of education, receive extensive on-going training and exhibit a strong commitment to teaching” (p. 23). Berliner (1993) and Ferguson (1991) both demonstrate a link between teacher qualifications and student achievement.

Outside the school setting, adjustment to frequent relocations is affected by positive mother-child relationships, mother’s post-move adjustment and length of time in current residence ( Finkel, Kelley & Ashby, 2003).

Despite these advantages afforded the students with membership in military culture, there are still elements of their highly mobile lifestyle that are still resulting in stress that can affect school outcomes. Stutzky and Barratt (2001) point out “Even if help with adjustments to moving is available, children are still
affected by the disruption of a move” (p.3). They list factors that can even exacerbate the move as

1. More than one stressful life event (ex: A parent going to war political unrest in country in which child resides)
2. Loss of support system for parents
3. Loss of support system for the child
4. The number of moves a child makes.

In addition to the impact on the child from the move itself, there is the issue of academic records not being available when registering at the receiving school which often leads to inappropriate placement of the student, causes further disjunction in the learning experience (Biernat and Jax, 2000). In interviewing army spouses, Wertsch (1991) had the following difficulties reported to her in association with relocations:

- Inability to join extra-curricular activities mid-year (29.1%)
- Falling behind in schoolwork (28.7%)
- Losing credit for completed coursework (25%)
- Losing credit for in-progress course (15.1%).

In the social arena, military students reported having only superficial relationships with peers (Long,1986 as cited in Witt and Hunt, 2002) and were found to be struggling with friendship formation and peer acceptance nine months after a move (Vernberg, 1990).

Acceptance outside the gates is an even trickier matter. Teenagers reported being treated badly by townspeople in a study by McClure (1997) and Vernberg
(1990) found that mobile boys reported being hit and teased more than their
civilian counterparts did.

As one might expect, trying to fit into a foreign culture is a double-whammy when it
comes to a military move but as Conklin (2002) describes difficulties can occur
on U. S. soil (in this case, Hawaii)

Military children may be shunned, harassed, or even physically attacked in
school. Military families may have difficulty relating to the community, both
because these outsiders [military families] don't appreciate or value local
culture and also because local people find their strange manners annoying.

Consider this encounter from the film Remember the Titans which is based on a
true story:

A white Marine Corps student in 1971 Virginia (whose father has
intentionally enrolled him in a school with an integrated football team
stating “If they can fight a war together, they can play football together”) invites two of his black friends into a diner with him. Seeing their
hesitance, he offers to treat thinking it might be a monetary problem. One
student explains,” Look here, man, alright? This here Virginia, alright?
Uh…they got…problems with…you know…?”
The white student stares blankly.
The second friend is more forthcoming. “They don’t want us in there,
man”, he explains.
“No, ahhhh, that history, bro. It’s on me, come on”.
A minute later they are standing out on the sidewalk, having been refused
service. The white student stands staring in disbelief while the two black
students utter angry “I told you so’s “ as they storm down the sidewalk.

In the same film, unaware of the local racial unrest the town has been
experiencing another brat runs into the first integrated football practice where
only the black students have shown up. He joins their ranks out of breath without
hesitation. The black students and coaches simply stare at him

“And who in the name of Heaven might you be?” asks a coach breaking the
silence.
“I’m Louie Lastic, offensive lineman. Naval family. Just moved here from
Bayonne.
Someone said ‘football’ so I come runnin’” he greets his teammates “What’s goin’ on everybody?”
They continue to stare in silence.

"Military Brats"
by Steve Dickenson & Todd Clark

(Courtesy of Todd Clark)

Figure 5.11 Military Brats Cartoon 10-5

Keegan, Hyle & Sanders (2004) go as far as identifying the military culture as that of being a minority -- not marginal or oppressed but distinct-- and that it has been victimized by elements of society in the same way other minorities have.

Some families living overseas are not able to get on-post housing (due to unavailability, accompanying their service member on an unaccompanied tour or being placed on a waiting list) and have to live on the local economy. This compounds the relocation experience by separating students and families from the support systems designed to help them assimilate and creates the stress of having to learn to live in a foreign culture (Keegan, Hyle & Sanders, 2004). Some families have it harder than most. Booth, Segal and Bell (2007) report that 16% of military spouses speak English as a second language noting that the figure is probably higher due to the inability of some to even navigate the survey connected to this figure. They also
report that only 3% of spouses use the ESL classes offered and this makes them less likely to use the services and programs for families that are geared toward an English-speaking population.

After I heard them laughing at her and her children, I went out of my way to spend time with Soon-Yi. She had walked them into the men’s room at a gasthaus where we were having a unit dinner. My daughter attended German school because we lived so far from the post, it was dark before the bus brought her home so we used the village school. I knew that feeling in my stomach that anomie when I wasn’t quite sure what to do and not knowing who to ask. We went once a month for something called Elternabend (parent night) to meet and help construct things the teachers need for the next month. Even the simplest questions caused me anxiety. Was I supposed to drink the coffee they gave me or pass it down? Was I sitting in someone else’s regular spot? If I spoke would they titter at my accent? It had to be ten times worse for Soon-Yi and her children. At least I could go to post and talk with the other Americans.

Surprisingly, American students who have been attending school in foreign countries have trouble re-assimilating into American culture and fitting in at school. Smith (1992) explains:

In the elementary school years the main problem is that the other children have already established their social order and peer groups, so the returnee is by definition an outsider. In the later years the problem becomes more complex. High school students have a particularly difficult time since their experiences are totally different from those of the typical American teenager (p.32).

![Figure 5.12 A high school class in Heidelberg](Image)

(Photo courtesy of Donna Musil)

This existing social order is something in which the military student cannot play catch-up as s/he can with academics. With so much emphasis on peer acceptance
in the teenage years, some choose simply to downplay their overseas experience or not even mention it at all.

"It is very difficult for people (especially children) who have not lived overseas to relate to returnees. At best, returnees are viewed as a novelty....In almost all cases the returnee is viewed as an oddity in the United States" (Smith, 1991, p. 32).

It is especially difficult for what have come to be known as Third Culture Kids or Trans-Culture Kids (TCKs) to assimilate into American culture and gain acceptance from peers. These children (many of whom are military children) have grown up in other countries and, despite being Americans, have never or rarely lived on American soil. According to Ender (2002), military children spend an average of seven years living in foreign countries. (See graph below) and that 80% of military children speak more than one language with 14% speaking two or more foreign languages.
Figure 5.14 Occurrence of Military Children Living in Foreign Countries

Their international experience is so unique, they have trouble finding true peers - “One thing is certain, they fit in best and relate best to others like themselves” (Fail, 1995) and will give up rather than trying to force the situation - “Sometimes- for the first time - they meet to make new friends, haven't learned how to adapt […] when internationally mobile children come up against this situation, they tend to withdraw, retreat,

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4 Note: This graph does not account for children who have lived in the same foreign country twice.
marginalize" (Bell, 1997, p. 63). This loneliness and sense of isolation has been shown to have an effect on both school attendance and performance (Popp, Strong & Hindman, 2003).

![Figure 5.16 Graduation at Izmir American High School (Izmir, Turkey) in the ancient Library at Ephesus.](Photo courtesy of American Overseas Schools Historical Association)

**Deployments: Every Child Left Behind**

My mom had gotten us out of bed in the middle of the night. My older sister and I stood on the stairs about halfway down peeking over the stair rail. There was a large bundle on the sofa covered with a blanket. Our mother pulled the blanket away in a magicians ta-da type move. There was a man on the sofa. We looked at him at then looked at each other. They were obviously waiting for some kind of reaction from us.

“Who’s he?” I asked my older sister.

“I think that’s our daddy” she answered, not quite sure.

We went back upstairs to bed.

Family separations are just part of military life. In 1999, Rohall, Segal and Segal (p. 50) reported that “at any given time, 8% of the Army are separated from their spouses.” That number has jumped to 36% in 2005 according to Engel, Gallagher &
Lyle, (2006). They also report that deployments are 50% longer and that due to the military’s stop-loss policy\(^5\), deployments or even enlistments can be involuntarily extended. These separations can be due to unaccompanied tours of duty, peacekeeping missions, temporary training missions or war. The increase in the length and frequency of deployments since the end of the Cold War (in particular, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation Enduring Freedom and the Global War on Terror) are evident on this Status of Forces Survey

![In the last 12 months how many nights have you been away from your permanent duty station because of military duties?](image)

**Figure 5.17 In the last 12 months how many nights have you been away from your permanent duty station because of military duties?**

Deployments and other separations are a continual source of stress on military families. In the home, deployments can upset the family routine and even the family structure (Blount and Curry, 1992). In most families, the spouse remaining behind must be solely responsible for the family’s financial and legal matters as

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\(^5\) Also known informally as the “Backdoor Draft”, the military’s stop-loss policy comes out of Title 10 United States Code, Section 123001(d): “The President may suspend any provision of law relating to promotion, retirement, or separation applicable to any member of the armed forces who the President determines is essential to the national security of the United States”
well as the upkeep of the military quarters (a requirement of occupancy) and the care of the family—all while worrying about the safety of the service member.

(Packman, et. al., 2006, p. 67) explain

The military family lives in a constant state of readiness that is heightened during times of national emergency or war. The military family must be constantly prepared in the event that the soldier gets deployed. All matters personal, legal, financial and practical must be taken care of at all times in order to ensure that the family members are not left with overwhelming responsibilities.

Overseas families have the added responsibility of being in an ever-prepared state in case of a Non-combatant Evacuation Order (NEO) alert which would remove all spouses and children from a designated area due to some sort of threat. A sort of getaway-bag is maintained by each family with necessary legal documents, medical records, clothing and emergency food and water.⁶

During a deployment, children will often have to assume duties previously performed by adults. This may involve extra chores (a source of resentment) or a change in role in the family such as the one described by General (ret.) Norman Schwarzkopf, himself a military brat when his father deployed

When he left to go over to Iran, he very ceremoniously presented me the West Point sword and…to a small boy, when your father hands you the

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⁶ Voluntary NEO drills are a great source of fun for military children who are bussed to assigned airports for practice loading people on planes followed by a trip to that base’s PX and usually a picnic of emergency food. Mandatory drills are universally despised.
sword and says you’re now the man of the house, take care of your mother and sisters, you take it very seriously. I took it very seriously. (Musil, 2005)

The medical facilities see an increase in patients for both physical and psychological needs during deployments (McNulty, 2005). Spouses report depression, sleep disturbances, boredom, feelings of helplessness, low self-esteem, poor concentration, anxiety, suicidal ideation and intolerance for their own children. It is important to note here that “when children do not feel connected to their parents, they often act out in schools or turn to inappropriate coping skills” (Packman, et.al, 2006, p. 67). As with mobility, the best indicator of how a child will cope with military separation is related to the mother’s response and adjustment to the deployment (Stafford and Grady, 2003; Orthner and Rose, 2005b). The children themselves may also show some of the same symptoms as the parent. Orthner and Rose (2005b) note “school-aged children may experience more somatic complaints, changes in mood and a decline in school performance.” (p.27). Much of this traffic to the medical facilities is due to what Boss (2007) has called “ambiguous loss”. He says this occurs when a family member is psychologically present but physically absent. True to their reputation for resilience, any decline in academics during a deployment is minimal and is related to when a soldier deploys during the school year. Engel, Gallagher and Lyle (2006) found that

1. A parent’s deployment during March [the month the standardized tests are given in DODEA] lowers a child’s test score by 0.75 percentage points (p.6)

2. If the deployment of a parent ends “in late summer or early fall-- that is—
at least 4 months before the test is administered, then the child displays no significant reduction in his or her test score” (p.6)

So, the researchers recognize a small but persistent academic penalty to military children when their parents are deployed but note “the effects of the parental deployment during the year are modest and tend to dissipate to some extent after a parent’s return” (p. 21).

The Elephant in the Room

“I saw my daddy on TV last night”.
She was coloring a picture she had drawn and didn’t even look up as she spoke.
I was sitting on the floor cutting out matting for their last art projects. I remember having watched the news every night during the Viet Nam War looking for my dad but never having been so lucky as to have seen him. “Really?” I asked her, “What was he doing?”
“Sitting on Saddam’s couch”. She went on coloring without looking away from her drawing. “Smoking a cigar”.
Saddam Hussein’s palace had been breeched by American forces the day before and this child’s father had the lead the group that spearheaded the attack. A photo of the event she described had appeared on CNN the night before. She seemed unimpressed by the whole incident as if daddies regularly stormed palaces of Iraqi dictators and their children, half a world away, got to watch it on television.

Most children don’t take such a blasé attitude toward deployments, especially ones involving a war. While it can be acknowledged that individuals react differently to war and conflict (Shalit, 1988), for the most part, children whose parent(s) are deployed to an area of conflict demonstrate increased levels of depression and anxiety (Jensen, Martin & Watanabe, 1996; Orthner and Rose, 2005b) with children living on post being significantly more effected than those who did not (Booth, 2002). Behavior problems can also manifest themselves in these children through their identification with their warrior hero’s attitudes and
behaviors (Sealy, 2003). It is not unusual to witness very aggressive dramatic play involving killing and death under the umbrella of "playing army" on the playgrounds of the children of deployed soldiers.

![Figure 5.19 The author’s brother playing in a replica of their father’s Green Beret jungle fatigues complete with matching weapon](image)

Roher (1996) attributes this to a “need to act out what they could not express verbally” (p.203) noting that much of this play is based on what they see on television: “social learning theory suggest that children will reproduce what they see on TV whenever a good time to reproduce it arises in their environment” (p.204). Booth, Segar & Bell (2007) warn that “Unmediated television viewing of war complicates stress for children with deployed fathers” (p.91). Mothers are now part of the picture as well.

The substitute music teacher didn’t know what to do. She called down to my room saying that several of the children were suddenly crying. I went down and got one of the weeping girls to tell me what the fuss was about. She said she was afraid for her father after what happened...
to “Monica’s” mother. Monica had told the children that she had received news that her mother had been shot...in the face...twice. A trip to the counselor and a call home revealed that the girl’s mother was fine and that Monica was really only voicing a fear about what might happen to her mother.

This was another form out “acting out”; it just happened to be a verbal acting out.

Sources of stress for military children with a deployed parent include not only the fear of injury or death (see graph below) to the parent but also

![Graph showing military and civilian worry](image)

**Figure 5.20 Military and Civilian worry that a loved one will be hurt:** 
Degree of Worry (1-7 Semantic Differential Scale and percentage of each response for civilian and military groups) (Booth, 2002)

1. Fear that the war would come to America, with military children showing the greatest stress (“Significantly more active duty children believed that their house would be involved, perhaps because they tended to live near [or on] military installations which are probably prime targets”, Ryan-Wenger, 2001,
2. Fear of Opposition to the war

There they were again. They stood outside the gates and yelled at us as we drove through the front gate and waved signs. Why were they always so mad at us and yelling mean things? Is that why we had armed guards at the gate? We’re they to protect us from the yelling people? I knew it had something to do with my dad’s job- once someone in town even asked him how many babies he’d killed that day when he was wearing his uniform. But today, he wasn’t with us. They were all deployed so why did they yell at us? What did we do?

A Military family Resource Center summary of research findings reports that “Children’s exposure to television coverage of vocal opposition to military involvement may lead to confusion, anger fear and concern regarding the situation”. (MFRC, 2002 ¶ 12).

Although Shalit (1988) points out” Different individuals adopt different coping strategies toward the same situation or toward themselves in a given situation (p. 36).” there are some predicable behaviors which have been identified as emerging during the stages of the Cycle of Deployment (which was first described by Logan, 1987). The American Psychological Association (2007) provides this outline of behaviors that are frequently seen in each stage of a deployment

**Impact of Military Deployment on Families**

*Pre-Deployment*

- Anger and protest
- Emotional detachment
  - Family stress
- Marital disagreements

*Deployment*

- Emotional destabilization and disorganization
- Sadness, depression, disorientation, anxiety, loneliness
  - Sleep disturbances
  - Health complaints
• Financial problems
  • Some find the midpoint of deployment as the time of greatest stress
  • Fear for safety of deployed service member

*Reunion*
• Apprehension over redefined roles and power dynamics

*Post-Deployment*
• Honeymoon period
  • Resentment over loss of independence
  • Insecurity about place in reconfigured system
• Service member may have difficulty disengaging from combat mission orientation
  • Domestic violence

(APA, 2007 p.18)

Despite this shopping list of symptoms, Jensen, Martin and Watanabe (1996) note that deployments rarely provoke any kind of pathological level of symptoms in healthy children and Orthner and Rose (2005b) report that 80% of children have readjusted within a month of the end of the deployment. The returning parent doesn’t always fare as well.

*I didn't break the rules; I didn't tiptoe and I didn't whisper (We weren't allowed to do either while my father was sleeping). Yet, there he was with his hands around my mother's throat while she tried desperately to wake him and assure him that he was home and safe. We were in new quarters in Alaska--about as far away from the Vietnamese jungle as you could get--and I'd come into my parents room, scuffling in my feeties-pajamas to ask where the bathroom was. Before I even got to the bed, my dad started and grabbed my sleeping mother by the throat. Afterwards, he sat on the side of the bed with his head in his hands. He was embarrassed that he'd done it again. "It sounded like those G**damn sandal they wear."

Cozza and Lieberman (2007) explain this common phenomenon

Combat is a powerful and formative experience leading to neurological and psychological changes that do not immediately dissipate upon returning home. Military service members are encouraged and expected to be aggressive physically forceful in combat if they are to survive. The combat environment is an ever-dangerous setting constant hypervigilence
is necessary for survival" (p. 31).

According to the APA (2007) about one third of all combat veterans suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome

More than 30% of all soldiers met the criteria for mental disorder but less than half (23%-40%) of those with mental health concerns sought help. Moreover, these figures do not include those who don’t identify concerns or those who identify concerns after returning from deployments. (p.23)

The APA attributes the low number of soldiers seeking psychological help as being due to a shortage of psychologists available to the military services, delays in the referral process and the stigma attached to psychological problems. Musil (2005) notes that many soldiers avoid seeking psychological help because of the knowledge that it will be reported to their commanders making them look unfit for duty and hindering progression through the ranks. This leaves the family home as the place where psychological problems manifest themselves. Rentz, et,al. (2000) found that maltreatment in military families increased by 30% for every 1% of active duty personnel either departing or returning from operation-related deployment.

The Ultimate Price

While we waited for it to start, we sat in the grass in front of our quarters and the three of us jiggled the fat on the back of our calves and laughed and laughed at how funny it looked. We heard the bugle and my sister and her friend grabbed their pencils and notepads so I grabbed mine. We didn’t learn tally marks until second grade but, I wanted to be like the big kids so I was going to count it too this time. They finished playing that song on the bugle that we heard sometimes late at night. Then it started. One…two…three… I covered my ears…four…five…six… but still managed to keep up the tally marks as we counted the rounds in the twenty-one gun salute.
Although less than 1% of service members have been killed during our current set of deployments (Cozza, Chun and Polo, 2005) it still remains a great source of anxiety in military families at home. Still, that number represents over 3,416 soldiers and approximately 2,733 children who have lost a parent in combat (APA, 2007). Even with a number that high, Cozza and Liberman (2007) point out

No data are available on the specific impact of war-related parental death on children. It would not be reasonable to conclude that given the intentional, aggressive, and sudden nature of these deaths, the psychological consequences might be more complicated and possibly more problematic (p. 30)

The death of a service member effects more than just the family of that soldier. Informal channels (such as the infamous “wives network” or e-mails and telephone calls form the deployed soldiers) send the news of a death long before the Red Cross makes notification to the family. As teachers, we are forbidden from providing information on injury or death of soldiers to the children even though many of the children will come in with information they’ve gotten from parents. The refusal of trusted adults to share the name of the soldier starts the worry cycle. Cozza and Lieberman (2007) elaborate

Children who live on military installations are exposed to more immediate death of a service member due to informal communication, community activities, military news, or memorial services. Knowledge of a death of an unnamed service member is typically followed by a pervasive sense of fear that persists until confirmation is received that the service member is not the child’s parent (.p.31)

The APA (2007) and Cozza, Lieberman (2005) point out that the knowledge to a family that their sponsor has been killed or injured may only be the starting point of a very stressful situation

The procedure itself may exacerbate stress in the family as full details may not be known or may be intentionally withheld. Family disruption occurs when a family
member is required to be present at Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs), often not located at or near the family’s station. In these instances the spouse may be caught between the needs of the service member, the needs of the children, and his or her own emotional needs. When a service member is killed, a number of military support services are available; however, the death inevitably leads to more family disruption. The family must leave base housing within six months to one year, and they usually relocate closer to other sources of support or extended family. The resulting loss of the military support system is significant, as is the change in accessibility of medical and mental health services and other accustomed benefits such as the Commissary (APA, p.25)

![Figure 5.21 Symbol of a Fallen Soldier](image.png)

Most units prepare a visible reminder of the deceased soldier similar to that depicted in the photo. The helmet and identification tags signify the fallen soldier. The inverted rifle with bayonet signals a time for prayer, a break in the action to pay tribute to our comrade. The combat boots represent the final march of the last battle. The beret (in the case of soldiers from airborne units) reminds us that the soldier has taken part in his final jump. (Army FM 3-21.5, 2003)

They are usually gone so quickly that we never even get to say goodbye. The Red Cross notifies a family of a death and then they are gone. Just like that. A family of a service member who is killed in action is allowed to stay in their house and continue attending a DOD school for 365 days after the date their sponsor is killed but most just return home to family immediately. That’s why it was so unusual to see Terry at school. “It’s just so crazy around my house right now” said the fourth grader. “I just wanted to be some place normal”

Sadly, loss due to death is just another form of loss that goes with membership in brat culture. Although they live an idealistic life on their bases, there are reminders everywhere of death, danger and destruction. Singer Kris Kristofferson, former army brat calls it “like a Hollywood version of a 1950’s small town…surrounded by barbed wire” (Musil, 2005). They enter their bases with identification for their vehicles and themselves

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7 U.S. Army Human Resources Command (2007) states “Eligible family members occupying government housing on the date the member dies may continue to occupy such housing without charge for a period of 365 days.”
passing by armed guards, the streets are named after battles, military units and fallen soldiers. Our own school is named after a Private First Class who was killed in battle. Implements of destruction are everywhere. There are modern war machines as well as relics and captured in brought home as trophies in plain view on road on a

![Figure 5.22 Students at Fulda High (Germany) pose on an Abrams tank](image)

(From courtesy of American Overseas Schools Historical Society)

As children, once a year, we had to sit through a gruesome film at school that warned of the dangers of picking up ordinance we found on the ground or playing with live rifle rounds we might find laying around. As the current conflicts have gone on, the children of our installation have watched the Warrior Walk grow. It started as a few trees next the parade field. One tree for each fallen soldier with a plaque and his/her unit guidon. More and more trees have been added. More sidewalks have had to be built. The Warrior Walk
is starting to look like a forest. It is no wonder that spouses of deployed soldiers listed “fear of what will happen to a parent” as the highest source of stress for their child in the survey of Army Families (Booth, Segal & Harris, 2007, p. 88).

As You Were, Soldier!

“I...think...I’m...going...to...throw...up” I called out in time to the beat my running shoes on the pavement.

“Suck it up!” my dad yelled back down the line to me.

I hated running at dinner time. There were just so many...smells. Today it was the quarters where the kids with the Vietnamese mom lived. What was that smell coming from the kitchen? The sticky Georgia heat just made it worse.

We were out “setting the example” again. All six of us were out doing the airborne shuffle through the housing area in a nice straight line from tallest to shortest - the picture perfect military family. My dad had been put in charge of a voluntary fitness improvement program called Run for Your Life. It wasn’t voluntary for us.

In contrast to what the parents of military children are reporting as being stressful for their children, adult brats who grew up during the World War II and the Viet Nam wars are reporting that fear of death or injury to a parent was not what they found the most stressful about being brats. Frequent relocations ranked number one for them followed by behavioral expectations (Ender, 2002).^8

With respect to such behavioral expectations, family members often find themselves dealing with a set of unwritten rules (APA, 2007). This is especially true for families living on post where “Living on post means the Army is more aware of what Soldiers and

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^8 The list was rounded out by 3) Parental separation, 4) Risk of parental injury or death and 5) Transition to civilian life.
their families do daily, and the organization can take punitive action against Soldiers if their families do not follow post regulations such as keeping up the house, cutting the grass, or obeying civilian or military laws.” (p. 25)

These expectations go beyond obeying laws. Up until, 1987, officer fitness reports included a section in which the officer’s wife was rated according participation in volunteer work and community activities in order to address the “suitability of the officer and his family for assignment to responsible positions as representatives to the Service and the Nation” (Alvah, 2007, p. 91). That’s a heavy load for a child to bear.

Research has shown that military brats (despite their nickname) are better behaved than civilian children (Watanabe, 1985 and Price, 2002). Any military brat would respond to this research saying, “They’d better be!” "Military brats were aware that their behavior or misbehavior was a direct reflection on their parents and specifically on their fathers” (Truscott, p. 189). Getting into mischief on a military post doesn’t simply mean that the child gets into trouble; the sponsor does as well! Mary Wertsch, author of Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood inside the Fortress, explains "… if a child fails to get off his bike and just keeps on pedaling, even as Retreat is being audibly played, the child is reported not to his father, but to his father's commanding officer." (Musil, 2005).

We all sat wide eyed, in silence, on the school bus as the driver pulled in to the Military Police station. My sister had thrown a boot from the back of the bus to hit a child in the front of the bus. As the bus stopped, she was escorted into the station by the driver. We all knew what would happen next. They weren’t going to call our parents. They were going to call our dad’s commander and he was going to be called into the commander’s office to answer for the behavior of his child and then sent to pick her up at the MP station. I was NOT looking forward to going home after school that day.
Wertsch (1991) continues this idea in her book” Most military children, to hear them talk, grow up in mortal fear of making some mortal stupid mistake and finding out the whole family has to pay for it.” (p.30). with the army’s focus on family, children are often asked to accompany the parents to “functions” such as unit parties, dances, Hail and Farewells, etc. An observer is sure to see more than one service member giving his or her children “the eye” to maintain good behavior. No one wants their children being seen as unruly for “If a man’s children misbehaved, the question is then posed ‘How can he have command of his troops?’”. Norman Schwatzkopf describes a situation in which he was given the eye- literally! While accompanying his father to a dinner in a tent in the Iranian desert, a sheep was brought out on a platter. As an honor to the father and his son, the eyes of the sheep were popped out and presented to them with great ceremony. “I am NOT eating that” I told him. He looked at me and said ‘Yes, you will!’ and I had to eat it”. (Musil, 2005)

This expectation goes beyond the gates of the military post, especially overseas where the Armed Forces Network reminds families again and again that they are “unofficial ambassadors” and that people will judge all Americans based on how we behave while stationed overseas.

“If you want my money, you’ll speak to me in my language. I don’t have any idea what you are saying!”

It was a tourist. The worst kind of tourist-- an American tourist. I hated when they came over. They were always so loud and pushy and, like this lady, expected everyone to know her language and bow and scrape for the Yankee dollar. Didn’t she know that Americans had to LIVE here after she got back on her bus and went to spend Tuesday in Belgium? They would think we were all like her. I couldn’t wait for the tourist season to be over so things could be normal again.
As one teenager in *According to my Passport I’m Coming Home* (Eakin, 1998) put it

“We shoulder the baggage of an entire nation. As envoys, we must consider how our
actions reflect not only on ourselves but on the millions of citizens we represent” (p.18).

The Baggage

Sometimes shouldering the baggage of a whole nation can get pretty heavy as, no
matter how well behaved a child is, an American is an American and they will be judged
on the behavior of other Americans and will sometimes punished for it as well as their
association with the US military

*It felt like someone had picked up our classroom in the Abrams
Complex in Frankfurt and slammed it back to earth like a basketball.
The thunderous sound that accompanied the blast concussion had my
ears ringing for hours after the bomb exploded. Our teacher had all of
us (male and female) follow her into the ladies room where she stood
on tiptoe on an overturned trash can and tried to peek out the
ransom to see what had happened. Amid the NEE-ner NEE-ner
NEE-ner of the German polizei sirens, some of us listened to her
description of the debris while others ran to find radios to tune into
Armed Forces Network for details of the terrorist attack.*

As in the example above, enemies of the U.S. military are not particular which
Americans are targeted in attacks even when children are involved. In that
particular attack, an American airman was killed just to get his identification card
so they could gain access to the base. Military children carry those same cards and
could be targeted as well. During a time of high activity of a radical anti-
American group while I was in Germany, armed guards rode the school buses
with the children.
Even in the United States, there is recognition of the dangers that might befall military children. My current school has cement barriers to prevent cars from parking near the school with car bombs; we have no outdoor trashcans to prevent bombs being placed in them either. Every door in the school (except the main entrance) is locked whenever children are in the school and there is a 100% ID card check at the door in order to gain entrance to the building. We have an armed “resource officer” and have had to teach the children how to hide in “emergency drills” in case of intrusion in the school.

Despite the dangers, having children around, like having the on post school is good business for the military, The APA (2007) summarized previous research showing that “the presence of children was associated with higher retention among male Soldiers, and the average number of dependent children that unit personnel had was positively related to unit readiness, though the reason for this is unclear.” (p.95)
One thing is clear—Brats are good for the military.

![Figure 5.24 Brats in the back of a “Deuce and a Half” (2 ½ ton M35 cargo truck). The author and her brat pals used to go Christmas caroling this way. (Photo courtesy of Donna Musil)](image)

CONCLUSIONS

Military children, although separated geographically, share a common culture known as Brat culture. They have more in common with one another than with the civilian children who share their geographic space. Donna Musil, writer/director of the documentary Brats: Our Journey Home. Portrait of a Lost American Tribe said in 2005 “Up to as recently as ten years ago, most military brats thought their experience was absolutely unique”. Mike Adams of Military Brats of America (Pyle, 1995) explains “The size of the American military exploded during and after World War II and so did the number of military children…the oldest of us are now in our 40’s and we’re beginning to ask what hit us in our childhoods” (p.20).

“Oh my God! Did you see dad in that movie?” It was my older sister. I knew exactly what she meant.
“You must be talking about The Great Santini”
“Yes! Was that totally us or what??”
I had to agree. It was as if someone had spied on us and made a movie about our family right down to the white station wagon with the U-haul storage box on top.”

Perhaps we weren’t the only family recognizing ourselves whining through a middle-of-the-night transfer packed into a station wagon. Mary Edwards Wertsch (1991) in the preface to her book, *Military Brats: Legacies of Childhood inside the Fortress*, credits this film as inspiring her to write her book. She talks about seeing the film “…the overall effect on me was like being struck by a thunderbolt. Whole scenes, whole sections of dialogue could have been lifted from my childhood” (p. xiii). It could be coincidence but it was just after that, in the 1980s, US Armed Forces research into military children began to emerge. Dr. Robert Blum, lead investigator of the Military Child Initiative at Johns Hopkins University notes the earlier lack of brat research “Over the past few years…there’s begun to be emerging literature and research related to military children. I think it’s only been in the last five to seven years that people have been aware of the needs of these particular kids.” (Buckelew, 2005, p.2)

Frequent mobility of military children has been at the center of much of the recent research. Their frequent moves come with a downside. They can have a negative effect on school performance, attendance, social development, peer acceptance, cultural identity and just a sense of well-being. While the military strives to make the transitions as smooth as possible for students, there are some aspects of a move that simply can’t be made any easier. Mobility issues related to education are especially tricky because of the numerous school systems that are impacted by attendance by military children. The DOD schools, which exist for the sole purpose of educating military children, try to maintain a consistent curriculum for its students and maintain a staff of professions trained to meet
the needs of this special population of learners but logistics make it impossible for these schools to serve all military children. These same logistics make it impossible for most military children to have an uninterrupted, cohesive educational experience.

While the DOD schools have been able to ward off some aspects of the academic detriments associated with frequent residential relocations, it is not fully clear from whence this success springs. Although, the DOD schools have their own set of educational standards in order to maintain academic stability in all of it’s schools (as opposed to adopting state or foreign standards for the geographical location of each school), educators are given full academic freedom in teaching style and presentation (Wright, 2000). Further research into which, if any, methodologies lend themselves to increased academic outcomes could be identified and shared with other military impacted non-DOD schools.

When asked for their thoughts on how to make school transitions easier on their children,”…parents stressed the importance of teachers understanding that this transition is difficult so they can help ease the anxiety and make it as smooth, quick and efficient as possible” (Wright, 2000, p. IV 45). Further research in how to do just that would be invaluable to a teacher of military children. During times of uncertainty such as war, deployment or civil unrest or living in a foreign culture, when home is full of stress, school may be the only source of “normalcy” for a military child. This responsibility is an important one that goes far beyond the teaching of academics. Continued research in how to relieve the stressors associated with military culture is necessary in order to maintain a quality of life deserved by the children of our military forces.
Figure 5.25 The author as a teenager enjoying a visit
to the Armed Forces Recreation Center
in Bavaria
Chapter 6

The Spying Mission
So, what did all of this teach you?

Well... military kids are certainly resilient!

Okay, the academics are great but what about the rest of the child?

So, what's the prob?

So you think you should be responsible for more than academics?

Aren't you the one who told me human beings had no job description?

Is that in your job description?

You were listening... and don't call me a crone. Chicken legs!
SO, WHAT ABOUT OTHER TEACHERS?

NOT A CLUE...

WHAT ARE THEY DOING TO REACH THEIR STUDENTS?

I DON'T HAVE CHICKEN LEGS!

OKAY, OKAY, METHERSLAH, I'M GOING

MEHUSRELAH, HUNK?

OKAY, TIME TO GO WATCH AND LISTEN AND ASK QUESTIONS!

BUT HOW WILL I KNOW I'M SEEING THE "REAL THING?"

EER MY POLE

Edith began her spying mission

She asked and listened

OKAY, CLASS TODAY WE WILL...
NOW, LET'S ALL GET ON THE SAME PAGE HERE.

WE HAVE ALLOT TO COVER TODAY SO LET'S GET RIGHT TO WORK.

EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT!

EVES, FRONT!

FACE FORWARD!

PAY ATTENTION!

STOP TALKING!

CHEERS!

DOES SHE EVER STOP TALKING?

AND YOU'LL GET IN TROUBLE.

WHAT ARE YOU EVEN LEARNING?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

PSST... HEY, KID!

Psst... hey, kid!

Uh... yeah?

THREE TIMES TWO IS SIX.

THREE TIMES THREE IS NINE.

THREE TIMES FOUR IS...

EDITH? WOULD YOU LIKE TO COME INSIDE THE CLASSROOM?

Nah, I'm good.
**What are you doing?**
*Trying to find the answer.**
*What answer?*
*To the problem.**
*What problem?*
*The one on the board.**
*What are you trying to find out?*
*The answer.**
*I mean, why?*
*Said she.

---

**So why do you have to sit on this bench?**
*I owe my teacher some work.**
*How did you incur this debt?*
*I didn't finish my past tense verbs worksheet.**
*Do you know how to write in past tense?*
*Sure, I do it all the time.*
*Then why do you have to do it again?*
*Un- I dunno.

---

**It's called direct instruction. It's very efficient, you can cover lots of material and...**
*Sad rii!*

---

**Is this your curving for the whole year?**
*This is for next week. It's how I have evidence that learning has taken place.*

---

**You just tell them and then test them.**
*It's really for your own protection, Carla. You can prove that you taught what you are required to teach by law, everyone should be doing it this way.*

---

**Here, it's all outlined in this teacher handbook from my last school. I'll bet you'll find this interesting reading.**
*Yes... I'm sure I will.*
Chapter 7

A “Faculty Manual” from the Inert Knowledge School District
Siegfried Engelmann
Early Childhood
Academy

Faculty Manual

Inert Knowledge
School District

Achievement…it’s all we care about!
Introduction

Welcome to Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy! Here we recognize that the teacher is THE most important component in the learning process and are proud to have you as part of our team. This handbook is intended to serve as a guide to the policies, procedures, and the daily operation of our school. Please read and commit to memory the contents of this handbook. We insist on accountability in our teachers as research shows a correlation between teacher accountability and student achievement (Sullivan and Niedermeyer, 1977; Diaz and Bontenbal, 2000)) and achievement is what we are all about here.

History of Our School

Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy was established in 1983 immediately following the release of A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) which made it obvious to all that the focus of education should switch its focus to standards, assessment and accountability. In order to rescue the children of America, immediate instructivist interventions were implemented to address these very issues. We chose to name our school after Siegfried Engelmann because he was not only a believer in our cause and innovator of the Direct Instruction curriculum but also because he was an early childhood educator and recognized how a traditional delivery could benefit even the youngest learners. (Engelmann, 1971). We chose the word “Academy” rather than school to emphasize our dedication to the academic development of our students. (Guba and Lincoln, 1985)
Throughout the years, our school has evolved through the use of many pre-packaged curriculums based on the work of the following theorists:

**B.F. Skinner** - His principles of operant conditioning described in his 1938 work *The Behavior of Organisms: An Experimental Analysis* led to practices within instructivism to motivate learning. (Kozloff & LaNunziata, 1999, paragraph 12)

**Robert Slavin** - developed a comprehensive series of highly scripted lessons in reading instruction for the “Success for All” program out of Johns Hopkins University in 1987. In 1995, he designed the QAIT model of teaching and learning outlining how quality, appropriateness, incentive and time interrelate in the instructivist vision of the learning process. (The National Academies, 2008).

**E.D. Hirsch** - was concerned about a lack of “cultural literacy” in students and proposed the concept of a Core Knowledge -- common background knowledge. He wrote *The Schools We Need and Why We Don’t Have Them* in 1996 and, in 1997 published a series of Core Knowledge books containing knowledge that every child should have in every grade of school. (O’Neil, 1999)

**Siegfried Engelmann**, - Preschool teacher and our school’s namesake. Engelmann and his partner, Carl Bereiter, developed Direct Instruction (DI) model of learning and DISTAR (Direct Instruction System for Teaching Arithmetic and Reading), a commercial six-year curriculum famous for being heavily scripted, broken down into sequential steps and involving intense instruction. (Kozloff & LaNunziata, 1999, paraphragn 12)

**Odgen Lindsey** - Lindsey, a graduate student of Skinner’s, developed the Precision Teaching (PT) in 1965. This methodology has an emphasis on “fluency”, completing tasks both correctly and quickly and differs from other intuitivist methods, there are no
particular curriculum materials; the methodology is applied to whatever materials are being used (Lindsey, 1972).

In the 1990’s we chose to expand our philosophy to allow teachers to choose their own mode of delivery (as long as it fell under the instructivist umbrella of methodologies.) We came to this decision after the release of the results of Project Follow-Through demonstrated the superiority of all of the “Basic Skills” (what we now call “instructivist”) models of delivery. Project Follow Through was the largest and most expensive educational study ever conducted. It covered the years 1967-1995, involved over 20,000 students and cost one billion dollars to conduct. Basically, it compared teaching methodologies from three basic models:

1. Basic Skills programs involving carefully designed instruction such as Behavior Reinforcement and Direct Instruction.

2. Cognitive Conceptual Skills models which focused on cognitive growth rather than specific content such as High Scope

3. Affective Skills models which focus lay in development of the whole child even beyond academics. Examples of these include learning through the use of centers and Open Education. (Stebbins, et al, 1977).

Kim and Axelrod (2005) summarize research showing that the methodologies in the Basic Skills model not only outperformed the other models in basic skills achievement during Project Follow Through but also on cognitive and affective skills achievement. We felt it was safe at this point to allow any methodologies in this transmission-type paradigm.

Today our school enjoys a rich array of teacher-centered, (often scripted) direct
instruction methodologies and behaviorist techniques to help our students reach our achievement goals.

**Our Philosophy**

Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy is dedicated to providing our students with a carefully planned, highly specific, sequential curriculum presented using a traditional instructivist approach. Instructivism is not a practice in itself but a modernist philosophy that includes such practices as direct instruction, mastery learning, lecture, or precision teaching. We recognize the importance of education and take responsibility for every aspect of learning process rather than putting it into the hands of children, we believe that

Instructivist schools have a clear understanding of what their pupils should learn and how they are expected to behave. They believe the teacher’s most solemn job is to instruct the young in the knowledge, skills, and behaviors determined by adult society to be valuable, (Finn and Ravitch, (1996, p.7)

Guba and Lincoln (1985) and Roushanzamir (2002) point to the details of the philosophy behind Instructivism:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Instructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ontology (forms and nature of reality)</td>
<td>'real' reality which is apprehendable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>epistemology (relation of knowner and what can be known)</td>
<td>objectivist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>methodology</td>
<td>experimental-sequential-quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inquiry aim</td>
<td>prediction and control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nature of knowledge</td>
<td>verified hypotheses established as facts and laws</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge accumulation</td>
<td>cause-effect linkages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goodness or quality criteria</td>
<td>objectivity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ethics</td>
<td>extrinsic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>'dispassionate participant' and &quot;logical&quot; voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>training</td>
<td>quantitative and qualitative and technical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodation</td>
<td>commensurable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hegemony</td>
<td>in control of findings and promotion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Table format & analysis of constructivism adapted from Guba & Lincoln, 1985.
Roushazamir’s analysis of Instructivism added.)

*Figure 7.1 Attributes of Instructivism*
A major focus of our education program is the systemization of specific components to be transmitted to the students adhering strictly to the curriculum guidelines and, since our instruction time is so valuable, we waste no time with multiple perspectives—there is one objective right answer to be found, stored and retrieved at the time indicated by the schedule (Bednar, et. al., 1992).

We believe that the ultimate goal of education is to transmit knowledge to our students allowing them to meet predetermined curricular objectives and demonstrate mastery on standardized tests (Kozloff, 1999).

**Vision Statement**

Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy maintains a static vision of producing hordes of high achieving students capable of filling societal needs in the workplace of the future.

**Mission Statement**

Our mission is to provide our students with the opportunity for high achievement in all academic areas. We will fulfill this mission by imposing on our students a highly structured, intense curriculum rich with opportunities for drill and practice, the passive receipt of knowledge and mastery of arbitrary objectives. (Guba and Lincoln, 1985)

**School Motto**

Achievement…it’s all we care about!
School Cheer

Gimme an A!

(That’s the whole cheer)

School Song

(To the tune of “Pomp and Circumstance)

We master objectives

Our focus is clear

Our reasoning is deductive.

We drill and practice all year.

Our teacher holds knowledge

To transmit to the class

Through direct instruction,

So tests we can pass

At Engelman Early
Childhood Academy!

We learn tasks in sequence
At an appropriate pace
From simple to complex
Transmission mode we embrace.
Based on behaviorist theories
Our philosophy’s cool
Instructivism’s the greatest
We love coming to school
At Engleman Early
Childhood Academy

**Mascot**

Topper the Hilltopper proudly represents our Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy. The Hilltopper was chosen to remind our students of the place they want to attain at the top of that graph of achievement scores (just like the little man below)
Instruction

As a teacher, you are the most critical element in the learning process. Your instruction is what will make or break a student in our school. All responsibility for learning is on your shoulders or as our school’s namesake so frequently puts it “If a student hasn’t learned, the teacher hasn’t taught” (Engelmann, 1971). A guiding principle in instructional planning here is that “virtually all school time and energy are focused on the desired learning; testing provides frequent feedback on progress; success is rewarded; failure is not accepted; and effort continues until the goals are attained” (Finn and Ravitch, 1996).

Two other principles of our philosophy to keep in mind come from Kosloff (1999):

1. External reality exists independently of what we think of it—You, as the teacher, are in possession of the reality (knowledge) and are the authority on the matter and it is your job to transmit to your students that reality.

2. Teaching is done from part to whole—Fosnot (1996) describes how the instructivist teacher’s responsibility is to take the curriculum, segment it into subject areas which are then further segmented into palatable bits of information sequenced from simple to complex.

(It is important to break the information for the students down to these decontextualized fragments of information to prevent “cognitive overload”. Kirschner, Sweller and Clark...
(2006) warn that “free exploration of a highly complex environment may generate a heavy working memory load that is detrimental to leaning” (p.80). It is better to serve content in predigested bites of content to prevent this from happening.)

Price, Mayfield, McFadden, and Marsh. (2000) explain the process guiding instruction:

The overall instructional approach is guided by the need to determine what the student knows and needs to know next, clarity of instruction, amount of time a student spends on the learning task, amount of time teacher devotes to seeing that the student learns the task, and effectiveness of instruction (p. 27)

The effectiveness of instruction is gauged by achievement. Carroll (1963) identifies five factors important in student achievement: aptitude, ability to understand instruction, perseverence, opportunity to learn, and quality of instruction.

Brophy (1979) identifies teacher behaviors eight behaviors exhibited by teachers that lead to higher achievement

1. Students being seated at the beginning of class facing the teacher
2. An introduction to the lesson
3. Guided practice (seatwork) (Rosenshine (1986) suggest that student “success” is archived at 80%, but that students should continue to practice until a 100% rate of success is achieved.)
4. Eliciting responses from the students to determine understanding
5. Not allowing students to call out in class
6. Wait time
7. Using praise sparingly
8. Using criticism sparingly and only to correct student responses.

The role of the student in the learning process is limited to attention and
compliance (Ausbel, 1968)

**Assessment**

Testing at Siegfried Engelmann Early Childhood Academy, like the curriculum, is instructivist and aligns directly to the objective of our curriculum. It is through testing that we are able to prove our academic superiority. Teachers engage in a continuous cycle of teach-test, re-teach-test until the desired skill is mastered or information produced (Price, Mayfield, McFadden, and Marsh, 2000). Testing is frequent in order to provide feedback to teachers (Finn and Ravitch, 1996) and has even been shown to improve retention (Roediger and Karpickle, 2006). Remember, according to our philosophy, YOU are the one responsible for the learning of your students (Engelmann, 1971) and their test scores. We will be judging you on how well your students do so make sure your students know in advance what will be tested and then ensure that you prepare them appropriately.
Chapter 8

What Isn’t Working
Edith returned to the Great Educator.

Hellooooo!'

“Anyone Home?”

You remember the boys, don’t you. They are from the new mountain.

Or sure, Hi, guys.

Well? What did you find out on your “mission”?

Go fish, Bob.

六？

Been talking to a few other teachers?

What do you think of that?
Well... they seem pretty confident about it and it's really popular.

Got any threes?

So, class. If you mix blue and red, you get purple.

She does this all.

Well...

It's a flashback.

Well, it seemed very organized. I knew every day what was going to happen.

Grace, Grace, Grace, Grace.

... and I had paper proofs that I had taught and they had received what I had sent.

It was really easy to have a sub.

Here on page 12, bye.
SO YOU LIKED IT?

...uh...

IT DIDN'T FEEL REAL.
IT FELT CONTRIVED.

...and with the kids moving in and out or going on block leave, it was hard to keep everyone in the same place. So I had to do a lot of reteach.

WHAT ARE YOU GUYS DOING IN MY FLASHBACK?

I DIDN'T FEEL LIKE THEY WERE LEARNING; THEY WERE JUST ... COMPLETING...
I seem to remember us agreeing not to ascribe meaning to other people's experiences. How would you feel if I invaded your content, sweetie? You'll have to forgive them.

Okay, I was bored stiff too.

They look at the whole time-space continuum differently than we do.

How do they keep track of stuff then?

The same way you do. Your brain takes what it needs for each situation. It can make sense of all kinds of mess we keep up there.

Since you've never been able to fully breathe, how do you breathe?
As you can see, in the grain, no piece of information, no knowledge, no concept exists alone. It is all interconnected.
So, Edith took the advice of the Great Educator and went back out "there" to look around.
After a long night in the Slammer and a long chat with her cell mates...
Chapter 9
You Need the Right Shoes to Run the Course\(^1\)


\(^1\) *Currere* - (L.) To run the course.
INTRODUCTION

Momma always says there’s an awful lot you could tell about a person by their shoes; where they’re going, where they’ve been...

-Forrest Gump (Finerman & Zemeckis, 1994)

I don’t even own a pair of Birkenstocks! Holistic Education needs to get a better press agent. People hear the word holistic and visions of aromatherapy candles, crystals and tie-dyed practitioners in Birkenstocks are evoked. Even in researching this topic, I had to wade through numerous articles, books and websites on holistic massage, holistic herbs, holistic interior design and even holistic financial planning in order to get to the ‘serious” stuff I was seeking (I even question some of the educators referring to themselves as “holistic educators”). The vision behind holistic education is certainly not driven by such things as imbalances in a person’s alpha waves or even the location of asteroids on a particular day. Still, as holistic educator, Scott Forbes (1996, p. 4) notes, “Unfortunately, the insights, of this vision are clouded by misty-eyed New Ageism, and a great deal of what is valuable is dismissed by this association” (I suppose it’s a little like having Billy Carter for a brother). So, just what is this vision behind holistic education?

BELIEFS OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

A chad pied son soulier
(To each foot, its own shoe)

-Michael Eyquem de Montaigne (1580/1603, bk.III, ch. XIII)

The vision guiding holistic education starts with an assumption about the nature of reality. Clark (1990, p. 3) explains “Life is either shaped by an ‘assumption of separateness’ in which the essence of reality is fragmentation or an ‘assumption of wholeness’ in which the essence of reality is unity”. This includes the popular ideas of education the whole child through addressing different learning styles (Gardner, 1993a) and integrating curriculum areas (Drake, 1998; Clark, 1990) but the vision of holistic education goes beyond the a place where traditional education stops – outside the classroom door and into that entity known as the “real world” to take on ideals that obstruct a learner’s path to self-actualization: “Thus holistic education reflects an attitude, a philosophy, a worldview that challenges the fragmented, reductionist, mechanistic, nationalist assumptions of mainstream culture and education” (Clark, 1990, p.3).

The values of mainstream culture are seen as irrelevant in holistic education; instead, the fullest possible development of human potential, Ultimacy, as Forbes (2003) calls it, is of central value. He defines Ultimacy (which is both product and process) as “…develop[ment] to the highest extent thought possible for a human” in order to gain “the kind of knowledge associated with wisdom (Forbes & Martin, 2004, p. 4). Forbes notes that an idea of attaining ultimate personhood has been associated with holistic education in every form and in every geographic location in which it has existed. He cites examples from religion (enlightenment, satori) and psychology (Maslow’s “self-actualization, Jung’s Unus Mundus, Roger’s “full-functioning person”) in evidence (Forbes & Martin, 2004). He elaborates further on this concept “…this kind
of knowledge (or way of knowing) which seems generally valued by holistic education has six distinct but interrelated aspects:

1. Freedom (inner liberation)

2. Good Judgment (self-government or autonomy)

3. Meta-learning (students learning how they, as individuals, learn)

4. Social Ability (Being in society but not of it)

5. Refining Values (Development of their own character and qualities)

6. Self Knowledge (learning the nature of oneself)

(Forbes and Martin, 2004)

On the way to Ultimacy, a learner can take in the world as the Big Picture and find himself/herself in it. Clark (1990, p.4) explains “…the ultimate purpose of holistic education is to transform the way we look at ourselves and our relationship to the world from a fragmented to an integrative perspective.”

This integrative perspective not only refers to a rejection of the Tylerian splintering of unified thought (Tyler, 1949) but also an inclusion of more than one educational orientation. Miller (2004) describes holistic education as being an integration of

1. Transmission Models (authoritarian, objective-based)\(^2\)

2. Freedom-based learning (full-bodied individualism)

\(^2\) Miller includes this model only in recognition that “Closely knit cultural or religious groups do need to transmit their heritage if they are to maintain their traditions” (p.21)
3. Social Constructivist (collaborative inquiry)

4. Critical Pedagogy (focus on social responsibility)

5. Spiritual Developmentalism (Unfolding of developmental/spiritual stages)

And justifies this integrative perspective (2004, p.25):

Human existence and the world of which we are part are so enormously complex and
dynamic and dynamic that they cannot be fully grasped by any one ideology….A holistic
educator recognizes that all five of the orientations on the educational map have value;
they all have something important to say about the nature of the human being and the
process of learning. From a holistic perspective, however, each contains only a partial
truth.

Krishnamurti (1929, ¶ 1) also recognized this heuristic nature of seeking knowledge and truth:

    Truth is a pathless land, you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion,
    by any sect. Truth being limitless, unconditional, approachable by any path whatsoever,
    cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or coerce people
    along any particular path.

Basically, what these theorists are saying is that there simply is no set knowledge of the world;
nothing in holistic education is a received truth. There is also no single way to map out a journey
for knowledge since truth changes in every situation.

Because of this slippery avoidance of a static definition along with words such as spiritual
and cosmic and its transformation-of-the-world attitude (Clark, 1990, p. 5:”…holistic education
is an overshadowing philosophy of life. Implicit in this philosophy is that holistic education has
the potential for transforming the world.”), holistic education has had a hard time gaining
acceptance in a society that demands down-to-earth accountability. In fact, some are even
threatened by non-traditional forms of education such as holistic education. The website for the
Arizona Parents for Traditional Education “honored” holistic education as a “Fuzzy Thinker Award” winner listing it as part of a New Age Movement along with integrated thematic instruction and Project Nature Connect³ (www.theriver.com/Public/tuscon_parents_edu_forum/#ANTI). But is holistic Education really part of a New Age Movement?

NEW AGE OR STONE AGE? THE ROOTS OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

_I do not think that shoemaker a good workman that makes a great show for a little foot._

-Plutarch, (Bartlett, 1919, quote no. 8884)

Scott Forbes (2003) suggests that, although holistic education has been a coherent movement since the late 1970’s, it is deeply rooted in educational reform movements that date back to the advent of formal schooling (John Miller, 1996, even traces it back to the early Greeks). He includes the following six theorists as the “founding fathers” (yes, that’s how he put it) as the major influences on today’s holistic education:


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³ “Project Nature Connect is an ambitious study exploring the effects of Nature on human physical and psychological health, stress perception, and environmental attitudes, as well as exploring the location and meaning of Nature in people’s lives” (McDowell, 2008, ¶ 2)
2. Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827). Swiss educator who advocated “informal education” through activity and objects. He sought to balance hands, heart and head and recognized the link between education and social justice.

3. Fredrich Wilhelm Froebel (1782-1852). German educationalist who advocated learning through “occupations” with “gifts” (playing with toys) and using these activities to gain harmony with God and the world.


Ron Miller (1997, 2000b) also recognizes Pestalozzi in his own list of pioneers of holistic education. Other influences he includes are:


2. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882). American Transcendentalist who spoke out against prescribed curriculums and recommended that scholars be educated by book, nature and action.
3. Bronson Alcott (1799-1888). American Transcendentalist who believed in education of the whole child. The focus of his teaching methods was on conversations and dialogues.

4. Francis Parker (1837-1902). Pioneer of progressivism, his “New Education”, or Quincy Method, included experiential learning, an integrated approach to teaching, collaborative learning, independent learning. His ideas saved a failing school system and drew attention from the world.


6. Maria Montessori. (1870-1952). Italian physician who became an educator. She believed that the senses had to be educated before the intellect and advocated de-centering the teacher.

7. Rudolph Steiner (1861-1925). An Austrian theorist who was an advocate of “spiritual perception” explaining that children go through spiritual stages that should be considered in the planning of education to help the spirit comprehend knowledge. Founder of the Waldorf Schools.

8. Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895-1986). Indian non-sectarian religious educator who promoted the idea that Truth had to be found in the mind of each person and individually.

Although not attributed to a particular theorist, holistic education found some large scale acceptance the wake of social change that challenged almost all aspects of the traditional mainstream belief system. Paul Davies (as cited in Schmidt, 2004) explains:
The dawn of the 20th century heralded an explosion of ideas which shattered the cozy notions of reality that had endured for centuries. Many cherished beliefs and unquestioned assumptions were swept away. The old world view of a rational and mechanistic universe, ordered by rigid laws of cause and effect, collapsed into oblivion, to be replaced by a mystical world of paradox and surrealism. (p.6)

The social upheaval of the 1960’s and its invitation to reexamine existing institutions made the time particularly ripe for giving holistic education a serious look. “‘wholism’, ‘whole earth ideas, whole foods, and ‘the whole child’ described things that might not have fully examined but which seemed to many people to make sense.” (Forbes, 1996, p. 8). Hidden power structures and ideas for liberatory education were exposed as part of the civil rights movement and through the writings of Eliot Eisner, Brian Jackson and Paolo Friere. The role of schools as agents of social change became evident. The view of human nature itself was also challenged as

The Skinnerian view of person as an electro-chemical stimulus-response machine (so helpful to the needs governments during the war and so popular with those who saw conditioning of others as a solution to their own aspirations) was being rejected as only very partial view of the mind. Behaviourism seemed more of a tool for exploiting people than for understanding them in any depth. (Forbes, 1996, p.10)

This raised questions about cognition and the nature of learning, leading to a rediscovery of theorists such as John Dewey, Jean Piaget and Maria Montessori. All this reexamination led to one conclusion: We had outgrown our own britches and there was no more room to let out the waistband. A full-out overhaul was necessary. Despite living in a postmodern society, our
schools were still serving up a modernist curriculum. In short, we were preparing our students to enter a world that no longer existed.

Recognition that “…educational ideas had fallen behind the pace of social changes.” (Doll, 1993, p. 43), curriculum theorists led William Pinar embarked on a paradigm shift that has come to be known as the Receptualization. A change of this nature was inevitable. As Thomas Kuhn explains in his 1962 book, The Structure of Scientific Revolution, a system in crisis (such as the state of education at that time) either has to change or perish. The paradigm shift is a form of self-preservation. This back-to-the-drawing-board challenge to mainstream thinking focused on a change in the field of curriculum to include “shift from a primary and practical interest in the development of curriculum to a theoretical and practical interest in understanding curriculum.” (Pinar, 2000, p. 187). Other principles coming out of this shift included the viewing of curriculum as a) a process rather than an entity, b) being transformational, c) being non-linear, d) being learner-centered and e) not having any universal discourse (Pinar, 2000). These principles fit well into the vision of holistic education which enjoyed its most popular era during the 1970’s.

Of course, even a perceived state of crisis can also goose along a shift in principles and that is exactly what happened with the publication of A Nation at Risk in 1983 by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. An essentialist panic ensued and the public demanded educational reform in the form of a back-to-basics frenzy. Alternative education (including holistic education) fell out of favor. Despite research into multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1993a) and what neuroscience if finding out about the nature of learning and how that brain research translates into practice (Kovalik & Olsen, 2002), holistic education today remains a step-child in the educational world.
HOLISTIC EDUCATORS OF TODAY

...as I take my shoes from the shoemaker, and my coat from the tailor, so I take my religion from the priest.

-Oliver Goldsmith (Boswell, 1980, p. 511)

Of course, the interpreters/defenders/cheerleaders/advocates of today’s holistic education movement have no intention of allowing holistic education to be thrown out like an old shoe. Experts in the field continue to keep it in the forefront of current practice through books, journals, websites, conferences and the like.

One of the major players in the field of holistic education is Ron Miller, educational historian and founder of the Holistic Education Review (now known as Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice) and Paths of Learning. Miller is also the founder and president of the Foundation for Educational Renewal. Trained as a Montessori teacher, he now teaches at Goddard College in Vermont. His major/relavent works include What Are Schools For? (1990), Free Schools, Free People (2000) and Caring for New Life. Miller is especailly interested in infusing spirituality into education.

Another Miller (unrelated to Ron Miller) who is a strong advocate of holistic education is John P. (Jack) Miller. He is a professor at the Ontario Institute for the Studies of Education (OISE) at the University of Ontario where he teaches courses in holistic education and

Working out of Oregon is holistic educator, Scott Forbes. He is the executive director of Holistic Education, Inc., which developed the Holistic Education Center. He directs the Teacher Development Program and heads the Holistic Education Research Unit in Protalnd. Dr. Forbes taught for 20 years (10 as a principal) at the Brockwood Park Krishnamurti Educational Center in England. His major works include: *Holistic Education: An Analysis of its Ideas and Nature* (2003) and *Holistic Education: Its Nature and Intellectual precedents* (2003).

A frequent contributor to the research/writings is independent educational consultant, Edward Clark. Dr. Clark is a former director of teacher education at Webster University. His focus of interest lies in both integrated curriculum and site-based educational change. He is the author of *Designing and Implementing an Integrated Curriculum: A Student-Centered Approach* (1997) and “A Search for Wholeness in Education” in 1990.

Also noteworthy in the field of holistic education are Yoshiharu Nakagawa of Japan who works with John Miller and wrote *Education for Awakening: An Eastern Approach to Holistic Education* in 2000 and Ramon Gallegos Nava of Mexico who wrote *Holistic Education: Pedagogy of Universal Love* in 2001 as well as creating this model of holistic education:
Figure 9.1 Holistic Education Vision—A Multilevel-multidimensional Perspective (Nava, 2000)

Still other major influences on holistic education can be seen on this simple Map of Historical and Contemporary Influences on Holistic Education created by Roger Stack of the Holistic Education Network of Tasmania (Figure 9.2)
Figure 9.2 Historical and Contemporary Influences on Holistic Education
Despite the fact that holistic education defines itself as an ever evolving entity, those in the field are seeking to streamline or clarify the definition – perhaps to disassociate themselves from those who use the name without understanding or practicing the principles behind it. Kolcaba points out (in reference to medical education) “holistic philosophy is so diverse that practically every theorist can claim holistic credentials.”(1997, p.290). The same can be said for general education. The Paths of Learning website even makes this statement

In order to bring together research in this field, it is important to begin by setting some boundaries about what is and isn’t “Holistic Education”….so if you use a different set of words to describe your work, please consider the deeper meaning as to whether it is a match for the field of Holistic Education

(Foundation for Educational Renewal, 2003)

This will undoubtedly solidify the field so it can gain acceptance from those who control funding for educational institutions and educational research. Still, I can’t help but see the irony in holistic education insisting on a group-licensed viewpoint.

MAKING IT MY OWN

I can tell where my own shoe pinches me.

-Don Quixote (Cervantes, 1950 Pt.1, Book IV, Chap V)

Frankly, I felt a little left out. I guess vanity may have played a part in my choice of holistic education but I think I was driven more by a feeling of something being just “not right”.

I suppose I had the advantage of having experienced both alternative forms of education and traditional ones so I knew there was a difference and I knew what a difference there was! I’ve whined before about having to attend so many schools (seventeen elementary schools) as a result of my father’s military career but it did show how many different ways there are of approaching the same task and how varied the results can be. I know what it is like to sit hour after hour and listen to someone babble on while scratching chalk across a board and how easily the words start to lose meaning. I also know how liberating it is to guide my own learning and the pride that comes from that I was the first person in the world to discover that a magnifying glass can project and upside-down image of whatever is nearby and even having a forum in which to share my discovery. It’s like two different worlds.

What I found out sitting in the Big Chair in the classroom was that it was just as boring to teach in an assembly line fashion as it is to try to learn that way. My colleagues in my first school as a teacher assured me that all that alternative education stuff I had learned in my laid-back Northern California, among the redwoods university had no place in the real world and that I was cheating my students if I tried any of that nonsense as it might affect their test scores…blah, blah…passing fad…blah, blah, blah…tried and true methodologies.

I bought into it and because a sensible shoe wearing, professional attire clad, hairdo sporting…LIAR! I WAS cheating my students and I felt awful. It wasn’t fun to come to work; I didn’t feel challenged so I knew that they didn’t either. I was the issuer of worksheets, the timekeeper on learning segments, the turn-to-page-nine announcer. A well-trained monkey could have done what I was doing. They spent more time engaged with their worksheets that they did with me and I spent more time putting red marks on them than I did with them. I was supposed
to be their agent of social change, the facilitator of their inquiry; we were supposed to engage in
the process together. I felt left out.

I decided to do something then that I suspect is done in many classrooms – I shut the door. I
shut the door and began engaging in what has come to be known as “subversive teaching”
(Postman & Weingartner, 1969). Since I was lying anyway, why not be deceptive in favor of the
learners. I incorporated as much holistic practice as I could without giving myself away.

I found an advantage in the school system in which I currently teach, the Department of
Defense Schools; in that they were actively seeking to move toward more Developmentally
Appropriate Practice and were open to novel/alternative approaches to get there. I wrote a
proposal at my school requesting to “go fully holistic” in 2005 accompanied by current
research, samples of activities and a cost analysis showing how it would only cost about half as
much as traditional programs.

APPROVED!

(I’d like to think that it was their dedication to the education of their students that drove their
decision but I think the matter was decided when they saw the financial comparison.) I was given
full rein over my program as long as all the (very generously defined) educational standards were
met. I was on my way!

An old Scottish Proverb says “It is better to wear out shoes than sheets.” I’d like to change
that last word to “seats” and hope the experiences with holistic education in my class light a
spark in my children that that wears out a lotta shoes!
Chapter 10

Pulling It All Together
I am so excited about this holistic education.

I can tell.

I mean, I think I can really make a difference now.

How?

Huh?

How will you make a difference? What will you do?

Hmm...

Well...

Firstly, no wait... I would...

I have no idea!

I guess I thought it would just kinda fall into place being so open-ended and all.

I'd better get with it.

So...

(So, what'dya think?)

You were certainly... uh... "generous"...

Now, scoot! You've got work to do!

I'm a generous gal!
There, the finishing touch. Now you look like a teacher.

If I were a teacher named Wilma Flinstone.

What's going on here?

Have they switched you to Pre-K?

Who's this?

My arch nemesis, Hagatha Whitenasty.

So many toys in here.

So... they'll be playing?

... in class?

Yeah, sure.

Well, do you have them do any work?

Well... that is their work.

Is it now, deary? How so?

They get ideas from Dury.

They talk to one another.

I'm not liking her.

Now very quaint.
They construct knowledge. Why don't you do your class a favor and just teach?

Look, woman, you don't have to agree but...

Well, say it from the floor!

Eeeeee

You know violence isn't the answer.

It never solves anything.

It goes against holistic philosophy.

I know.

I love you.

I know.

Edith was excited about the first day of school.

Let's start with some exploratory activities.

It means you get to play.

Oh, no! I didn't study that. I'm going to fail!

What's that?

Yes!!
As Edith gets into the swing of things, a visitor drops in.

Hello, Olga. I haven't seen you in a while. How've you been?

I've been quite disturbed to hear what people are saying about you.

It's true, then, isn't it?

I've switched teams.

Huh? You've changed orientation.

I'm sorry... what?

You've gone... holistic.
Olga, what I was doing before just didn't feel "right." It wasn't really meeting the needs of the students, like no one took them into consideration when planning the curriculum.

It just didn't feel like me. I took a long, hard look at what was and what I wanted for my students and knew I had to be honest with myself. I found a discrepancy in the way things were and saw that our traditional methodologies just didn't fit anymore.

Well, Scott Forbes (1998) or one. He points out that "...holistic education reflects and responds more fully than conventional education to a new and increasingly accepted view of what it means to be human.

Were we having a problem being human?

And just how will you do this? If our methods aren't doing it, what will?

I mean when you get done with recess and everyone gets back to their seats, what will you do differently?

We aren't at recess. Olga. This is our instructional time.

This is instruction time? But it looks like play time. There's no structure. I can't even tell what subject you are teaching.

That's one of the characteristics of holistic education.

All of them!

This strategy of a fully integrated curriculum is more realistic than arbitrary separation of subject areas you see in traditional education.

Lake (1994) explores this. "The brain processes many things in parallel. Aristotle experiences are mentally quick and easily" (p. 8).
Holistic education also offers these benefits (as cited in Lake, 1994)

**BENEFITS OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION**
- Helps students apply skills
- Integrated knowledge base leads to faster retrieval of information
- Multiple perspectives lead to a more integrated knowledge base
- Encourages depth and breadth in learning
- Promotes positive attitudes
- More quality time for curriculum exploration

**Plus, Edgeron (1993)**
found that 83% of teachers in one study that tried an integrated curriculum preferred to continue using it rather than returning to the traditional curriculum after the study.

Okay, that sounds really groovy, and all but what about achievement?

Recent studies show that these students tend to hold their own!

Kohn (1999) explains that in various types of integrative/interdisciplinary programs, students performed as well or better on standardized achievement tests than students enrolled in the usual separate subjects.

That's pretty impressive. Still, I'm confused. It looks like everyone is doing something different. Did you give them all different assignments?

In a way, it's not fully random. They plan, implement, and evaluate their own learning according to their interests.

A teacher can be on a larger scale, a school system takes responsibility for the curriculum and teaches what her students decide is important to the learner. Learners are often not motivated by interest or even tolerance of the material being taught.

What? Then how do they know what to do?

Well, that's one of the other strategies of holistic education. The children direct their own learning.

Oh, how that's just whack! The children do what they want?
I'm sure you can figure out the role of intrinsic motivation in achievement.

A direct, consistent and positive correlation has been found between motivation and academic achievement. 

Czikszentmihalyi (1992) describes a cycle of flow in his Flow Theory where intrinsic motivation leads to achievement and achievement leads to further motivation. The process feeds itself.

First of all we have to understand that in a holistic classroom, the teacher-learner hierarchy is broken down.

The traditional notion of the teacher-centered classroom doesn't fit here.

...classrooms which focus mainly on the intellectual level of interaction (traditional classrooms) are far less demanding than holistic ones.

Hansen (1994) says it well: "The paradox is that although the image is playful, holism has to be the strictest of disciplines. Its results depend entirely on the rigor of its application."

The teacher is more of a facilitator, a mentor, a coach. I don't give answers, I pose the questions. When they have reached a state of cognitive disequilibrium, I throw an ill-structured question at them to get the juices flowing again.

That sounds kinda cruel. Is that another one of those strategies of holistic education or are you just mean?

Yes, problem-based learning is consistent with the beliefs of holistic education and serves to improve long term retention (Farnsworth, 1994). And it improves both achievement and attitude of both students and teachers.

Also, since it is authentic in nature, students relate to it more strongly than arbitrarily constructed problems.

Authentic? You make it sound like I've been lying to them.

You do the math on that one. Here, look at this cartoon. Does this give you a sense of how ludicrous what we've been doing is?
Hey, shouldn't you be at school so you can learn the important things in life?

I'm ready for my writing conference.

Okay, leave me your writing. I'll be there in a few minutes.

Writing conference? What's that?

Okay, here's where it breaks down. I'm looking at this paper and, frankly, it's a mess. There are spelling and grammar errors all over it.

Yes, that's part of the process we use in holistic education.

I asked every child to make some sort of graphic representation of what they've learned as evidence of what they've done and to share with the class.

I ask every child to make some sort of graphic representation of what they've learned as evidence of what they've done and to share with the class.

A really solid one like whole language.

Good ideas never die and the strategies behind whole language are right at home in holistic education.
... as I was saying... 
we treat writing as a whole, 
get our ideas onto what we 
call our “Slappy copy” and then 
we have our writing conferences 
in which I teach them correct 
grammatical and spelling 
practice in the context of 
their own work. They are not 
taught isolated sub-skills 
since children learn them 
more efficiently this way. 
(Weaver, 1986). Then they 
make their revisions and 
we publish their work.

Let me get this straight, 
you teach them skills one 
at a time? 
Sure, and many of them 
just pick the skills up 
on their own from reading 
and writing (we do lots of 
both in here).

But how do know 
who knows what? 
and who has met 
which objectives?

I talk to them, 
I read their writing. 
I watch what they’re 
doing, I listen 
to them explain it 
to others.

It’s not so hard 
when you get to 
know everyone.

cooperative and collaborative 
writing is very much in 
keeping with holistic 
philosophy and has 
demonstrated success even 
with children as young as 
these. Vermette, Harper & 
Dimilla (2004) compiled 
research showing that 
children engaging in 
cooperative and collaborative 
learning activities learned 
more content, had greater 
conceptual gains and had 
higher reading growth than 
those in traditional programs. 
That doesn’t even begin to 
address the social gains...
Look at the big picture. Oligo Holistic education isn’t just a way to teach; it’s a whole philosophy of life. These strategies are more than just a way of imparting information; they are leading to a transformation.

Yes, Ron Miller gives this example of one kind of transformation of who we are as people: If we could come together in places where our views were respected and allowed, where we could dialogue freely with those who hold different views, and see how their views make sense, I think we could make a giant step toward building a genuine participatory democracy (2000 p. 9).

That’s a pretty tall order for second grade. So you said that was one form of transformation.

Yes, the highest form of transformation occurs in the individual learners themselves.

Will this involve the word "Nirvana?"

Scott Forbes (2003) calls it Ultimacy. It’s the highest state a human being can aspire to. It’s becoming the best “You” that you can become.

Wait a minute. I’ve heard this before. Didn’t Maslow have a thingy-dingy like that?

Are you referring to his Hierarchy of Needs?

I think so. Didn’t he have a place for becoming the best you can be?

Yes, he had a pyramid of needs with the most basic human needs at the bottom and Self-actualization at the top. Self-actualization is the same concept as Ultimacy (Forbes, 2003).

This hierarchy is very much in keeping with the ideas behind holistic education.

It recognizes people as a whole...

... it takes into account the need for such non-academic factors as personality and the need for love.

... and the need for acceptance...

... and the need for self-actualization (Maslow, as cited in Norwood, Iaag).
Maslow saw only one or two percent of people becoming self-actualized. Holistic education sees this as a possibility for all persons.

That's not surprising at all. The Montessori Principles helped give birth to the principles of holistic education (Miller, 2006).

### Miller (paraphrases) sees these aspects as being philosophically congruent to holistic education:

1. Her vision of the cosmic education - a recognition at oneness with the universe.
2. Her sensitive period - a recognition of bringing the child at the center of the learning process.
3. Her concept of the prepared environment - this refers not only to the physical environment but the mental environment, and includes posing problems and accepting all learning styles and learners.
4. Her view of education - nurturing the self (related to the spiritual aspect of holistic education).
5. Multi-age Grouping - the recognition that learners develop at different rates unrelated to chronological age and that learners at different stages can assist the learning of one another.
6. Learning based in reality - refers to realistic learning stressed in holistic education.

For example, in order to learn the concept of germination, one must use the Pink Tower. It can only be learned using the Pink Tower, not toilet paper tubes, not sticks from the yard.

How often does one encounter Pink Towers in real life? How authentic is that?

Also, the focus on individuality: "Everyone go to your carpet square and do your work." doesn't leave much room for social construction of knowledge.

### No, I could not! They are kinda picky about that. If I may interject a personal opinion here... I wonder if Maria Montessori would even recognize the Montessori Schools of today. The philosophy is still there but the practice is all kindy-woody. They are very expensive equipment bound and it has to be their expensive equipment."

"I just wish Maria Montessori would come back and clobber their elitist hoggins with their own Pink Towers!"

Calm down, woman!
Okay, you’ve told me all about the effectiveness of holistic practices can have on academic achievement...

...So how does it hold up in other areas, like motivation. Just looking around, I’m guessing kids like to learn this way.

What’s PATHE?
It’s a program called Positive Action Through Holistic Education that was implemented in the early 1980s. A 1984 report showed increased attendance, decreased drop-out, increased completion of school, increased attentiveness, decreased behavior problems, increased positive attitudes toward school, increased community involvement, increased social skills, and increased self-esteem.

Actually, the holistic kind of learning better addresses the needs of children with varying learning styles.

Lake (1991) stated, “Of course, every room—every student—is unique, while the search for patterns and contexts may be universal, every learner will have his/her own learning style. To meet these diverse needs means providing choices for students. Put to use in the classroom, the brain research points toward interdisciplinary learning, thematic teaching, experiential education, and teaching that is responsive to student-learning styles.”

Armstrong (1998) cites research showing that ADHD children do better in active, hands-on environments with activities such as problem-based learning. These are the kinds of activities you would find in a holistic classroom.

Studies have shown that the use of holistic strategies have led to an increased interest in school and improved attitudes toward school (Czerniak et al., 1990).

Jacobs (1984) also found that an interdisciplinary approach such as those used in holistic education led to higher levels of self-direction, higher attendance, increased homework completion, and a more positive attitude toward school.
Really? What about other children with special needs, like those with cognitive or social/emotional differences?

There's not been much work in this area specifically. I'm sure with all the varying degrees of cognitive and social/emotional differences, empirical evidence of success is hard to hard to gauge.

Still, holistic practices such as allowing personal construction and the open-ended, self-paced nature of holistic education, allows any child to work at a level of appropriate challenge.

Ron Miller comments on this subject:

By accommodating differences and refusing to label children, for example, as 'learning disabled' or 'hyperactive', teachers bring out the unique gifts contained within each child's spirit (2000, p.8).

So, it's sort of self-accommodating?

Right!

Bell Hooks says...

Progressive, holistic education engaged pedagogy is more demanding than conventional critical or feminist pedagogy. For, unlike these two teaching practices, it emphasizes well-being. That means that teachers must be actively involved, committed to a process of self-actualization that promotes their own well-being if they are to teach in a manner that empowers students (as cited in Burke, p.4).

So, if you aren't at the philosophy, you won't really be a holistic teacher.

But I could start with some activities.

On sure, that's how I started years ago.

You've been doing this for years? I had no idea.

Yes, but I didn't tell anyone; I just shut my door and did what I thought was best for my students. I've only recently come out of the closet about my orientation.

Well, holistic education has a lot to offer and I want to share that message with others. I also want to collaborate with other holistic teachers.

Why?

I suspect there are more of us than we know, because they've closed their doors too. I hope I'll inspire others to open up about who they are so we can share ideas and reflect together on our practice.
I was speaking metaphorically. Yoga is a noisy business!

But your door is closed.

I closed the door for the noise.

Oh, I see. Well, I can't wait to get started. Thanks for sharing this philosophy with me.

I thought it was all yoga and meditation.

Well, yoga and meditation do have a place in the holistic classroom. The visualization skills that are offered by...

- Hey, I'm sold! I'm sold. But I think I'll start a little closer to my comfort zone in the beginning.

Okay, start with the Great Ideas in Education website (http://great-ideas.org). It has lots of resources.

Okay, I will. Thanks again.

Bye.

Ugh?

Yes?

Could you close the door?

Just for the noise, of course.

Sure.
Chapter 11

The Big Ten
I forgot how boring this was. I feel more like a bookkeeper than a teacher. We are getting ready for our annual standardized test. The other third grade teachers tell me this is the way to get ready and have shared stacks and stacks of worksheets with me. This standardized testing thing is still new to me. It starts in the third grade in our school. I was asked to move up to third grade after my first year of holistic teaching because the students and I had formed a “bond.”

I’m feeling a little cross-eyed after grading all these papers. The students are antsy and I’m seeing some behavior problems I hadn’t before. This is a good reminder of why I became interested in holistic education in the first place. Next year, I’ll trust my gut on this one and bypass the worksheet mountain. It just isn’t worth it.

(Journal Entry January 21, 20XX)

I’m in my third year of holistic teaching now. It’s a comfortable fit. I have a student teacher this year who has asked me why no one ever told her about this before. I smiled remembering having asked that same question myself a few years back. I can’t imagine ever going back to a direct instruction model of teaching. It would be like putting the training wheels back on my bicycle.

The year I chose to implement holistic education practices in my class was a tough one. One hundred percent of the students in the class had at least one parent in Iraq or Afghanistan, we went through three principals and I was battling cancer during the inquiry. Still, I would put the entire experience in the plus column. The guiding question of what kinds of stories would emerge in bringing holistic education into a class of military children provided me with some answers to questions I didn’t even know I had and reaffirmed for me my reasons for becoming an educator.

In reviewing the journal entries, the notes I took and memories that just popped back into my head without making it to paper, certain themes started to emerge. I call these themes my Big Ten because there are ten of them and because they are the Big Ideas that came out of my inquiry into the use of holistic instructional methods in the military classroom. Some are positive aspects
of the experience, some are things I wish I would have known before I started and some just…exist.

It seems odd to be spouting the glories of holism and then breaking the inquiry into segments so I will state here that these ideas do not exist this way in my mind; they are integrated into the text of my being. They are presented in this format for the clarity and ease of the reader. However, since the study was conducted through the lens of holism, I’ll provide a brief, holistic overview of findings.

So, what happened?

Our journey started out slowly since holistic instruction was new ground for all of us. Once the children understood the expectations, there seemed to be no stopping them. There was an overall change in attitude when they came in the door in the morning from “What do I have to do today?” to “What do I get to do today?” Many children had already determined what they wanted to know that day when they arrived at school while some needed prodding. Morale was high the entire year and behavior problems were few. Although we didn’t take standardized tests in that grade, their pre/post math and reading scores were outstanding at the end of the year which helped give some quantitative “credibility” to what we were doing.

Some parents were understandably wary of holistic instruction in the beginning but reported that the enthusiasm of their children toward coming to school helped to win them over (those test scores didn’t hurt, either). As the year went on, we had a few parents poke their heads into the classroom and ask questions about holism first, in a challenging manner and then as vested stakeholders in the philosophy.
Personally, I felt a real connection to my students that I’d never had before. With many opportunities for informal conversation, I got to know more of them than just what I saw on a worksheet. They also got to talk to one another and get to know each other. The classroom had a feel of a community. I also enjoyed coming to class every day because I wanted to know what the day would bring as much as they did! That doesn’t mean the class ran without any planning. The first of my Big Ten deals with this very issue:

**#1 It wasn’t as Easy as I Thought It Would Be**

*(and I hadn’t even started yet)*

I had seen my teachers do it in my “alternative” classes (one of the aliases of holistic education from the 1970s). The teachers were in class when we got there and we just all got to our work. Somewhere in the room, students were building boats from wood scraps, some were writing trivia questions about Speed Racer, and others were producing a newspaper. It all just *happened*, right? Boy, was I naive! As was explained by Hooper (1999, ¶4) in Chapter 10, “The paradox is that, although the image is playful, holism has to be the strictest of disciplines…the reason for this is that when we engage many levels of mind, bring emotion, intuition, gross and subtle senses to bear on the same goal as intellect, we activate more sensitivities.”

I had a lesson plan book and there were nice, neat spaces for assignments and activities but that was the kind of teaching from which I was trying to escape. So what was I going to “plan”? The answer to that question is: It depends. Holistic Education, Inc. (2003, ¶3) elaborates
In holistic education there is no curriculum set by "experts" but rather it is developed by the immediate stakeholders—teachers, students, and parents. This ensures that what is studied is relevant and meaningful. However, this means that teachers must be creative and responsive to the individuality of their students. Teachers in holistic schools cannot simply "deliver" a pre-packaged curriculum, which is a challenge to some teachers but a great joy and inspiration to others.

I knew it would be a great joy and I was anxious to get started but how was I supposed to be responsive to the individuality of children I had not yet met? The answer came from Green and Gredler (2002, p. 59)

Teachers are urged to become facilitators of learning by creating authentic contexts that stimulate students to meet their own learning needs, which naturally vary across children. Required in this effort is an understanding of student backgrounds, culture and prior knowledge. “Kidwatching” skills or the ability to detect opportunities for growth and learning based on observing children are also essential

So what would I be watching them do while I was observing? This was getting tricky.

I remember from the Math Their Way training that they engage in “exploratory activities” the first week of so. This would be a good opportunity to get to know the materials and well as a chance to see who is who and what they are about. When [my daughter] Becky was in Math Their Way in kindergarten, I remember thinking this was a waste of time and wondered when the “real” learning would get started. I’ll make sure to explain this to the parents at the orientation.

(Journal Entry, August 4, 20XX)

So, we played. I plopped down on the floor with them and we built with unifix cubes. We made patterns and snakes and towers. I’d join another group who were looking at the reptile books and another group who wanted to paint. We also did lots of talking while we played.
“Your dad’s in Iraq?” “Do you know where that is?” “How far away is it?” “Have you ever seen their alphabet?” I got to know their interests and the ideas started to flow. With Miller’s (1996) three basic principles for holistic curriculum — balance, inclusion and connection — in the back of my mind, I got to work. The next day, there were books about snakes and reptiles; there was modeling clay and paint for making artistic renditions. There were calculators to compare the height of the highest towers, there were maps and books about Iraq, some words in Arabic to copy. This day, we talked while they “played” with those things that had been put out for them and got more ideas. This idea connected to that one and that idea related to another and we’d get “stuff” to facilitate their second grade inquiry into those ideas. Eventually, they were getting their own ideas and their own materials. They’d work in groups and alone. They’d talk and discuss or work silently. Each learner seemed to have a different style of approaching a question.

I started to see that my job was to facilitate. I wasn’t there to tell them things. I wasn’t even there to provide them with activities; my job was to provide them with the opportunity for experiences. I was providing the environment, both physical and intellectual, for them to satisfy their own learning needs.

“Jenny”’s teacher from last year made a point of coming to see me during the first weeks of school. She wanted me to know that Jenny could not skip count — not by two, not by five, not by ten so I would have my work cut out for me. I’m sitting nearby right now listening to Jenny count money by fives and tens. A few of the children have set up a shop where they are pretending to sell beaded necklaces they made in the art center. I’ve not given any instruction in this, Jenny listened to the others count it out and caught on – today.

(Note, August 15, 20XX)

Jenny’s world in the traditional classroom didn’t bring a need to learn this skill but this need was somehow stimulated by the experience of selling hideous beaded necklaces.
We moved the furniture quite a bit those first few weeks. I hadn’t considered furniture placement as part of planning. We needed to accommodate places to talk, quiet places, place for projects, places for meeting. Although I wasn’t aware of the existence of such a thing as a holistic school planner, Jeffrey Lackney is just that. He designs holistic schools from the ground up. While I can’t do anything about the architecture of my school, I’ve made an adapted list of his suggestions, (2007, ¶3) that I can do and we now use it when setting up my room for the beginning of the year:

1. Embrace the entire community as a place for learning.
2. Allow for transitional places between the indoors and outdoors.
4. Accommodate a Variety of Learning Groups and Activities.
5. Consider Home as a Template for School.
6. Vary Circulation Patterns while Ensuring Supervision.
7. Cluster Learning Areas for Effective Collaboration.
8. Provide Space for Sharing Learning Resources.
11. Create Privacy Niches.
13. Provide a home base for every student.
15. Design for Appropriate Acoustics.

Of course, we have no aversion to doing some redesigning of the physical space as the need arises. We spent a few weeks of this last year with a rather large “pit” in the middle of the room
to accommodate some inventions that were being constructed after some inspiration from famous African American inventors. Just like the curriculum, the environment we made had to be flexible and sensitive to the needs of the learners.

Setting up the physical environment is only half the job in a holistic classroom. A positive emotional environment is also essential to the learning process. This led me to my second Big Idea:

#2 Discipline isn’t a Dirty Word

It looks like a hurricane hit the room! This afternoon was a disaster. Our exploratory activities turned into a free-for-all and ended with them all in seats with their heads down. I’m not off to a good start here, I went right back to something I’d seen teachers do all my life. I never said “Don’t throw the blocks.” I thought they would just know this from being human beings. I must be doing something that’s sending a message that it’s okay to throw blocks in here.

(Journal Entry August 10, 20XX)

This wasn’t the way it was supposed to be. The research said that holistic classrooms had fewer behavior problems (Morley, 1991). The lack of rigidity in the learning environment had obviously led some students to believe that there simply were no rules in this classroom. I hated to admit it but this was exactly the case. I had some more work to do here.

We usually sit down on the first day of school and go over the school rules together. I thought that this time, I would just let the rules emerge out of need. I thought we would just address each situation individually as it arose, the way we would the curriculum. I thought this was a way of being sensitive to individual learners. I thought wrong.
Not ready to completely abandon the idea of an interactive, living, breathing agreement of acceptable classroom behavior, we had a meeting to address this as a community. After a litany of don’t-do-this-don’t-do-that’s from the students, I guided the focus more in line with holistic philosophy and asked them to come up with a statement that went beyond our classroom and addressed our expectations for one another as human beings. There was much chitter-chatter from the community, some input from me about using positive wording rather than negative wording, more discussion and finally, a hand went up and we had our first expectation:

TREAT US GOOD AND NICE

That said it all. It was the most beautiful, pure thought I had ever witnessed. It was the guiding principle for the entire year. When a behavior choice was ever in question, it came back to this simple statement. Is yelling in someone’s ear a way to treat them good and nice? Are we treating our class good and nice when we interrupt learning? Is excluding someone a good and nice way to treat them? We added other items to our “What We Expect for One Another” chart about physical safety, respecting the personal space, and not disturbing the learning of others and respecting all ideas but that first expectation really set the tone for the whole learning process that year.

Putting it all down on paper and posting this in a prominent place in the room gave these expectations a sense of importance as well as two things that were especially important to military children: ownership and choice. The life of a military child is a life of compliance; they go where they are told when they are told and are never given any input. In their quarters and housing areas, they are reminded constantly that nothing belongs to them so they can’t really make emotional connections to their surroundings. In the classroom, this emotional connection
is critical in imprinting learning to the brain (LeDoux, 1996). Allowing military children to take part in the construction of the expectations and to make their own choices about their behavior (as well as the consequences) gives them a sense of connection to their learning environment.

We had to come to an agreement with “Jace.” He can only say “Who cares?” three times a day. He tends to spout this phrase right before he gives up on a task. I’m not sure what “who cares?” really means to him yet but it was driving his classmates nutty hearing him say it about everything.

(Journal Entry September 1, 20XX)

One of the children noticed today that Jace had been engaging thoughtfully in what the kids have been calling “Globe hunting,” an activity which had elicited the “Who cares?” response from him earlier in the month.

“Hey, you haven’t used any of your ‘who cares?’ in awhile.” noted one child.

Jace grinned and said “Who cares?”

(Journal Entry September 20, 20XX)

Since one of the basic tenets of holistic education is responsibility for one’s own learning, (Miller, 1996), I decided to supplement the usual behavior plan with responsibilities toward learning and blatantly stole the idea of having the student make a Personal Learning Statement from Davis (undated ¶ 4)

Here, the student generally writes about three things: who he or she is as a learner; what he or she hopes to accomplish this year; and how he or she plans to make it happen! Ideally, this statement would be reread daily, and updated by students periodically to foster continual goal-setting, and to promote actualization of those goals.
This seemed like a good idea but it took on the semblance of a round-robin reading circle and children were just phoning it in so they would have something to say when it was their turn; so some tweaking was necessary. Rather than having a forced reading, the option was there every morning to describe their inquiry with “Who has something cool they’re learning?” Hands went up with enthusiasm for this one. Everybody wanted to tell about what they were doing so much that we had to limit the time for this activity. The children would get ideas from one another and network ideas and join the inquiry of others who had found something interesting.

Out of necessity, we also implemented a “What are you doing?” board in which children would indicate with a tag board name card where they were working and they had to be able to explain their inquiry (See Figure 11.1). In the early days, we had some less-than-productive activities (running around, chasing, wandering and annoying other learners) and this requirement of being responsible for one’s activities and learning put an end to that.
I had planned for reflection time at the end of the day to talk about how we had all spent the day and what we learned but we always seemed to be in a rush to get out the door at the end of the day and this got pushed to the wayside again and again. I think this is a serious flaw. In a philosophy rich with inquiry, dialogue and reflection, leaving this part out is like not having enough legs on your milking stool. The learners need time for their ideas to marinate; they need to examine their process and they need to learn to listen to the reflections of others. I know
Socrates will excuse my paraphrasing in “The school day unexamined is not worth the trouble of getting out of our jammies.” Reflection time is still an area that needs to be addressed in my planning.

Of course, the planning of the emotional environment of a classroom isn’t complete without looking at the emotional stability and security of the classroom. This isn’t furniture to be moved or some words to post on a wall but rather, an attitude of acceptance that must be the norm.

“Rosie” came dragging in today and just sat down and stared off into space. I didn’t say anything to her but just sat in the empty seat next to her and continued cutting out labels. The bell hadn’t rung yet so this was usually an active time for chatting with friends. It was unusual to see her so quiet.

“Camp ********** got hit last night” she didn’t even look at me when she said it. “We heard it on the news this morning.”

I asked her if she had heard anything from her dad. She just shook her head.

I know this was a long day for her.

(Journal Entry, undated)

With the inevitable disruption of continuity, anxiety surrounding the war and geographic separation, I knew an atmosphere of emotional stability in the classroom was a priority issue. I had much help from the school counselors on this one. They conducted workshops for teachers and students and from Day One, we modeled a place (maybe the one place) that was consistent and safe and had characteristics such as these adapted from Richardson and Fallona (2001, p. 723)

- Aims at fostering good self-esteem.
- Pushes for respect: yourself and others.
- Wants good communication skills in students.
- Wants students to do anything that they do well.
- Building Community.
- Fosters a collective responsibility for helping students excel academically and socially.
- Wants to help students grow up to be the best human beings they can be.

The fastest way to way to hear my stern voice in the early days of the school year was to do something inconsistent with the emotional stability of the classroom. It was made clear that causing an upset in this balance was absolutely unacceptable. Since this was a school wide effort, supporting one’s peers and viewing ourselves as a caring community became the norm and infractions in our classroom were rare.

Another infrequent occurrence but still part of the story of our early days in holistic education were what I affectionately called The Refusniks. These learners bring us to Big Idea #3.

#3 Some Children Need a Jump Start

Lisa: [panting] Grade me...look at me...evaluate and rank me! Oh, I’m good, good, good, and oh so smart! Grade me!
[Marge scribbles an A on a piece of paper]
[Lisa walks off, muttering crazily and sighing]

Lisa Simpson, going through school withdrawal during a teachers’ strike (Crittenden & Scott, 1995)

They weren’t really being non-compliant. They just weren’t jumping into holistic education like the others in the class. The Refusniks seemed…anxious. This struck me as odd since holistic education has the reputation for being the relaxed, laid-back, mellow step-child in the education family. These children usually sat at their assigned seats and asked lots of procedural questions. “What am I supposed to be doing?”
“Am I supposed to copy this?”

“How many sentences does it have to be?”

I wanted them to ask questions, lots of questions; this is what would get the inquiry going but these low-level questions weren’t going to get them anywhere past their seats plus Tisher (1977) found that these kinds of questions correlated with lower achievement. What I wanted to hear were what Chin and Brown (2001) called “wonderment questions”. These were the kind of questions that signaled deeper thinking, understanding of concepts and knowledge construction. So, how was I to get those kinds of questions out of the mouths of the Refusniks? Chin and Brown (2001) found that activities that involved open inquiry or problem solving produced the greatest number of wonderment questions. Hey, those were the very activities that were going on in our classroom! So, what was it that was keeping those children bound to those little blue plastic chairs? I had a hunch. I suspected this was some form of learning anxiety. Shein and Coutu (2002) explain

Learning anxiety comes from being afraid to try something new for fear that it will be too difficult, that we will look stupid in the attempt or that we will have to part with old habits that have worked for us in the past. (p 6)

These children were so invested in conventional education that they were afraid to let go. While the rest of the class was elbow deep in inquiry, the Refusniks were still waiting for the curriculum to come to them. They were afraid of doing something “wrong” so they kept asking what they were supposed to do. They didn’t want to get into trouble for talking or not following directions so they didn’t collaborate, they didn’t share, they didn’t make decisions and they didn’t take risks. These were not the activities that won them praise in the compliance model of
education. The result — anxiety and this non-facilitating type of anxiety is no friend to the learner, stealing focus and concentration (Cooper, 1995).

Since I was still new to holistic education too, I decided we’d make the first part of the journey together. I joined a group of students who were making salt dough landforms and invited the Refusniks to join me. This was less threatening than trying to initiate an encounter by themselves and eliminated the fear of rejection. At first, I got responses like “That’s okay” and “no thanks” but since I was the teacher and they were trying to please me, they eventually joined in.

“Taj” seemed to like the microscopes. We put anything we could find under then: hair, dust from the piano, pencils shavings. I tried to engage him in conversation while we looked at the objects but I got a sense he had not done much informal talking with his teachers before. When I would ask him a question, it seemed like he was trying to find the “right” answer in responding to me. I asked him why the hair kept falling off the microscope when we tried to look at it, he answered “Uh…uh…it’s not sticky enough?” and looked to me for an indicator of correctness. (Journal Entry October 9, 20XX)

These children weren’t shy by any means; they had just imprinted a different vision of learning. Once I got some conversations going in group learning situations, I would fade out little by little and let natural engagements form. While the Refusniks did eventually embrace holistic education, they still seemed to maintain a stronger residual bond with conventional education than the others. After one particularly busy day in class full of enriching learning activities, a young girl proclaimed, “Hey, we didn’t do any work today!” because there had been no paper involved. I also had a child who would get a paper and write whatever he saw on the whiteboard when he came in the room in the morning thinking this was some sort of important information. I’m guessing this was habitual behavior from a former class and assured him that I would let him know when he needed to do this but he just kept doing it all year. He ended up with more than one of my grocery lists on that morning paper. Sometimes, I just wanted to get
into a crazy tickle fight and scream at the top of my lungs, “Come on, guys! This is supposed to be fun!” (Which brings us to Big Idea # 4)

#4 This is Fun!

After we settled in and got running smoothly (around October), the room took on a sound. There was always what I called a happy buzz in the air. The children were not only content, they seemed to be in a state of what Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) calls “flow”; they were almost hyper-focused on what they were doing because it brought them enjoyment. This didn’t mean I had a room of zombies; just students so immersed in what they were doing that interrupting them is almost like waking them up.

Sheesh! It was not worth tears. “Evan” was crying because it was time for our class to go to lunch. He wanted to stay behind. He said he’d eat when he got home. I explained that we were not allowed to leave children in the room alone and that we had to go to lunch at our assigned time or it would make the next class late and then their teacher would chase me with a stick, (No smile). He suggested, in all seriousness, that we just stay behind. He wanted to keep working on his probability chart. He was tossing handfuls of colored counters and recording the results to see if it matched his hypothesis. He simply didn’t want to leave in the middle of it even though I assured him the information would be just as valid after lunch.

(Journal Entry, November 1, 20XX)

While some children worked alone, most seemed to like to engage with other students in what Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1990) calls “group flow” and Vygotsky (1978) called social construction of knowledge. That’s what led to the happy buzz.

Thank goodness for “Kendra.” “Eric” has a book about sharks. He wants to talk about sharks, he wants to show everyone the pictures of the sharks in his book, and he wants to look up sharks on the internet. I’m about worn out listening to shark facts. I’m so glad she decided to take an interest in sharks even if most of her side of the conversation is “Ewwwwwwwwww.”

(Journal Entry, November 3, 20XX)

They were having fun. Not just Kendra and Eric but all of them. Even though I had asked that any child with even a hint of illness be kept home because the chemotherapy had suppressed my immune system, parents said their children were insisting to come to school with
colds and sniffles. I had never had such a low absence rate in my entire teaching career. I suspect this is because fun is serious stuff. Feinstein (2006) gives this mortal warning about the brain’s need for positive experiences, “…if these pleasure pathways are not stimulated or do not receive differing amounts of pleasure, we can become depressed, bored, function poorly or die.” (p.384).

When we experience pleasure, the chemical dopamine is released in the brain and this chemical aids in the construction of knowledge.

Because dopamine is also the neurotransmitter associated with attention, memory, learning, and executive function, it follows that when the brain releases dopamine during or in expectation of a pleasurable experience or reward, this dopamine will be available to increase the processing of new information. (Willis, 2007, p. 5)

All the talking and moving around doesn’t hurt either. Willis (2007) summarizes research demonstrating that verbalizing about what one is doing aids in comprehension. The National Association for Sport and Physical Education (2004) warns that extended periods of inactivity (like sitting) are contraindicated for young children.

I confess, I was having fun too. A year earlier, as I had been setting up an experiment for science, one of the students had remarked, “You’re always in a good mood when we do projects.” She meant something active rather than the passive direct instruction we usually used and she was right. It WAS fun teaching this way and it was good for the students too. Pihal (1981) demonstrated a positive correlation between teacher enjoyment and student achievement. I liked coming to work and not knowing where the day would take us. I liked really connecting with the children and talking to them and learning with them. I felt like…family. There was a sense of community and we were all supporting one another. We would get through the cancer;
we would get through the war, we would share the journey through second grade. Two of the girls made a “yucky days” calendar to count down the days until the chemotherapy and radiation were over. Every day, there were busy calculations at this calendar. Together, we looked through catalogs, cut out pictures of possible wigs for when my hair fell out and ran an election to see which one I should get. There was even a chart made like a football pool to guess the color and texture of my hair when it grew back in. (The prize was a book Tomie DePaola had signed for me about how frightened he was growing up during war called *I Was Scared*). To feel like we were really doing something for the war, we adopted four soldiers recovering in Walter Reed Hospital and wrote them letters, there was also an activity to collect sweatpants for soldiers who arrived at the hospital in Landstuhl, Germany from the battlefields with bloodied or shredded uniforms. The children wanted to decorate the sweatpants (I would have given anything to see the soldier who got the pants with the pink daisies on them). We were facing some very adverse conditions but we still managed to have fun. I enjoyed watching them come up with ideas and helping them to find out about aliens and prehistory and the *Titanic* and poop (yes, really!). I really came to care about them and their baby sisters and their new kittens and their soccer victories and this caring went right back into the education process because, as Noddings (1992, p. 27) notes “Caring is the bedrock of all successful education.” Caring has also been shown to contribute to teacher satisfaction (Brunker, 2007) and teacher satisfaction is a predictor of student dropout, attendance and disciplinary problems (Ostroff, 1992). It all comes from having fun.

If all of this fun leads to all these benefit, I just can’t see why anyone would want to do it the hard way.

#5 The Standards are Only the Beginning – Feeding the Beast
One of the guiding (sub) questions in this study was how holistic education would or could co-exist with the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) standards. As I suspected might be the case, they were fully compatible. We did more than “cover” the standards through the inquiry carried out by the children; I feel that they had a deeper, stronger depth of understanding than with earlier practices in which we addressed them one by one and then did a page or two as proof that they had been mastered. Had I been keeping track, I was certain that the standards had been addressed gain and again and had been addressed in such an authentic manner that they had been internalized by the students. That thought gave me an idea. I wondered if there was a way to keep track, maybe just for a month or a semester to demonstrate to parents, administrators and interested teachers that all was in order in the holistic classroom. This led me to a fantastic invention—the Backward Lesson Plan book. I was already journaling everyday about what was happening in the class. It was just another short step to note the standard that was connected to the activities that came out of the inquiry; it was just a number and letter abbreviation – easy! This after-the-fact lesson plan book became an invaluable tool during parent conferences; a source of critique of activities, events and ideas that came up and a way of following the thought processes, understandings, misconceptions, etc.

“Steven” to “Julia” in the reading center while sharing a book about Abraham Lincoln’s education: “Oh I get it; he home-school himself.”

(Journal Note January 5, 20XX)

“James” correcting “Karissa’s” grammar after hearing her say “I been knowed that”: “No, it’s I done been knowed that.”

(Journal Note November 18, 20XX)

“Alli” explaining why seeds need to be carried away from their source: “Their roots will all get tangled up if they all try to grow in the same place. (She makes a circle around herself with her finger) Plants need to have an interpersonal bubble like us.”

(That’s out phrase for our personal space)
(Journal Note February 9, 20XX)

An example of how an activity could be used as “proof” that the standards were actually being addressed in our classroom comes from The Dead Bird Incident (for clarity of the reader, I’ve written out the standards rather than using abbreviations)

When we were going to lunch down a glass hallway, “Sammy” noticed another dead bird by the door. It’s the third one we’ve seen in this spot in two weeks. She wanted to know why birds kept dying in this one spot. Were people just finding dead birds and putting them there? Was something in this spot fatal to birds? Naturally all the kids wanted in on this one. We took turns looking at the bird pile with lots of “Eeeewwww”s. I pointed out to them that they would be eating dead bird for lunch that day (chicken). “Gross!” was the response. “Kristin” wanted to know why anyone would ever want to eat a dead bird.

(Journal Entry, November 6, 20XX)

In response the curiosity around this issue, it was decided that we would post some chart paper and a pencil near the birds and get ideas as to why this particular spot was so deadly (Figure 11.2)
Figure 11.2 Dead Bird Chart Paper

People in the school community would pass by the bird pile and contribute ideas. I worried about inappropriate responses but was pleased to see that there weren’t any. This got to be such a popular activity, that we actually had to add paper so more responses could be contributed. Afterward, we analyzed what had been written by breaking them into general categories and we then able to make a narrative speaking to the cause of the birds’ deaths and proposing some solutions. After the birds had finished decomposing, the bones were brought in, bleached and put in our science center for further observation. Although this activity only involved (literally) a few minutes a day while it was a “hot topic”, these DODEA standards were addressed Figure 11.4:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Standard (or strand)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(DOSEA, 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovery and curiosity surrounding bird pile</td>
<td>S1a: asks questions about objects, organisms, and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily observations of pile and predicting what would happen next</td>
<td>S1b: uses observations to make predictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of tools to examine the pile and the bones</td>
<td>S1c4: uses simple tools (such as magnifiers, scales, mineral testing devices, timers, etc.) and units of measure (U.S. customary units and metric)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording and clustering responses from chart paper</td>
<td>S1c5: records data from investigations in an organized and appropriate format (e.g., lab book, log, notebook, t-chart, etc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using more decomposed birds to predict how the newest one would decompose</td>
<td>S1d: identifies patterns based on observations and summarizes findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clustering the responses on the chart paper</td>
<td>S1f: analyzes and makes statements about data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by type (plausible, silly, impossible)</td>
<td>displayed in a Venn diagram, graph and table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructing table of responses, continual discussions with peers</td>
<td>S1g: communicates scientific explorations through discussions with peers, drawing, graphs, tables, simple reports, and oral presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using tweezers to examine the bones, observing the decomposing birds through the glass.</td>
<td>S1h: demonstrates safe practices in science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Putting up the data collecting chart paper for responses, categorizing the responses</td>
<td>develop and implement a plan to collect and organize data to address a given question;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a table of the responses from the chart paper</td>
<td>M5b: translate information from one data representation to another, i.e., graph to table;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using tally mark of responses to find the most frequently occurring themes</td>
<td>M5e: describe the characteristics of graphically represented data, i.e., identify the mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining the responses on the chart paper</td>
<td>E2c.4: Punctuation, Capitalization and Other Conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fragment of sentence?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Punctuation?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Did the response answer the question?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Explain importance of clarity in understanding responses</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing ideas about what happened to the birds</td>
<td>Talking a Lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- talk about what they think, read or experience</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attempting to explain the responses of others on the chart paper (based on what was written)</td>
<td>- explain or speak from another’s perspective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating informally to discuss the bird pile</td>
<td>- talk in small groups to collaborate on a project, ask questions, or to make comments or suggestions to facilitate work on a task or project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posting the chart paper to gather opinions of others</td>
<td>- express and solicit opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categorizing responses from the chart paper</td>
<td>- cluster useful descriptive information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examining responses from the chart paper and discussing which to which category each belongs</td>
<td>- describe information and evaluate or reflect on it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chart only accounts for those activities directly related to the bird pile. From this activity came many other questions and ideas which resulted in inquiry that addressed dozens of other standards (See Figure 11.5).

There was much discussion today about the beaks. Would the beaks decompose? What were those beaks made of anyway? Were all bird beaks made of the same stuff? I had no idea!

(Journal Entry December 1, 20XX)
“Jenna and “Jace” were sitting outside the cafeteria in the hall with a book about birds. They were comparing pictures from the book to the pile of feathers and bits o’ bird to determine what kind of birds were in the pile. Were they all the same kind of bird? The kids were chased out of the hall by a staff member who sent them “back to class”. I guess that’s the only place learning is supposed to take place.

(Journal Entry December 5, 20XX)

While the self-choice activities associated with holistic education are invaluable, not all of our day could be devoted to these. There are also activities mandated by the school. In our school, these include

- **Holey cards** — cards with 100 holes in them to answer 100 memorization problems which have to be answered in a certain amount of time. They are color coded for addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. (About 15 minutes a day)
- **Type to Learn** — A computer program that teaches children to navigate the keyboard. (about 20 minutes a day)
- **Specials** — Spanish, P.E., Music, Art (50 minutes per day)
- **Read 180** — An intensive reading program for children who are below grade level in reading. This affects about one third of my class. (90 minutes a day)
- **Math Specialist** — Comes for 40 minutes three times a week
- **Guided Reading** — Ability-grouped basal reading (35-45 minutes a day)
- **Reading Counts** — Individually leveled reading program involving testing on books read for points. (About 45 minutes per day)

With Lunch (30 minutes) and recess (20 minutes), that means that between 180 and 310 minutes a day in activities in which they have no choice\(^1\). The children are in school 390 minutes a day. Simple math makes me a liar. I am telling them that their education is their own and then trotting them off to teacher-directed activities.

\(^1\) This does not include Guided Reading time because I have blatantly rejected this (quietly) and meet the requirement by sending the basal reader and workbook home at the beginning of the year for “homework.”
In Miller’s (2006) words

An education that starts with standards, with government mandates, with a selection of great books, with lesson plans — in short, with a predetermined “curriculum” — is not holistic, for it loses the living reality of the growing, learning, seeking human being.

This schedule had me questioning whether I was really running a holistic program. Since I had no control over these mandated activities, I tried to, at least, use Miller’s (1996) concept of balance. He explains “The philosophical roots for balance come from the Tao and the concepts of yin and yang” (p.7) and outlines classroom terms of yin and yang

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process</td>
<td>Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagination</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Rational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative assessment</td>
<td>Quantitative assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instruction/learning  Assessment/evaluation
Program            Technology
Vision             Techniques/strategy

I spent the year trying to balance passive activities with active ones, teacher-directed with self-choice and fact-directed with open-ended activities. I was able to meet all the requirements by engaging in what I call “Feeding the Beast.” This is what I call the practice in which a teacher complies with mandated activities in order to be able to engage the class in more enriching activities. It’s like leaving a hunk of meat every day for the lion so he won’t feast on you. As long as I had “evidence” that we were meeting all requirements, nobody really questioned my methods. Yeah, yeah, we did the typing thing and the Holey Cards but we didn’t count the minutes. We did the Reading Counts thing as part of our inquiry, in context, and fared about as well as the other second grade classes in all of these areas. We engage in music, art and movement as part of our regular class but still go to those specialists because it is mandated. If I could ever feed the beast enough, I’d like to be able to keep my class all day and have a fully holistic class.

# 6 Achievement: The Proof is in the Pudding

There isn’t a great deal written about the academic achievement of students in holistic classrooms. This isn’t due to poor performance of these students but rather a philosophical snubbing of the role of traditional academics in the formation of self-actualized learners. A deep belief of holism is that a learner is more than a just a test score. Academic achievement is, at most, regarded as a by-product of engaged learning. That being said, I’d like to address the issue of academic achievement during our year in the holistic classroom: We kicked a**!!  Our
performance is certainly not an anomaly. Even though holistic education is often viewed as a touchy-feely fringe element of the education world, Koegel (2002, p. 2) notes, “This widespread belief ignores what is perhaps the best-kept secret in the educational world: the documented evidence that… nontraditional education ‘works’ even in the terms defined by traditional educators.” Research has demonstrated that students in holistic and other nontraditional programs performed as well or better than students in traditional programs (Bean, 1995; Kohn, 1999; Stevenson & Carr, 1993; & Vars, 1991).

I was pleased with the performance of my class; so pleased that I sent home a detailed report of how well they had done to “prove” that holistic education was working. One of those computer-generated reports showed our performance compared to all of the other second grade classes in our school and how we had outperformed the more traditional classes. This author had no friends the day this report went home. Even if I was spouting from every orifice in my body that test scores were only a part of the whole picture of a child, to some, it was more than that and I angered some colleagues by sharing this information. I felt like such a two-face. I went overboard; I ranted about test scores not being a big deal and then (probably out of vanity) flaunted out test scores.

Somehow the shame of this incident snapped me back to reality. I now see the place of standardized tests in holistic education – it’s how we “pay the rent.” I have a friend from high school who is a studied actor of high principle. He is a classically trained method actor but, in order to pay the rent, he has to take on some jobs that don’t really suit his training. He does television commercials and cartoon voiceovers and those live murder mystery weekends. By
doing those, he can still eat and he can engage in more meaningful activities like more creative or independent productions that don’t really pay anything but produce non-monetary rewards.

In the real world of holistic education, the standardized tests are like those cartoon voiceovers, we do them because we must and our acceptable performance on them allow us to continue engaging in the more meaningful activities that produce non-academic rewards. Since I can’t avoid them, what I do now is supplement the scores with a portfolio assessment. Our school hasn’t adopted portfolio assessment even in the early grades but many teachers do it as an add-on.

I noticed at the conferences that the parents looked at the test scores reports for about a second and filed them away with all the other papers in their hands. The things from the portfolio, they touched, they read, they smiled, and they passed back and forth between them. It seems like the scores are just disconnected numbers but the portfolio “means” something to them.

(Journal entry, January 21, 20XX)

“Daniel” is somewhat shy but just talked and talked about each item in his portfolio as his parents looked at them. Now he wants to put everything in his portfolio!

(Journal Entry January 21, 20XX)

I like portfolio assessment. I like it much better than letter grades. I really only put serious thought into its use during this year—in the past only having stuffed some papers in a folder before parent conferences. I now consider it my main source of assessment and those fill-in-the-blanks report cards and test score sheets, I’m just using those to pay the rent. When asked by parents or other teachers why I prefer this form of assessment, I like to share Damiani’s (2004) main points on the issue of portfolio assessment.
• Assesses what students can do and not just what they know.

• Engages students actively.

• Fosters student-teacher communication and depth of exploration.

• Enhances understanding of the educational process among parents and in the community.

• Provides goals for student learning.

• Offers an alternative to traditional tests for students with special needs.

The big lesson I learned about achievement through all this is that, if I’m going to talk the talk of holistic education, I need to walk the walk and let go of grades and test scores as indicators of “success.” I had never thought about it before but a co-worker pointed out a discrepancy in the way we do standardized testing in our schools anyway; she said that she didn’t give much credence to the scores because, with the high turnover rate of our military students, we don’t usually even test most of the students we’ve taught. Good Point.

Speaking of whom, these students bring us to Big Idea # 7.

#7 Brat? No Problem!

“Hagatha Whinebody” is on a rant again. She keeps saying it “The skills! The skills! They need to have the skills! They can’t do anything if they don’t have the skills.” This time she’s blaming it on the attendance policy. We don’t advertise this or anything but we don’t have an attendance policy. She says if we had a strict attendance policy, the children would be here and wouldn’t be missing out on the skills they need.

(Journal Entry, March, 26, 200XX)

It seems artificial to be preparing our students for the “world” while containing them in a classroom. What had Hagatha in a snit this time was the return of a major unit from Iraq. This meant that students would be taking block leave ² and there would be multiple absences, for

² All of the members of a military unit taking leave at the same time rather than individually
some, up to a month. Most children would take time off at home to spend time with their returning service member but many would be traveling to their Home of Record to spend time with the extended family. This didn’t present a problem for the students in our class like it did in a direct instruction class; the students could just pick up where they left off upon their return.

When “Cindy” got back to class yesterday, she jumped right back into her work on the book she and “Mickey” had been writing about two girls who started their own dancing club. Mickey showed Cindy what she had done on the book and the two girls squished together on one computer to add some ideas that Cindy had come up with on the long car ride back from Connecticut.

(Journal Entry April 6, 20XX)

I guess this is one way that holistic education was sensitive to the needs of military children. Trying to work around the frequent absences that are simply built into military life just seemed like swimming upstream. So, why fight nature?

“Jarel”’s mom stopped by today. They just got back from their trip to Mississippi and dad is getting ready to rotate head back to Afghanistan tomorrow. She had a large stack of papers in her arms. She had been to Jarel’s brother’s class before coming by. His teacher had asked her to come in to go over his make-up work that had accumulated while he was gone. It seemed like he was being punished for being gone.

(Journal Entry April 6, 20XX)

Allowing students time to spend time with their families is just one of the recommendations to come out of the Military Child Initiative’s Best Practices: Building Blocks for Enhancing School Environment (Blum, 2007). This monograph outlines best practices for teachers to better address the needs of their military students and shows a turn toward ideas that fit right in with those associated with holism by the Department of Defense.

Another best practice the Military Child Initiative (MCI) recommends is the inclusion of military culture in the curriculum. As was noted in Chapter 5, the inclusion rather than exclusion of the culture of this unique group of learners is a way to enhance connectedness to their learning
environment and that connectedness, in turn, enhances learning (Blum, 2007). An unidentified installation staff member in the monograph had this to say

If we can incorporate the military right into the curriculum, help students feel a sense of pride in what their parents do and have everyone understand that, not just the military kids, it’s a wonderful thing. It doesn’t matter if you agree or disagree with policy or politics, these children’s parents have pledged to uphold and support our Constitution, and they are making sacrifices for the good of all.

This wasn’t a difficult thing to do as this was pretty much a school wide effort. There was a construction of a Hero Wall in a main hallway where children could put pictures of their parents. In the cafeteria two large maps were constructed, one for Iraq and one for Afghanistan where children could connect a piece of colored string with the name of their deployed soldier from a map of the United States to their deployment location. There were also clocks next to the main one showing the times in these locations. At the beginning of the war, our two stuffed mascots, Ally Gator a and Wally Gator got “deployed” along with the soldiers and their little baby alligator, Ollie Gator became quite upset and talked to the children about his feelings. The two stuffed alligators were” issued” desert camouflage uniforms that were made by a parent and they had to get a power of attorney to allow Ollie to be in the care of our principal during their deployment. The two gators went to Joint Readiness Training in Louisiana with the infantry division and then boarded the plane and went with them to war. There was frequent contact and updates on their status and lots of photos. Ally even suffered an “injury” and got to talk about
the great medical care she got in the field hospital. In class, we interviewed the first parent to come back from Iraq so the students would have a better sense of what their deployed soldier was experiencing (also, seeing someone come back unharmed and in good spirits was good for their own morale). They wanted to know about the “bad guys” and the camels and snakes and the dust storms. This set off a chain of inquiry in the class to find out more about Iraq. Still, there was something beyond these activities that I considered to be beneficial to the students. It was a sense of acceptance for who they were and they never had to explain to anyone why they were in our school or why they had been to so many schools or why their parents didn’t live in the same house. One military child says of her school

I do feel like I belong there. My school is diverse, has different kinds of people. No two people are the same, and that makes everyone feel at home.

It makes everyone feel like they have a place and a reason for being there. (Blum, 2007 p. 5)

There was nothing in their textbooks or workbooks that could do this for them. The holistic education practices more than allowed for the inclusion of their stories and their experiences.

“Jen’s” mom was trying to make excuses for her again. Her dad is deployed? Well, whose dad isn’t? Every child in the class had someone deployed but they all managed to participate in class and follow the rules. Did she think I’d never seen the child of a deployed soldier before? What did she want me to do, allow her child to throw wet paper towels in the bathroom because she missed her dad?

(Journal Entry January 18, 20XX)

“Jason” was one of the first to get to use the new thingy-dingy and he couldn’t wait to tell the others about it. “You sit in this room and there’s this really big TV and

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3 At the time, my youngest sister was working in a field hospital in Kuwait and let them ask her questions about it. She is extremely charming and I sensed they felt better finding out that, if hurt, their soldiers would have someone like her sneaking them ice cream cones in the middle of the night.
then, your dad comes on and you get to talk to him. It’s like the phone but you can see him too!” The others could wait for their turn to use it.

(Journal Entry, March 12, 20XX)

Another of MCI’s recommendations struck a chord with me. They suggested giving a child that is transferring in the best you have to offer curriculum-wise, not the leftovers. When I was a child, our rotation date was always in October so I always arrived midyear in a new school. It seems like nothing but I was usually given the leftover workbooks with someone else’s name crossed out and someone else’s handwriting in it. All the good clubs were filled by October so I had to settle for whatever was left like the Tropical Fish Club or the Gardening Club. Whenever my name was added to the job chart or the reading group list, it was never the carefully lettered, first-day-of-school writing but a hastily scribbled, “afterthought” that didn’t match the rest that announced me as the intruder that I was.

What am I supposed to be doing?

- Every new child to enter my class midyear

The advantage I found in using the holistic strategies was that there was no static place in the curriculum to miss and then try to locate upon arrival for the students transferring in. There were no reading groups to join since they selected their own reading material, there were no stacks of papers to make up because they led their own learning and the cooperative/collaborative nature of holistic education didn’t mean they had to try and break into established cliques.

When a new child arrives in our class, we like to play pretend TV show and interview him or her in the format of the audience question-and-answer they see on Oprah and other talk shows. It’s a good ice-breaker and is silly enough to put the new student at ease.
“Kevin” found out that our newest arrival, “Jacob” like Star Wars too. It wasn’t even five minutes on the playground before they were choreographing a detailed light saber battle together.

(Journal entry October 22, 20XX)

“Ben” couldn’t wait to share the song he had written with our new student, “Kenny”. He gathered a couple of the other students and brought me my guitar. “Okay, here’s how it goes…”

(Journal Entry, December 4, 20XX)

Never before, had I seen children adapt so quickly to a new setting! It was almost as if they were sucked into the experience upon arrival. The other students treated them like the new puppy in the house that is in danger of being petted to death. “Want to help with my moon colony?” “You can help us build these roller coasters, if you want.” “We’re making a mural, want to paint the tundra part.” More than once, I had to intervene to insist the child allow the new student to get settle before the ambushes began.

Eavesdropping: “See, if you make it too high, it will go too fast and the marble will fly out. That’s velo.velo… I forget the word. If you make it too low, it won’t go fast enough to go around the curve. You have to figure it out.” “Kendra” had brought her mother to class after school on her first day. She wanted to get the name of the computer program we had been using to design the roller coasters so she could work on it at home.

I had no control over club memberships or assignment to other activities but using holistic education practices in the classroom made a definite improvement on the transition to the classroom for new students from the way I remembered it. I don’t have any research on this but I think lettering their names on the bus lists and job chart as neatly as I could helped too.

#8 Not Everyone Shares My Enthusiasm for Holistic Education

Hagatha was angry - Really angry. I can’t see why it matters to her what I do in my own classroom. I wasn’t asking her to drink the Kool-aid and join me. We were making the order to send in for supplies for next year in our grade level meeting. I indicated that I didn’t need any workbooks. No math workbooks? No. No workbooks at all. They all stopped what they were doing and looked at me for an explanation. “I’m going to try something different next year. I won’t need any workbooks.” They continued waiting so I explained. It felt like when I was trying to
explain to my dad why I liked folk mass instead of traditional mass and he just stared like this. “That’s that thing we did in the 70’s where you just let them wander around and of what they want, right?” asked a veteran teacher. “Well, I hope it doesn’t work!” snapped Hagatha, “Then they’ll expect us all to be teaching without workbooks.”

Memory of the year before I started holistic education

I felt like an upstart. I wasn’t trying to say anything about them; I just felt this need to give my student more than I had with past practices. There was room for different philosophies at our school; that’s what I liked about it. Why was Hagatha (and other incarnations of Hagatha) giving me such a hard time? Did they know something I didn’t? I started to doubt myself. I didn’t want to make trouble. I was messing up the common planning time because I didn’t have any “plans.” What about the supply list for the grade level that we sent out to children entering second grade? Mine didn’t match theirs. Although not a novice educator, I was experiencing a phenomenon Mtika (2008) describes as part of the new teacher experience.

If they attempt to make changes, they may experience resistance from more traditional teachers or administrators in the schools (Vinz, 1995). They may experience political resistance from veteran teachers as they struggle with their idealized sense of mission to change a school (Schempp et al., 1993) or, they may experience pressures to conform to established school practices in order to gain a positive teaching evaluation (Bullough and Gitlin, 1996). This may contrast sharply with what they learn in teacher education institutions that they are supposed to be change agents. (p. 59)

Even after the students in my class outperformed her class academically, on her terms (academic testing), Hagatha said only “Well, they gave you all the easy kids.” Another teacher in the next grade stated recently “I can always tell which kids I got from you; they come in to my class and expect to play like they did in yours.” The “bitch-factor” aside, these teachers were so invested in their own philosophies that they just could see any other possibilities. In a sense,
they’d gone blind. Ridley (1990) points to four factors that keep teachers from considering non-
traditional philosophies

1. An orientation toward activities versus philosophy
2. Resistance to change
3. A lack of resources
4. Concerns about accountability

The deconstruction of old ideas can be uncomfortable, especially those involving a change in the
role of the teacher. So most teachers cling to the methods reflecting the way they were taught
(Britzman, 1991) because it’s comfortable and they know it “works.”

“Jan” and I talk sometimes on the recess bench about our philosophies. She’s been a
teacher here since the Viet Nam War so she has a lot of insight. She doesn’t seem
thrilled with my ideas about education as of late. “I’ve seen the pendulum swing back
and forth on this again and again and it always come back to this ‘teach the skills.’
Don’t waste your time with this nonsense; it’s just going to disappear like it has before.
(Journal Entry September 14, 20XX)

In their defense, most of the teachers had no problem with my having abandoned traditional
philosophy. Many stopped in to see how it was going and to ask questions. We still traded ideas
and did shared activities just like before. The administration seemed pleased enough with the
way things were going that they sent in other teachers and student teachers to do observations as
a comparative to other methodologies (of course that was four principals ago!).

Most of the parents seemed to like the methodology as well. I think they were pleased that
their children were pleased. I got a really nice note from a parent thanking me respecting the way
her child learned and another parent wrote a letter insisting that I be moved to third grade with
the class the next year. Before I actually was moved up to third grade, I was approached by
parents who wanted to know which third grade teachers were of similar philosophy so they could
request that their child be put in that class. I did however run into a couple of the grown-up
version of Refusniks who had a hard time seeing the big picture when it came to their child’s classroom.

“Melvin”’s mom was by today. She was concerned about us not having desks. She wanted to know where he was to put his things. I attempted to explain to her that we had whatever he needed in places where he would use them. We had paper in the writing center and paint in the art center and writing implements and scissors and other common items in central locations. She wasn’t listening...She didn’t like our pencils. She wanted her child to use his own pencil and she wanted him to have a place to keep it so no one else would use it – it was an ordinary #2 pencil. We had primary pencils. She also didn’t like where his seat was. She was concerned that he would have to turn his head to see The Board and that might cause neck strain. I explained to her that the board was in the room when I moved in and that it didn’t signal the front of the room because, if I was doing this correctly, there was no front of the room. I also told her that he could work wherever he wanted and that most of his writing would be self-generated so the location of the board...She was not listening to me...I don’t think she even wanted an answer...I think she just wanted me to know that she was keeping an eye on things.

(Journal Entry January 19, 20XX)

For the first time in my teaching career, I had a parent request to have her child moved from my class during the early days of my first year of holistic teaching. I was surprised by the request because the child seemed to be thriving. The parent explained that “this” [waving her hand to indicate the room] was just not what they wanted for their daughter. I think that hand wave was dismissing more than the physical room. I understood. They were up against something a little odd and wanted a sure thing for their daughter. My colleagues told me not to take it personally; it wasn’t about me, it was about the philosophy. Still, I had the urge to grab the woman and say “Wait! You haven’t given it a chance yet!”

I don’t know what to do about “Dania.” She keeps coming back to our class. She stops in here in the morning before going to her new class. Every trip to the bathroom and the library and she stops in to see what’s going on. I don’t want to boot her out but I don’t want to encourage her going AWOL every time she leaves her classroom.

(Journal Entry August 20, 200XX)
I came to the realization that, if you (or your parents) don’t want to participate in a holistic setting, it can cause the same anxiety as was in evidence in Hagatha and her pals and this will not facilitate learning. R. Miller (personal communication, February 26, 2009) notes

I would think that military families, in general, are more conservative and traditional in many ways. They may, on the whole, be less comfortable with student-centered educational approaches. If there is a conflict between parental and educator expectations, the stress could be harmful to the child’s learning.

The learner (or their parents on their behalf) just has to have that “hunger” or else, it is a force feeding. Some students just never feel that deep need that is answered by approaches like those in holistic education. They are the subject of Big Idea #9.

**#9 Holistic Education isn’t for Everyone**

They aren’t being resistant. It isn’t due to conditioning or misunderstanding or being a Refusnik. Some kids just don’t click with what holistic education has to offer. I’ve had one or two of these students every year. I tried to tell myself, out of vanity, that they just didn’t “get it” but finally had to accept that not every learner is going to thrive in a holistic environment. I thought it was the answer for everyone. I wish I would have had R. Miller’s (personal communication, February 26, 2009) warning in the beginning. I wouldn’t have pushed so hard.

…I would be careful about making generalizations. I believe that we should always consider children’s individual needs. Some military kids may well thrive in less structured educational environments, but I would think that others require more structure, for various reasons.

“Jeremy” is not a happy camper. At first I thought he was just being too lazy to find things out for himself but he does not like open inquiry. He wants to know what’s coming next and how to get there. He doesn’t want to collaborate with anyone; he
even hides what he’s writing so no one will copy it. He has helped himself to a math text and is going through it page by page.

(Journal Entry September 28, 20XX)

Some students need the comfort of one correct answer and don’t like flailing about looking for questions and my prodding with “What do you think?” often ended it up with an angry “Just tell me, okay?” This need for structure is perfectly understandable in a military child. The whole military culture is based on order and routine. During war, when the rest of their life is in uncertainty, structure can be the friend of the military child. While the holistic classroom does have an underlying structure, these particular children crave something more overt. Part of my philosophy is accepting learners the way they are and just because they don’t like to get their fingernails dirty while learning is no reason for me to reject the way they learn. I have to remind myself that I am there to provide opportunities and if a child wants to find worksheets on the internet to do, I’ll provide the computer and the paper for that and even put a smiley face on the paper when it’s complete.

Jersey didn’t want to learn to play the recorder until I told him it was part of “math instruction.” He accepted this and got a recorder.

(Journal Entry October 10, 20XX)

Jeremy doesn’t like to like to play with his recorder. I tell the kids to “tune up” which means just make noise and see what your recorder can do. He will only play exactly what is written on the music sheet.

(Journal Entry November 13, 20XX)

Hand in hand with this Big Idea was the discovery that not only did some people not fit holistic education but…

#10 Not Everything Can Be Done Holistically

I like a challenge. When my whole language professor warned us that not everything in the classroom could be done holistically, I jumped at the chance to find out how it could be done. I
wrote a whole language math unit. It was a good unit, I was pretty proud of it but it was the only one I could produce. It was a second grade geometry unit. When I tried to force holism onto other areas of math, it seemed just that – forced. I thought holistic education was the way to teach everything in the curriculum. I had to make a sheepish admission to myself that there were some places where it just didn’t fit.

Overheard: (Two children are working on a mathematical model their well-meaning teacher forced on them)
Child 1: I already know what to do here. I learned it in first grade. How long do we have to keep playing with this stuff?
Child 2: Just add it together and tell her you did it that long way.

I had dismissed activities such as memorization and drill and practice as being “brain antagonistic” (as opposed to brain-friendly) but Horton (2006) explains that, in some cases, they are necessary, “Use drill and practice activities to help people learn the simple rules and procedures they must apply unconsciously as part of higher level activities” (p.109) and gives as examples, foreign language vocabulary and spelling, grammar and punctuation rules. I will include the basic math facts in that list (having noticed that those who had to stop and count their fingers had a more difficult time with abstract concepts) but only after the concepts are understood through exploration and they have had lots of opportunity to construct knowledge in this area. I would also rely on direct instruction in areas in which exploratory activities are not appropriate such as Fire Safety and Stranger Danger. I don’t see this as an abandonment of holism but rather sensitivity to the needs of my students and adjusting the curriculum appropriately even if it means the abandoning of holistic practices in some instances.

While these ten Big Ideas were the standout observations I absorbed through my experience in moving toward a more holistic teaching practice, this is hardly the end of the list; in fact, this
is hardly the end of the lesson. I see my inquiry into holistic education as ongoing. What you’ve read is only a glimpse into a journey that I suspect will be going on as long as I have a breath in my lungs. Just as the classroom of today barely resembles the classroom of my mother, my approach to education will have to evolve with a changing world. By remaining faithful to the principles of holism in my teaching, I can remain faithful to the needs of my students by giving them exactly what each and every one of them needs. I intend to do just that.
Chapter 12

A Neat Little Bundle
Introduction

The thing I remember most about my experiences as a child in holistic classrooms (in any of its incarnations) is that I remember them. I remember the experiences like building a life size Pueblo village right in our classroom. I remember learning that you could use math for real life – I thought teachers had just made that up. I remember the discovery in the tide pools of the Monterey Bay of all the different ways life was represented in one tiny hole. The memories of the other fourteen classes I was in are a bit vaguer. I have no fond memories of doing Worksheet Number 7 in first grade or meeting “the student will be able to…” objectives on a lesson plan in Mrs. Blewett’s class. The difference in these two models of education lies in who is being served. I knew I wanted to bring a holistic-type experience to my students. I went to a groovy Northern California university to learn how to be an “agent of social change.” I planned my classroom environment and my curriculum according to these beliefs. One my very first day as a teacher, Sister Hagatha showed up at my door and said it looked like we were having recess. She instructed me to put the desks in rows and “just teach from the book.” The other teachers through the years assured me that this was the most efficient way to do it so I was a model of compliance year after year.

This work of inquiry was my second chance. I had the opportunity to reclaim ideas that had been itching at my soul for a decade. I could have remained in Plato’s cave watching the shadows go by but how does one go on pretending not to know something known? The Department of Defense Schools seemed more open to developmentally appropriate teaching practice so I decided to give this nontraditional form of education
another whack. This time, I would be on my “home base” with a population of students in which I was fully invested – fellow brats.

Summary of the Study

This research is a qualitative work in autobiographical narrative inquiry that involved collecting the stories and experiences of a class of military children and their teacher as they moved away from a traditional model of classroom instruction to a nontraditional, holistic model. The study is an examination of those stories that emerge during the inquiry through a lens of holism. For the protection of national security, this research takes the form of “true fiction” (Clifford, 1986, p. 6) and uses blended experiences mirroring He’s (2003) composite auto/biographical narrative method. Also, the entire study was told from my own point of view from my own observations, no direct interviews were conducted and all data were masked to protect privacy. The question guiding the research was what kinds of reality would be witnessed in this classroom of military children as their teacher engaged in teaching activities based in a holistic philosophy? Sub-questions related to the research question were

1. How can holistic education practices be used to help meet the unique needs of military children?

2. Can holistic education practices co-exist with the Department of Defense educational standards?

3. What changes do I note in the classroom atmosphere while using holistic education practices including my own attitudes and perceptions?
Findings

In answer to the big “How’d it go?” question implied in this section, the answer, as with all things steeped in humanity, is a resounding “It depends.” With each individual learner, came a different story and with each day, a new experience for every one of them. There were days when I would call the inquiry a rousing success and days I wanted to get out the worksheets and go play Minesweeper on my computer. Still, there were ten Big Ideas that emerged from the inquiry which can be consolidated into three major themes: (1) There was quite a bit of work involved, (2) The work was worth it and (3) holistic education is not the answer to every question.

Because of all the deep learning and individual learning styles and interests, holistic education kept me up and running all year. As a facilitator, I was continually looking for resources, giving advice in ten different directions and trying to draw out those kinds of questions from my students that facilitated authentic inquiry. I didn’t even do any direct teaching but was more what Miller (1996) describes “a midwife to draw out ideas that lay within the person” (p. 69). I was also engaged in drawing out students who were timid about taking the risks inherent in a holistic curriculum and wanted to cling to a predictable instructivist curriculum. In the midst of all this, there was the never ending task of trying to allow enough academic freedom without letting the whole thing turn to chaos.

While there is still more effort involved in implementing a holistic curriculum than a traditional teacher-centered curriculum, once I got the hang of it, it became almost second nature and, as the children took on more responsibility for their own learning, I had more time for meaningful engagement with the children. The effort was starting to pay off.
This engagement with the children produced a strong caring relationship with them that I had never experienced in traditional classrooms. Relationships based in caring have been shown to offer academic gains as well as social gains, Noddings explains…”Kids learn in communion. They listen to people that matter to them and to whom they matter…caring relationships can prepare children for an initial receptivity to all sorts of experiences and subject matters.” (1992, p. 36)

Both the learning experiences and the caring relationships helped the class in “paying the rent” with some pretty impressive academic performance which was nice but even more impressive was that the students were deeply invested in their own education. They seemed to enjoy coming to class, they jumped right into their work and continued their work until interrupted by school-mandated activities like specials and lunch. Their engagement and obvious enjoyment of learning made the additional planning and preparation involved in holistic curriculum well worth the effort.

The Department of Defense standards were easily met through the regular inquiry of the children and no additional instruction was necessary to “cover” any missing elements. The tracking of how the standards were met through holistic strategies even led to the invention of my Backwards Lesson Plan book which was a sort of after-the-fact journaling of both their activities and reflections about what was occurring in class.

The holistic curriculum also provided the opportunity to integrate their military culture right into their regular learning experiences without it being an oddity. The class took on a we’re-all-in-this-together kind of feeling which served to strengthen the aforementioned caring relationship.
It was also just...fun. I enjoyed the experience as much as the learners did. Children are pretty sensitive beings; they can tell when a teacher hates her job and when one is genuinely “there”. I truly felt like I was part of the learning experience as a learner myself and I loved it! I think this shared enthusiasm for holistic education lead to it being an extremely fulfilling experience...for most.

I hated to admit it but holistic education was not for everyone. Some children just didn’t respond to the holistic environment and seemed a little overwhelmed by all the choices and decisions. They never really warmed up to the openness and would probably have been better served in a more traditional setting. Some colleagues didn’t welcome the arrival of a holistic classroom either (and weren’t quiet about it). I attributed this to a lack of knowledge about what holism actually was and just a sense of threat from something that didn’t resemble what they were doing in their own classrooms.

There was also the discovery that not all activities were suited to holistic methodologies. Some of the lower level elements of learning such as memorized facts that are needed in higher level thinking (math facts, vocabulary, spelling rules, etc) just didn’t find a friend in holism and had to be learned through old-fashioned drill-and-practice.

A finding I didn’t expect in my inquiry was an ally in the Department of Defense Schools. I had expressed concern that they would be a harsh critic of my research because it was a nontraditional form of inquiry and didn’t fit into the outline for their research process. While they did request that the research be sequestered after completion, they offered no resistance to my content. Also, I discovered that holism is not as much a stranger in the DOD schools as I had
first thought as was pleased to see, as part of the news release about our 2007 Teacher of the Year, Patricia Laney.

Mrs. Laney firmly believes that it is her responsibility to work with the whole child. She feels it is her duty to prepare the student not just academically, but to instill in them the knowledge that they are competent, capable who can learn. (DODEA, 2007 ¶ 3)

There is also a recommendation in place from the Military Child Initiative to teachers of military children to have more meaningful interactions with their students suggesting that teachers

Create more opportunities for student-student and student-teacher interaction through:

- Small learning communities, as lower student-teacher ratios promote interaction
- Block scheduling, with longer classes that foster greater interaction
- Looping, in which a teacher is with the same class for more than one year
- Class meetings, where students share their thoughts daily or weekly
- Staff members who are assigned as mentors or advisors to individual students or groups
- Cooperative learning projects, which studies show eliminate cliques and widen friendship networks, even across racial divides

(Blum, 2007 p.8)

This list of recommendations sounds like a shopping list of activities for the holistic teacher (too bad it hadn’t been published at the beginning of the year; I sure could have used it).
Conclusions

So, I wanted to see what would happen in bringing holistic education practices into a class of military children. Having been both a military child and a student in holistic classrooms, I suspected that holistic education might be a friend to the military student and wanted to see what kinds of experiences emerged from this combination. The two major themes to emerge from this inquiry involved the removing of obstacles and the giving of place.

Although the military child typically performs quite well academically (DODEA, 2008), there is much more to these learners than academics. They face some unique obstacles as part of the culture of the military child that prevent them from become fully self-actualized learners. The most obvious of these obstacles are rooted in the frequent geographic relocation of this population of students. Biernat and Jax (2000) describe a disjunction in the learning experience of highly mobile students such as those in military families. While the students in this study who arrived mid-year did demonstrate the initial discomfort of joining an in-progress class full of strangers, they took much less time to assimilate than I had seen in previous classes. The children dove right in and formed friendships much faster (and made friends with more children) than the typical nine month friend seeking struggle described by Vernberg (1990). I attribute this to the cooperative/collaborative nature of holistic education that got the students talking to one another rather than merely sitting in proximity to one another as they might do in a traditional classroom.

The lack of school records that sometimes hinders the placement of an arriving child (Biernat & Jax, 2000) didn’t prove to be to be as much of a problem as it had in the past either. The very nature of holistic education with its self-paced, open-ended focus on the personal construction of knowledge (Miller, 2000) allowed children to find their own appropriate level of challenge from
the day they arrived. I give credit to this personal connectedness with the curriculum for the
decrease in absences and behavior referrals (during class time anyway) we experienced and the
increase in motivation as described in the work of Czikszentmihal (1990) and Fontaine (1991).
With the obstacles of finding their place in a static curriculum removed, the learners in the study
grew wings and flew!

Another obstacle presented itself in the past in the form of fighting Mother Nature. Despite
research showing direct instruction, instructivist models to produce better academic outcomes
(Engelmann, 1971; Kim & Axelrod, 2000), the students in this study showed the highest
academic gains for their grade as demonstrated on the math and reading pre- and posttests. This
which outlines how holistic approaches to learning more closely resemble the way the brain
takes in and uses information to construct knowledge and the research of Bean (1999), Kohn
(1999), Stevenson & Carr (1993) and Vars, 1991 who showed that students in fully integrated
programs such as holistic education do as well or better than their peers in traditional models.

Military children are reminded constantly that they don’t belong. Either it’s the “If the army
wanted you to have a family, they would have issued you one” expression or the resentment of
mobile children in civilian schools described by Stutzky and Barrat (2001). If nothing else came
out of the use of holistic education practices with military children, giving them a sense of place
was the one goal I had for myself. I could tell almost immediately that my passion for their very
own place was rubbing off almost immediately. Again, I give credit to the cooperative/
collaborative nature of holistic education for this one. The children talked. They talked about
where they came from and where they had lived. They talked about their deployed soldier and
how much their mom cried and how Georgia smelled funny and they sang the songs from the
 Armed Forces Television commercials and it was okay. All of these subjects were okay. This experience of the shared culture serving military children mirrors Fail’s (1995) research showing that military children do better around other military children and prevents the self-marginalizing they tend to do around other populations of children as evidenced by Bell (1997). I can say, without exception that there were no children isolated from the other children during the study. There were assigned times to talk to one another such as in cooperative groups but the informal conversation during their individual interest work really sealed the deal. They were talking about what they wanted to talk about and our class became the place where they could do this. They could talk about their experiences as military children without risk of ridicule or resentment. They also learned to listen and to hear ideas other than their own from frames of reference other than their own, reflecting Forbes and Martin’s (1994) Social Ability, an aspect of holistic education in which one is in a social group but not of it. Although not an academic skill, being part of something “real,” being a full participant in a society begins with having a place and a voice in that place.

Holistic education not only helped in giving these students the skills to be a person and a connection to their own education but the academics to back it up. If holistic education practices can do all that and be an enjoyable experience, why do it any other way?

Implications for Teaching

Our experiences were unique to us. The stories that came out of our experience were a mere snapshot in time of what happened to us at the time of the research study. Any implications for practice would have to come from inspiration more than actual occurrences in the study. That being said…
Yes, it’s a lot of work. I came home tired most days but, at the end of the day, I felt like I’d made a difference in the lives of my students. I know there are teachers out there who are tired of just meeting the standard and want more, just the way I did. Most teachers enter the profession because they genuinely want to reach children and touch their lives; no one becomes an educator because they want to grade workbooks, do they? The experiences that emerged from this inquiry could serve to remind teachers why they took their place in the Big Chair in the first place. Some teachers are just not having fun anymore and when the teacher is unhappy, the students are unhappy. The high level of teacher satisfaction demonstrated in this study could be encouraging to teachers on the verge of burn-out. The wide variety of activities and experiences and the teacher connectedness to the learning may inspire a worn out teacher to try something different whether it be holistic education or another philosophy.

To those teachers who are interested in trying something more authentic in their own classrooms but hesitant to make a leap due to lack of knowledge or fear, this research could serve as a bridge by demonstrating exactly what is involved in a philosophy make-over. It could even reach a Hagatha or two by inviting them (vicariously) into the holistic classroom to have a look around and see that there is no threat to them.

While the study dealt specifically with children of members of the military forces, school systems with highly mobile populations such as military-impacted schools or children of migrant farm workers or those districts with multicultural populations may recognize themselves in the descriptions or situations contained herein and might consider holistic education as an alternative to traditional education practices. Even if the populations in this study don’t resemble their own, other teachers can see that then children in the study suffered no harm academically, socially, or physically and that they even fared quite well.
To those ready to invest in a holistic adventure of their own, the discovery in this study that holistic education doesn’t fit every situation or every child is an eye-opener. Trying to force a philosophy where it won’t go (holistic or any other philosophy) will certainly produce negative results all around. It’s good to know this going in to the experience. In the same vein, teachers inspired by the high academic performance of the students in this study who are looking for a fix-all in holistic education to improve academics might want to keep moving.

Limitations of the Study

The transferability of autobiographical narrative is practically an impossibility; another researcher would have to become me and that position is currently occupied. The subjectivity of any qualitative research also presents a limitation. Another teacher in the same class with the same children may have had an entirely different experience than mine due to different backgrounds, expectations, training, etc.

The big limitation in this study however has to do with the nature of holistic education. As Forbes (1996, p.1) points out, “The holistic education movement does not have a single source, a predominant proponent, or a major form of expression. Consequently, it is difficult to define holistic education.” A teacher in our school told us that she was a holistic teacher. She is a desks-in-a-row, straight-from-the-textbook, worksheet-flinging teacher. I don’t have worksheets or use textbooks or even have desks in my room. How can we both be holistic teachers? Therein lies the problem – each practitioner may be using his or her own definition of holism. The particular limitation in my case was that I was using a definition that meant “less structured” because I thought the less structured curriculum could be of benefit to military children. R. Miller (personal communication, February 26, 2009) explains why this could be a
problem for another researcher to attempt to replicate my study: “‘Holistic’ does not necessarily mean less structured. Waldorf education, for example, is very holistic, yet very carefully guided by the teacher according to an established curriculum. Your research may hinge on exactly how you define ‘holistic education.’”

Another limitation around this same issue relates to whether I was really “delivering” a holistic education at all. As was noted in the last chapter, the children spent most of their day in activities outside the classroom or in structured, mandated activities in the classroom. So, was this really a holistic experience for them? Was what we doing together enough to outweigh the influence of an outdated modernist structure? Wilber (2001, p. xii) gave me some hope here

So why even attempt the impossible? Because, I believe, a little bit of wholeness is better than none at all, and an integral vision offers considerably more wholeness than the slice-and-dice alternatives. We can be more whole, or less whole; more fragmented, or less fragmented; more alienated, or less alienated – and an integral vision invites us to be a little more whole, a little less fragmented, in our work, our lives, our destiny.

Still, I couldn’t help but wonder if it was the little bit of holistic curriculum that was aiding their connection with school or it was something else. Hagatha was kind enough to suggest another possibility. She proposed that it was my enthusiasm and not the philosophy that was making a difference in student learning. She proposed that any methodology about which a teacher was passionate would have yielded similar results and a teacher who was less than
enthusiastic about a philosophy s/he was forced to use would have had a poor showing. (Nasty lady but a good point.)

Another limitation was the cancer I was battling during the research study. I wondered if the children would have acted differently around a researcher who was not pale, weak and bald. I might have been seeing them just being kind to me because of my illness. I suspect this is not the case since the years after the study; I’ve had children in my class who knew nothing about the illness and have had the same level of cooperation. Still, it is something to consider.

Of course limited size of the sample and the situation the class experienced due to world politics could also be a limitation if one were trying to transfer any theory generated from this study, but since I was studying my own practice, I don’t consider this a limitations at all, just a reality.

Suggestions for Further Research

This research study was an attempt to explore the experiences of military children in a newly holistic classroom. This particular group of military children was made up of the children of soldiers deployed to hostile warzones as part of a major infantry division. Further research into the use of holistic education with military children should include a more varied group of military children from different branches within the military as this group may have formed a bond due to their situation more than the experience with holism. Also, an inquiry into the stories of children of deployed parents and parents stationed at the garrison and how they relate to holistic education would bring much insight into the experience.
A particular area of interest for me would involve the extension of this research to include other teachers of military children who had grown up as military children themselves. How would this common experience express itself in the learning process?

Another suggestion for future research would build on the enthusiasm limitation. What role does teacher enthusiasm play in enhancing the learning experience? Does it really override methodologies/philosophies?

Just to see how far the continuum extends, research into how holistic teachers define the phrase “holistic education” would do much in pinning down what does and doesn’t fall within holistic practice and may help to solidify a working definition.

Something that didn’t receive much attention in this dissertation was the spiritual aspect of holistic education. This was a shortcoming on my part. I felt like I was stepping on enough toes by throwing the oddity of holism into an “if it ain’t broke” situation. Adding the spirituality issue would have been a tough one to pull off for a novel holist. I’d like to address this issue myself in future research to explore its role in the learning process.

Summary

The overriding question related to any research study is “So what?” What did this research bring to us that wasn’t there before? What does it mean? In the case of this researcher, it demonstrated that holistic education does have a place in the education of the military child. My experience in bringing holism to these children was a positive one and I don’t think I’d be speaking out of turn saying it was a positive one for them as well. Even the children who didn’t quite click with the philosophy still had a pretty good year in our class. Because I grew up a
military child, I was concerned that the children in my class would just ride out their time the way I was tempted to do as a child and not invest in their own learning. What I found in using holistic teaching practices was a group of children enthusiastic about learning and a teacher who was an invested partner in the process. What I found out about myself was that I needed the intellectual stimulation offered by holistic education as much as my students did and despite being rather mousy, I made a change within the system for the better because I believed it could be better. I feel more than ever that I’m preparing my students to enter the world as the best human beings they can be. In that effort, I’m not catering to the workforce or a nostalgic modernist vision of the world but the one in which each child is part of a great whole and realizes his or her part and responsibility in that universe.
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Appendix 1

DODEA Regulation 2071.2
Department of Defense Education Activity
Research Approval Process

References:
(a) DS Regulation 2071.2, “Research Approval Process,” May 24, 1983, hereby canceled
(b) Title 5, United States Code, Section 552A, as amended, “The Privacy Act of 1974”
(c) Title 45, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46, “Department of Health and Human Services Regulation-Protection of Human Subjects”

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this regulation is to update policy and procedures governing the approval and monitoring of research studies and data collection activities that require the use of school personnel, student and staff information, or school facilities in the Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA) School Systems: (1) Department of Defense Dependents Schools (DoDDS) and the (2) Domestic Dependent Elementary and Secondary Schools (DDESS).

B. APPLICABILITY AND SCOPE

The provisions of this regulation apply to all research studies and data collection activities proposed by qualified individuals, organizations or institutions. Requests may originate either from staff employed by DoDEA, or from persons or groups outside of DoDEA, such as graduate students, universities, and research organizations. It pertains exclusively to requests not funded by DoDEA.

This regulation does not apply to research studies, including data collection activities, funded by DoDEA and conducted by DoDEA administrators and teachers in executing their responsibilities to maintain and improve instructional programs and administrative practices.
C. DEFINITIONS

Research studies, including data collection activities, referred to in this regulation are those studies that involve students or staff in activities such as:

1. Studies conducted to develop and/or validate educational theories, techniques, instruments, methods and/or materials.

2. Studies describing, examining, and assessing, or evaluating policies, practices, programs, methods, organizational structure, human interaction, teaching, learning materials, facilities, and/or other aspects of the school system.

3. Studies conducted to obtain information, opinions, or attitudes through measurement means, such as surveys, questionnaires, interviews, observations, tests, and/or inventories.

D. POLICY

It is the policy of DoDEA that all research conducted in the DoDEA school system by non-contractual agencies, individuals or groups of individuals follow the approval procedures provided in this regulation. A review committee created at DoDEA Headquarters will determine the soundness of the research proposed and determine approval. It is the policy of DoDEA that research conducted in the DoDEA schools shall not unduly affect the students or employees of DoDEA or DoDEA as an organization.

E. PROCEDURES

1. Submission
   a. All individuals who wish to conduct research in DoDEA districts/schools shall complete the Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement form (Enclosure 1).

      1. All requests must be complete with required support documentation (e.g., copies of survey forms, observation checklists, etc.). Incomplete requests will be returned for revisions.

      2. The requester shall submit an original and five copies of the request.

      3. Research in DoDEA districts/schools must align with the DoDEA Community Strategic Plan.

   b. The requester shall obtain the endorsement and signature of a professional person sponsoring the research on the Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement, Part 2.
c. A signed Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement, Part 3 is required in order for the request to be considered. The requester shall sign one copy of the Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement, Part 3 and submit it with all materials to acknowledge receipt of, and compliance with, the guidelines listed in the agreement.

d. The requester shall submit forms and all support materials to the following office:

Department of Defense Education Activity
Research and Evaluation Branch
4040 N. Fairfax Drive
Arlington, VA 22203-1635

2. Approval

a. All requests will be reviewed by a research committee, established at DoDEA Headquarters, with appropriate members to be appointed by the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch.

b. The research committee shall convene three times during the school year for the purpose of reviewing research requests: September, October, and April.

1. All requests will be processed during those times only.
2. All requests must be received by the first day of the month to be reviewed.

c. The Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch, shall approve requests based on recommendations of the research committee members.

d. Research approved by the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch, must also be approved by the Superintendents and Principals of the districts and schools in which the study will be conducted. The Superintendent and Principal Approval Form (Enclosure 2) will be included with the letter of preliminary research approval from the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch. After approval by the Principal, he/she will forward the request to the Superintendent of his/her district. Once the Superintendent has reviewed the request, he/she will forward the approval form to the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch. The Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch, will then send a letter to the requester stating the final decision.

3. Conducting Research

a. Data collection for approved research conducted during each school year in DoDEA districts/schools must begin between October 1 and March 1 and be completed by May 15.

b. Individuals conducting research studies in DoDEA schools/districts must conduct themselves professionally at all times. Failure to do so will be sufficient cause for termination of the research study.
c. Research approved by the DoDEA Research and Evaluation Branch only allows the requester to proceed with the research as described; it is not an endorsement and does not compel any personnel of the DoDEA system to participate in research studies.

d. The Research and Evaluation Branch shall maintain a permanent file of all research requests.

4. Reporting Requirements

   a. The requester must submit an annual update of ongoing research by the anniversary date of the research approval.

   b. The requester must submit two copies of the final research report to the DoDEA Research and Evaluation Branch.

   c. If the researcher wishes to publish the research, approval must be granted by the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch who will in turn coordinate this with DoDEA Legal Counsel and Public Affairs, before submission for publication. After publication acceptance, the researcher must provide the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch, with one copy of the published work.

   d. The report must prominently display a disclaimer that the work and opinions are of the author and in no way represent the views of the Department of Defense or any of its Activities.

5. Personal and Organizational Rights

Participation in research studies by students, parents, and school staff is voluntary. Informed consent is required from students and/or parents; a copy of the consent form will be kept in each student’s permanent file. Anonymity of each participant must be preserved. Privacy Act (5 USC 552a) information will not be provided to the researcher unless: 1) the researcher is informed that he/she is receiving Privacy Act information, 2) the researcher collects Privacy Act waivers from each participant, and 3) the researcher executes an agreement acknowledging the strictures for the Privacy Act and his/her duties to adhere to that Act. The identity of schools shall be revealed only when authorized by the Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch. Approval of a research proposal does not constitute commitment of resources or endorsement of the study or its findings by DoDEA.
DoDEA Regulation 2071.2

F. EFFECTIVE DATE

This regulation is effective immediately.

Enclosures-3

1. Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement, Parts 1, 2, and 3
2. Superintendent/Principal Approval
3. Parental Consent

Distribution: X
Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement
Part 1

Name: __________________________________________ Date: ________________

Address: ________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ( ) __________________________ ( ) __________________________

Fax: ( ) __________________________ e-mail: __________________________

1. Study Title:

2. Proposal Abstract:
3. Explain how your research study (1) is aligned with the DoDEA Community Strategic Plan, and (2) will impact your field of study.

4. What is the major hypothesis(es) or question(s) to be tested?
5. Describe the population and/or sample to be studied.

<table>
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<th>Sample</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Descriptions (Grades, Schools, Demographics)</th>
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<td>Administration</td>
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<td>Staff/Others</td>
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<td>Parents</td>
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6. Describe your plans for conducting the study including administration of instruments, other data collection activities, and the timetable you will follow. (Include a copy of all questionnaires, surveys, exams, interview protocols, etc. you plan to use).

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Instrument/Type of Data Collected</th>
<th>Amount of Time Required</th>
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7. Describe the statistical or other analysis techniques to be used in the treatment of your data.

8. In what form(s) and to whom will you report your findings?
Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement

Part 2

Research Requester: ________________________________________________________________

Research Title: _________________________________________________________________

Faculty or Staff Sponsor __________________________________________________________

Name: _________________________________________________________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

Telephone: _____________________________________________________________________

University/Department/Organization: _____________________________________________

Faculty/Staff Sponsor Signature: _________________________________________________
Research Study Request, Endorsement and Agreement
Part 3

Guidelines:

1. Research involving campus level personnel, especially that which involves principals, teachers and students, may only be conducted between October 1 and May 1.

2. Research involving pupils and personnel of the DoDEA must protect the dignity, well-being, and confidentiality of the individual(s), including the rights guaranteed legally and constitutionally and by DoDEA policies. All information obtained is held in the strictest of confidence, under the Privacy Act (5 USC 552a).

3. The research shall not unduly interfere with the classroom instructional process or the regular operations of the school or district.

4. Personal, social, and psychological research of any nature must NOT be in conflict with the rights of individuals or groups.

5. Approved research shall be conducted in accordance with the policy and regulations of DoDEA. The researcher shall cooperate with the staff member(s) designated by the district or school to coordinate the research. It is the researcher’s responsibility to become familiar with DoDEA operating policies.

6. Approval of a request to conduct research is not an endorsement and does not compel any personnel of, the DoDEA to participate in research studies.

7. An approved research study may be terminated at any time by the Principal; Superintendent; Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch; Associate Director for Research and Evaluation; or the Director, DoDEA.

I acknowledge receipt of the Guidelines for Research in DoDEA and agree to abide by the guidelines as stated.

I acknowledge that Privacy Act information will not be issued to me unless I have 1) been informed that I am receiving Privacy Act information, 2) collected Privacy Act waivers from each participant, and 3) executed an agreement acknowledging the strictures for the Privacy Act and my duties to adhere to that Act.

_________________________________________  ______________________________________
Signature of Researcher                                    Date

Form 2071.22 (pending OMB Forms approval)
Superintendent/Principal(s) Approval

I have reviewed the Research Study Request for ______________________________

entitled’ ______________________________

________________________________________________________________________

I agree/disagree (circle one) that my school will participate in this research study. I also understand that given my approval, this research will be conducted in accordance with DoDEA policy.

Date: ___________________ School Name: ________________________________

Principal’s Name: ______________________________________________________

Principal’s Signature: __________________________________________________

Please forward this request to your Superintendent after completion of this form.

The following should be completed by the Superintendent:

I agree/disagree (circle one) that my school will participate in this research study. I also understand that given my approval, this research will be conducted in accordance with DoDEA policy.

Date: ___________________

Superintendent’s Name: _________________________________________________

Superintendent’s Signature: _____________________________________________

The following should be completed by the Principal and/or Superintendent.

If you disagreed above, please state your reasons below.

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Superintendents: Return to the DoDEA: Chief, Research and Evaluation Branch
Fax: 703 696-8924

Form 2071.24 (pending OMB Forms approval)
Parent Consent

My signature below indicates that I have read the information provided and have decided to allow my child to participate in the study entitled ________________________________

to be conducted at my child’s school. I understand that by my receipt of this consent form, the principal has agreed to participate in this research project.

I also agree to the conditions listed below with the understanding that I can withdraw my child at any time should I choose to discontinue the participation.

1. Classroom observations may be conducted, and student’s test scores and individual written work may be collected as part of this research.

2. The identity of the subjects will be protected.

3. The information gathered will become part of the data analysis for the study and may contribute to published research reports and presentations.

4. There are no foreseeable inconveniences or risks involved to my child participating in the study.

5. My participation is optional. My decision whether or not to participate will not prejudice my future relations with the DoDEA, the school or teacher. If I decide to participate, I am free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice.

6. If I agree to participate, a copy of this form will remain in my child’s permanent record and remain until s/he leaves this DoDEA school.

Parent/Guardian: ________________________________________________

Signature: _________________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________________
Appendix 2

Manuscript-“While You in the Far Away Place”
While You Were in the Faraway Place

by

Natarsha Baker
and
Edith Allison
To all military children
   -N.B.

To those who wait
   -E.A.
I saw you packing up your army stuff. That always means that you are going away for a long time. You said you were going to a faraway place and that you would be gone for my birthday.

I was mad.

You missed my birthday last year too. I didn’t even want to talk to you.
When it was time for you to go, I felt AWFUL. I was sad that you were going away and I was mad at myself for being mean to you. I couldn’t stop crying.
When I went to school the next day, I was still feeling bad. Our counselor, Mrs. Diamond, came to talk with our class. Almost all the kids in our class had a parent who had to go to the same faraway place you did. She said we might feel lots of different feelings about this and gave us a chance to talk about it, if we wanted to. I didn’t want to.
Some of the other kids did want to talk. They got to pick a mask that showed how they felt and talk from behind the mask to tell about it. I was surprised. Some of the kids felt the same way I did. Some of them even had mixed up feeling like I did.
Laura said she felt angry and jealous because her daddy had to go away and the daddy next door didn’t. Those kids could still play with their daddy but Laura couldn’t.

“It’s not fair”, she said.
Karen felt sad when her best friend, Shakirah, had to leave. Shakirah’s mom had to go to the faraway place so Shakirah had to go stay with her grandma until the soldiers all came back. Karen cried so much that she didn’t want anyone to see her.
Arturo said that every night when it started to get quiet, he felt worried about his daddy in the faraway place. He wondered if his daddy was safe there and if he was lonesome there and how long he would have to stay there.
Devon was worried too but he was worried about his mom. He said she watched the news about the faraway place all the time. One day she watched the news all night and didn’t wake up Devon and his sister for school in the morning. He said he just wanted her to turn off the TV.
Brandon said that sounded like a good idea. He said he felt scared by some of the things that he saw on TV about where the soldiers went. He didn’t like when people talked about those scary things they saw on TV either.
Marissa talked about being scared and confused about the people who she saw gathered at the gate.

“They were angry and yelling at us and I don’t know what we did to make them angry.”

She said it made her tummy nervous when she saw them.
“I’m tired of the whole thing”, said Ricky. “Can’t we just talk about something else?” His daddy didn’t have to go and he felt bored by all this talk.
Tina said she just wanted the whole thing to go away too because, since the soldiers left, getting onto the post took a long time because the cars had to be searched.

One time she was even late for her game. She said she felt frustrated.
“Proud” said Mercedes. “I felt proud at church when they called up all the soldiers who were going away to give them a special blessing. I was proud of my daddy.
“But Mrs. Diamond, ‘proud’ is a good thing, right? You can’t have a good feeling about all the soldiers going away, can you?” asked Frank.

“You tell me” Mrs. Diamond smiled at us.

“When I come back next time, you tell me if there is anything that makes you feel good or happy during all of this.”
I still didn’t feel like talking when Mrs. Diamond came back and I really didn’t think that was anything good about you being gone. I just listened to what the others had to say.

I found out that I was wrong – there were some ways to feel happy while all the soldiers were away.
Nguyen said that writing to her dad and telling him what she was doing made her happy. She said her mom always put some pictures in the letters too and they all put “kissies” on the back of the envelope.
Ted said it made him happy to get letters and pictures from his mom. He even had a picture in his book bag that she had sent him. He let us all look at it.
Tyler said she felt happy when she got to talk to her dad on the phone. She said that, in the faraway place, it was already daytime there when it was nighttime here so her mom let Tyler and her brother sleep out on the sofa when they knew a call was coming in so they could talk to their daddy too.

She said it was like having a slumber party when they got to do this.
Julie said she got to see her daddy on TV and that made her happy. He was talking about how good the soldiers were that were there with him and what a good job they were doing and how proud he was of them. That made Julie feel better because she had been worried before.
China said she felt happy when her family got together with the Family Readiness Group. The people in the group all had somebody in the faraway place and they would get together to share news and keep each other company. China said she liked playing with all the other children there.
They were right!

These were all good things to make us feel better while the soldiers were gone. I wish I had given it more thought. Mrs. Diamond said she was glad that we recognized so many ways to feel happy because she knew it wasn’t easy.

She asked us to do some more thinking for her next visit. She wanted to know ways that we could help other people feel better during some pretty tough times.

“We’re only just kids” said Jaime. What could we do?”

(I had been wondering the same thing)

She smiled, gave us a wink and told us “Give it some thought”.
Robert couldn’t wait to talk when Mrs. Diamond came for her next visit.

“We made my dad happy when we sent him a package.” Robert and his brother had put some of their dad’s favorite things – even his favorite toilet paper – in a box and wrapped it up and helped carry it to the post office so it could get mailed to the faraway place.
“Our class is doing something too”, said Roy. “We adopted a tank unit and started writing them letters. We asked the commander to make sure that our letters got to the soldiers that didn’t get any mail.”
My dad and I used have chocolate milk every night before bed" said Douglas. "Before he left, I showed him I could do it all by myself. I thought I made it wrong because his eyes got all watery when he drank it but he said it was the best chocolate milk he had and that he knew I would be just fine while he was gone now that I could make it all by myself.

Mrs. Diamond said she had a feeling that it was the best chocolate milk ever too. I wonder how she knew.
“Don’t forget our website” said Ronnie. “We made a site with lots of pictures of what we are doing so our parents overseas can see us whenever they can get to a computer. We even got e-mail from some of them in the faraway place telling us how much they enjoyed seeing all of us”

“Those are wonderful ideas” said Mrs. Diamond. “I know the soldiers must feel much better with what you’ve done. Can you tell me ways that you can make people at home feel better?”
Cheryl was first. My dad asked me to take care of my mom while he was gone. When she’s feeling bad, I always try to cheer her up.
Jodi explained that all the kids in her family helped. “We took over jobs my dad used to do. He made us a ‘duty roster’ so we could take turns. That way all the work gets done and mom doesn’t have to do all the extra stuff.”
“We had a boy in our class who got some bad news.” said Jason.
“We couldn’t cheer him up at all so we just stayed nearby so he knew he had friends.”
“You did exactly the right thing”, said Mrs Diamond. “Sometimes just being there is the best way to help someone feel better.”
Mrs. Diamond came and talked to us lots of times while you and the other soldiers were gone. I never got up the courage to talk about how I felt but even listening to the others made me feel better.

One time she told us that we would all be okay because we would all take care of each other.

She was right.

Mrs. Diamond also told us that every time the soldiers go away, there are two parts to it. The going-away was only one part. The second part was the coming home. I like that part the best.
I must have looked out the window a hundred times the day you came home but it didn’t make you get there any faster.

I was afraid you wouldn’t recognize me because Mom said I had grown a whole head taller since you were gone and my teeth... well they were a little different too.
“That can't be my baby girl!” was the first thing you said to me when you got home. “My baby girl had teeth in the front of her mouth.”

I just said “Oh, daddy!” that way I always do when you say something silly and gave you the biggest hug I could give.

I told you I was glad it was finally the second part. “Second part?” you asked me. I explained about the going away part and the coming home part and looking for good things and ways to help other people — all the things Mrs. Diamond had taught us. You seemed really proud of me and asked me “When did you get so smart?”

So, I told him, “While you were in the faraway place”.