Retrospective self-analysis of the elementary teacher preparation program of first and fifth year teachers

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Retrospective self-analysis of the elementary teacher preparation program of first and fifth year teachers

Kruse, Anne Elizabeth, Ph.D.

Iowa State University, 1990
Retrospective self-analysis of the elementary teacher preparation program of first and fifth year teachers

by

Anne Elizabeth Kruse

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department: Professional Studies in Education
Major: Education

Approved:

Signature was redacted for privacy.

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INTRODUCTION

A look backward can give us a forecast for the future. Using a retrospective self-analysis from current classroom teachers for the purpose of redesigning, correcting, or eliminating part or all of a program is an important process for institutions intent on improving the quality of their programs, sustaining an edge on their competition, or justifying their financial viability.

Assessing the content of teacher education preparation programs could be evaluated by means of standardized tests but evaluating the quality of the preparation program becomes more difficult. Approaching this from an intensive holistic perspective is a focus of the qualitative case study. That is, researchers use a case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and its meaning for those persons involved.

Although retrospective interviews have been used in various disciplines of law, medicine, psychology, sociology and management, only as recent as the late 1960s and early 1970s has this type of research received considerable support and recognition. Qualitative research offers a valuable resource for confirming insights gained through interviews and observations.
Need for the Study

A common strategy found in qualitative research on teacher retrospective self-analysis is to have the teacher reflect on previous classroom experiences and instructional behavior. Allen et al. (1981) describe the program of self-appraisal which makes the teacher the center of attention. She or he then becomes the expert consultant in improving instruction. Excellent teacher preparation and superior teaching demand continuous attention to problems of teacher self-evaluation and teacher self-improvement.

Although research is rather limited in regard to longitudinal studies of factors that have been identified as critically perceived problems of teachers, some attempts have been made to identify specific factors, usually of a survey type questionnaire. To date, there is no specific research regarding face-to-face, retrospective self-analysis interviews specifically formatted to aid teacher preparation programs to redesign their undergraduate curriculum according to the perceived problems of first and fifth year teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to utilize the retrospective face-to-face interview from first and fifth year full-time elementary teachers to glean information which would provide programmatic direction for teacher preparation
programs. In conjunction with the outcomes of the Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Programs Task Force Report, a committee which was charged with synthesizing the findings contained in Profile VII - Teacher Education Students from RISE (Research Institute for Studies in Education) at Iowa State University to make recommendations for program improvement, six areas were targeted from previously collected data where respondents expressed a concern for areas of improvement in their undergraduate teacher preparation program. These areas were 1) classroom management, 2) working with parents, 3) working with other teachers, 4) evaluating student achievement, 5) assessing learning problems and 6) working with children with learning problems. A questionnaire was developed incorporating the first five areas. The sixth area was eliminated due to the time length of the interview.

The target population consisted of two groups. One group included full-time kindergarten through ninth grade first year teachers who graduated from Iowa State University in 1986-87 who are presently teaching in the state of Iowa. The second group included full-time kindergarten through ninth grade fifth year teachers who graduated from Iowa State University in 1982-83 who are presently teaching in the state of Iowa. Both groups had previously responded to a RISE (Research Institute for Studies in Education) first
year and fifth year questionnaire in which their names, addresses and phone numbers were made available.

Research Questions

The following research questions address the purpose of the study:

1. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in classroom management?
2. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their ability to relate professionally to peers?
3. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their ability to work with parents to improve the education for their students?
4. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in evaluating student achievement?
5. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in diagnosing learning problems?
6. How do first and fifth year teachers perceive the overall quality of their elementary teacher education preparation program?
7. What were the perceived strengths of first and fifth year teachers of their undergraduate elementary education preparation program?
8. What areas of improvement do first and fifth year teachers perceive to be needed in the elementary education undergraduate teacher preparation program?

9. Do fifth year teachers perceive classroom management, working with peers, working with parents, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems in a different perspective than first year teachers? If so, how?

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations were inherent to this study. First, the study focused on a restricted population which limited the generalizability of the findings. The sampling was based on voluntary participation as opposed to random selection. Most all participants contacted were more than willing to be interviewed and readily consented. There can be significant differences between people who choose to participate in studies and those who do not as Borg and Gall (1983) point out.

Second, the pool of teachers was drawn from persons who had previously responded to a RISE questionnaire. This group of respondents became the pool weakness. There were other teachers who could be full-time teaching in Iowa who graduated from Iowa State University but did not respond to
the RISE questionnaire for first and fifth year elementary education teacher graduates.

Third, the data collected were based on participants' perceptions of their teacher preparation program and these conclusions and results are based on subjective data in a retrospective self-analysis report.

Definitions

1. Retrospective Interview: For purposes of this study, this will be defined as a face-to-face, structured, interview of teacher's perceptions of his/her teaching effectiveness as it is related to their professional preparation.

2. Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Program: Specifically, the elementary education teacher preparation program at Iowa State University for graduates in 1982-83 and 1986-87.

3. First-year teacher: A person who has completed training to become a teacher and who is in his/her first year of full-time teaching.

4. Fifth-year teacher: A person who has had four successful years of teaching and is in his/her fifth year of full-time teaching.
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Teacher education preparation programs are continually striving toward a goal of developing effective classroom teachers. In theory, college graduates should be prepared for most any situation that would arise in their classroom or building. However, Griffin (1982) states that an idealistic attitude by beginning teachers is lost because frustration sets in.

Despite a solid college preparation, beginning teachers enter the real world of teaching and find the challenges more difficult than their collegiate study suggested. New teachers are suddenly put on the spot to carry out full professional responsibility (Huling-Austin, 1989). "Often [beginning teachers] get the worst assignments and the heaviest loads. For many the first year is a sink-or-swim experience" (p. 5).

The novice teacher assumes essentially the same job responsibilities that the 20-year veteran teacher does, but on the first day of employment (Huling-Austin, 1989). The isolation that beginning teachers experience frequently causes them to learn by trial and error (Lortie, 1975). These teachers develop coping strategies in order to survive. Such strategies may become the very ones that prevent effective instruction from occurring (Huling-Austin,
Barnes, & Smith, 1985). McDonald (1980) reports that if the beginning teacher is not given support, these early coping strategies can develop into a teaching style that may be used throughout the beginning teacher's career.

Clayton (1976) found that 25 percent of all beginning teachers vacated their initial teaching position following their first year. By 1983 these percentages had dropped to approximately 15% of new teachers who leave after their first year of teaching, another 15% of beginning teachers leave after their second year of teaching and an additional 10% leave after their third year (Schlechty & Vance). The overall rate of teacher turnover is six percent per year (Schlechty & Vance, 1983).

Grissmer and Kirby (1987) state that "Individuals may leave early in their careers because of a mismatch between original expectations and actual experiences as teachers, arising because individuals enter employment commitments with incomplete information" (p. 12). More recent studies have concentrated on problems associated with burnout among teachers which has lead to another 20% drop-out rate after the fifth year of teaching (Gold, 1989; Schwab & Iwanicki, 1982). In 1987, one-third to one-fourth of those entering education permanently left the field of education making attrition rates for young, inexperienced teachers at 20-25 percent annually (Grissmer & Kirby, 1987).
Clayton (1976) states: "When the amount of time, energy, and expense given to the preparation of teachers is considered, the question of teacher attrition, particularly first year teacher attrition, becomes an exceedingly important one" (p. 1).

Problems of Beginning and Veteran Teachers

The major source of data on the problems of beginning and veteran teachers is what teachers themselves tell us about their problems. These data are reported in simple surveys in which beginning teachers have been asked to list their problems or to check off items in a list of possible problems. Frequently in such surveys, questions have not been asked about when these problems occur, how disruptive they are, their effects on the lives of the teachers, how they were worked out or suggested solutions. These gaps in the research literature show how little is known about the character, frequency, causes, and possible solutions of the problems of beginning and veteran teachers.

The literature does, however, mirror how beginning teachers think, feel about and remember this period in their lives. It was one of intense anxiety, even of panic.

There are a number of factors that can cause difficulties for beginning and veteran teachers such as inappropriate assignments, excessively disruptive students, or culture shock. These teachers lose self-confidence,
experience stress and anxiety, and they question their own competence as teachers, even as people (Hawk, 1984; Huling-Austin & Murphy, 1986; Ryan et al., 1980).

Veenman (1984) conducted a study on the perceived problems of beginning teachers. Perceived most often was classroom discipline, motivation, and dealing with individual differences. Veenman (1984) does, however, remind the reader to keep in mind that discipline or order by one teacher may be called disorder by another teacher and vice versa.

Johnston and Ryan (1983) identified four common problems of many beginning teachers: planning and organization, evaluation of students' work, motivation of students, and adjustment to the teacher environment. Barnes and Huling-Austin (1984) add classroom management and dealing with parents according to their research.

Classroom management continues to rank as the number one area of concern for both beginning and veteran teachers (RISE reports, 1980-1989). Denscombe (1985) suggests that neither during a student's experience at college nor at a teacher's initial assignment do these teachers receive coaching about classroom management to anywhere near the extent necessary to ensure their survival in the classroom. "Their success seems to depend far more on a rather tacit set of assumptions that are based on first-hand classroom
experience both as a pupil and as a member of staff — what can be called a 'Hidden Pedagogy'" (Denscombe, p. 40).

Much of the teacher's time is spent in responsibilities other than teaching; the massive record keeping, the rigid curriculum guide, the pre- and post-testing...; when material is presented, when it is mastered, when it is retaught, when it is reinforced and post-tested. It is just mammoth (Wise and Darling-Hammond, 1983).

Socialization and peer relationships continue to be reflected in the literature as an area of concern for teachers. Petty and Hogben (1980) suggest it is due in large part to the relatively weak socializing impact of the training institutions. "Unlike other professions such as medicine and law where considerably more attention is devoted to instilling new 'professional' attitudes, for teachers the training rigors are relatively mild and ineffective" (Dreeben, 1970). Teacher isolation for nearly all of the work day further contributes to the lack of socialization and peer relationships (Lortie, 1975). Even though there are exceptions, most teachers still work in their own classrooms, isolated from other teachers (Jordell, 1987).

The transition from student life to professional life becomes a concern for beginning teachers and at times is very difficult. As an undergraduate, the student is busy
doing many things; separating themselves from parents and their role as a child, living away from home and becoming independent, searching for a mate, and generally growing up. After a "honeymoon" period of anywhere from two days to two months, the beginning teacher is ready to give attention to his/her profession. Griffin (1982) states at this point the first year teacher can become isolated because the newness of teaching has worn off and the idealistic situations do not exist.

Dreeben contrasts teacher training institutions to medical training institutions:

Unlike medical training institutions, institutions that train teachers do not provide anything approaching a system of supervised apprenticeship; thus many new teachers start their first job green - and then go it alone...Immediately following graduation, students embark on the first job, one entailing full classroom responsibilities, ecologically isolated from experienced colleagues, but subject to sporadic supervision from school administration, supervision that even if helpful cannot be based on prolonged observation. Hence the portrait of the beginning teacher: cut-off from the sources of knowledge underlying his/her work, isolated from colleagues and superiors, left alone to figure out the job - discover, correct or repeat his/her own errors - through his/her own experience.

(Dreeben, 1970, 128-129)

Working with parents is reflected in the literature as a continued concern for not only the beginning teacher but the veteran teacher as well. Teachers' contact with parents in the United States is limited; teachers want
parents to support them, but not interfere (Feiman-Nemser & Floden, 1986).

Jordell (1987) states that there are reciprocal misunderstandings in the relations between parents and teachers if one looks beneath the surface. Parents influence the school through the students, and certain groups of parents exert influence on the schools. But, Jordell continues, this kind of influence affects the whole school more than the individual teacher making parents more of a secondary source of influence on teachers.

The research on the behavior and attitude of beginning teachers (Jordell, 1985) seems to conclude that new teachers feel they become better teachers after some time in schools, or at least, that they solve certain teaching problems better than before. Also, many teachers indicated that they believe their ways of teaching became more traditional. This may indicate that beginning teachers develop behavior which is not compatible with the attitudes they bring with them from teacher education preparation institutions. Jordell (1987) seems to feel that beginning teachers develop "new" knowledge (theories and beliefs) and "new" behavior as a result of their exposure to "life in classrooms".

Reflective Analysis

Reflective analysis is a naturalistic method of inquiry derived from diagnostic teaching (Renko, 1984) and certain
theories of action in research that describe how teachers restructure tacit knowledge through a formal process of introspection (Garman, 1984; Sanders & McCutcheon, 1984; Schubert, 1984). Involvement in reflective analysis stimulates criticism, testing, and the restructuring of tacit knowledge "so as to produce new actions that improve a situation or trigger the reframing of a problem" (Schon, 1983, p. 277).

A study by Seager and Renko (1986) showed that the method of reflective analysis is viable as a tool for teachers who may be interested in examining their professional practice through a formal process of introspection.

Self-report instruments are used frequently to evaluate the effectiveness of program or training interventions (Sprangers, 1988). Each report is retrospective in nature in that it is a self-appraisal based on past experiences (de Meijer et al, 1986). Porras and Singh (1986) argue that personal experiences are more salient and as a consequence are more likely to be recalled accurately. A retrospective report by Field (1980) states "it is clear that the subjects' desire to search their memories and to provide the most accurate reports is of importance in the results obtained" (p. 79).
Various studies in psychology and sociology have used self-reporting instruments. A retrospective interview was used in the study by Reinke et al. (1985) to provide self-report data concerning specific psychosocial changes. The interview focused retrospectively on a wide range of inner and outer events and self-perceived changes over the subject's adult life. The interview was guided by open-ended questions to assist the subjects in talking about their adult lives.

A neglected area of research is that of the individual perception of one's life changes over time (Suggs & Kivett, 1985). Retrospective strategies measuring perceived life changes over time can further the advancement of life span developmental research. Researchers have neglected the individual's perception of her/her life changes over time (Suggs & Kivett, 1985).

The program of self-appraisal makes the teacher the center of attention. She or he become the expert consultant in improving instruction (Allen et al. 1981).

Some primary teachers have found it helpful to talk with pupils they have had who have moved into the intermediate level, and question them as to what difficulties they are currently having. In a similar fashion, intermediate teachers have interviewed high school students. And additionally, high school teachers have found it helpful to
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follow-up, either on their vacations or by means of correspondence, students who have gone to college or who have gone into jobs in the community. Some instructors at the college level have found it desirable to help current students to interview a certain number of the teacher’s past students to aid in the improvement of their teaching (Simpson, 1966).

Developmental Stages

According to Levinson (1986) there are developmental periods in early and middle adulthood which consist of structure-building and structure-changing periods. A structure-building period ordinarily lasts five to seven years, ten at the most. A transitional period, or a structure-changing period, ends the structure-building period and the possibility of a new one is created. Transitional periods last about five years. Levinson states “Almost half our adult lives is spent in developmental transitions. No life structure is permanent. Periodic change is given in the nature of our existence” (p. 7)

As a transition comes to a close, one begins making crucial choices of meaning and commitment and building a structure around them.

Levinson (1986) found that each developmental period begins and ends at a well-defined average age, plus or minus two years around the mean. The initial three stages are:
1. The Early Adult Transition, from age 17 to 22, is a developmental bridge between pre-adulthood and early adulthood.

2. The Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood, from age 22 to 28, is the time for building and maintaining an initial mode of adult living.

3. The Age 30 Transition, from age 28 to 33, is an opportunity to reappraise and modify the entry structure and to create the basis for the next life structure.

Figure 1 (Levinson, 1986, p. 8) shows the period of Early Adult Transition is approximately equal to the time devoted to attain a college degree. The stage of Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood and Age 30 Transition is the approximate time teachers would be in their first and fifth years of teaching.

It appears from the research by Levinson that persons go through various stages in their lives at approximately a five year time period before moving onto the next stage. Evaluating teachers at five year intervals appears to be a valid idea.

Gould (1985) in his research on adult life stages states "Although a 20 year-old may feel fully formed and mentally well-equipped to cope with life, that same person at 40 will ask how he/she managed to get through the last 20
years" (p. 19). This might well be true of teachers. Although a 22 year old may feel fully skilled and mentally well-equipped to cope with teaching, that same teacher at 27 or 32 will ask how she/he managed to get through the last five or even ten years.

There appears to be developmental stages through which the beginning teacher moves. There also appears to be developmental stages through which the fifth year teacher moves. There are reasons to believe this may be the case mainly because teachers appear to improve progressively, become more sophisticated in method and attitude, and seem to "mature" as teachers.
Late Adult Transition: Age 60-65

Culminating Life Structure for Middle Adulthood: 55-60

Age 50 Transition: 50-55

Entry Life Structure for Middle Adulthood: 45-50

Mid-life Transition: Age 40-45

Culminating Life Structure for Early Adulthood: 33-40

Age 30 Transition: 28-33

Entry Life Structure for Early Adulthood: 22-28

Early Adult Transition: Age 17-22

ERA OF EARLY ADULTHOOD: 17-45

ERA OF PREADULTHOOD: 0-22

Figure 1: Developmental Life Stages
METHODODLOGY

The Iowa State University Committee on the Use of Human Subjects in Research reviewed this project and concluded that the rights and welfare of the human subjects were adequately protected. In addition, this committee determined that risks were outweighed by the potential benefits and expected value of the knowledge sought, that confidentiality of data was assured, and that informed consent was obtained by appropriate procedures.

Subjects

The target population for this study consisted of first and fifth year elementary teachers presently teaching in the state of Iowa. Previously collected RISE data on the one year follow-up studies of '86-'87 graduates and the five year follow-up studies of '82-'83 graduates were used to obtain demographic information.

Prospective respondents were initially contacted by telephone. This conversation introduced the interviewer and the topic of the study. Each prospective participant was asked for his/her permission to be interviewed and to tape record the face-to-face interview which would be transcribed personally by the interviewer. The interviewer emphasized that each tape would be erased at the end of the data collection period. Confidentiality and anonymity were assured. Their name, school or any other distinguishing
information would not be used anywhere in the transcribed data or in the reported study. Voluntary participation was emphasized in the conversation. Upon arriving for the face-to-face interviews, each participant had the opportunity to decline the interview at that point if they so desired. The interviewer explained that the interview would last approximately 50 to 60 minutes.

The total number of teachers interviewed was 30 individuals, five male and twenty-five female. Fourteen first year teacher-respondents and 16 fifth-year teacher-respondents participated in this face-to-face structured interview.

Materials

A questionnaire was developed incorporating all six areas cited by the Evaluation of Teacher Preparation Program Task Force in which respondents had expressed a concern for areas of improvement in their undergraduate teacher education preparation program. These areas were 1) classroom management, 2) peer relationships, 3) working with parents, 4) evaluating student achievement, 5) assessing learning problems and 6) diagnosing learning problems as well as questions regarding the overall and specific elementary education teacher preparation program at Iowa State University. A concluding Likert scale was developed for each respondent to rate his/her teacher education
preparation program in the six areas listed above, his/her overall teacher education preparation, and how each one compared himself/herself to other college and university graduates. The interview closed with comments from each participant regarding the strengths of the teacher education preparation program when they were attending ISU as well as suggestions for program improvement.

Procedures

When the decision had been made to utilize the questionnaire which was developed, a small pilot study was constructed to determine the length of time needed to complete the interview and make necessary adjustments in the questionnaire and the interviewer procedures. It was determined that the interview was approximately 70-75 minutes in length. Both the interviewer and the interviewees expressed a concern about the time length. It was suggested to limit the time frame to no more than 60 minutes. Therefore, after discussion with interviewees and with committee members, a major adjustment was made to eliminate one of the six areas. The area chosen was number five – assessing learning problems.

After compiling the revised questionnaire, another small pilot study was constructed which remained within the 50-60 minute time frame (see the Appendix). The names, addresses and phone numbers of the target population were
Telephone contacts were made to the 41 possible participants to request a date, time and place for the face-to-face structured interview. Of the possible 41 participants, eight had left the state of Iowa and two were involved in full-time teaching in preschool programs. These ten were discounted from the pool. Thirty of the viable 31 participants consented to the face-to-face structured interview. One respondent declined the interview request.

Interviews were conducted with respondents in order to obtain their perceptions of the past one to five years of teaching regarding five targeted areas of concern from first and fifth year teachers and how these respondents perceived their teacher education preparation program as it relates to his/her actual classroom experience.

Interviews were recorded by means of a tape recorder so all information obtained could be retrieved. Tape recording the interview reduces the tendency of the interviewer to make an unconscious selection of data favoring his/her biases (Borg & Gall, 1983). Verbatim transcripts were made of each interview.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was inductive from specific raw units of information to including categories of information in order to define working hypotheses or questions that can be followed up (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The primary processes
involved in inductive data analysis are unitization and categorization (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984).

Units are "chunks of meaning" which come from the data. A unit is the smallest piece of information which can stand alone and which has meaning in the absence of any other information. Units include words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs which contain a theme.

Categories comprise units of data which yield a single theme which relate to the same content (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Each theme of classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement, and diagnosing learning problems contains 15 questions for each respondent. These 15 questions have been analyzed to include five categories of data according to the following categorization: question one is "style", question two is "how style acquired", questions five through eight are "problems and concerns", questions nine and ten are "undergraduate preparation", and questions 11 through 15 are "suggested future program changes".

This study is presented as a case report which includes a description of the questions posed by the study, a description of the compositions of the respondents which are
reported as themes, and a summary and discussion of the conclusions which emerged from the respondents' compositions.
RESULTS

Analysis of the information obtained from the face-to-face interviews with the two sets of respondents, first year teachers and fifth year teachers, revealed five themes: (a) classroom management, (b) peer relationships, (c) parent-teacher relationships, (d) evaluating student achievement, (e) diagnosing learning problems, and five areas: (a) teacher preparation program satisfaction, (b) program strengths, (c) suggested improvements, (d) general program comments and (e) comparison and contrast of first and fifth year responses.

Each theme and area is discussed across data sets, including a summary of the findings within each theme and each area. Examples of statements of respondents are included. Confidentiality is protected by removing real names, gender, school district and grade level identification. Results are summarized at the conclusion of the discussion of each theme and each area.

Classroom Management

The theme of classroom management includes five categories of data: (a) style, (b) how style acquired, (c) problems and concerns, (d) undergraduate preparation, and (e) suggested future program changes. Each of these categories will be dealt with separately. A brief summary of the findings of each category will be discussed.
Fifteen questions were asked in this theme which lead to the five previously outlined categories. A word of caution is necessary. Even though this theme is titled classroom management, some respondents used the words "discipline" and "management" interchangeably. For the purpose of this discussion, classroom management will refer to the way each teacher manages his/her classroom which may include discipline techniques.

**Style**

In order to gather information about classroom management, each teacher was asked to describe his/her classroom management style. First year teachers stated:

I guess my kids perceive me and I probably do also, as someone who isn't the sort of iron-hand teacher. I need to give them a little more freedom gradually so they can take on more responsibility.

I set up what I expect right at the beginning. The principal gave me a difficult classroom where the kids would put their desks into a circle, pull out their radios and cans of pop and would visit. They would jump out of the windows. I went in and turned all the desks around and moved them away from the windows. I told them that their attitude and their responses were going to be their grade. I told them if they didn't push in their chair, it would be counted off.

I have found that I need structure and I use a seating chart. I also implement assertive discipline. Our rules are posted and kids do get verbal and written warnings and then they're out.
If they disturb my classroom more than three times, that's more than enough. I can't see interrupting teaching more than that.

I'd say I'm very flexible. I don't have kids sit in their seats a lot. They are very free. At the beginning of the year we make rules together and we talk about them so much for the first month. I try to get them to be responsible for their actions. They know their limits and we work from there.

I use assertive discipline techniques. I student taught my second nine weeks when they had school-wide assertive discipline and I felt comfortable with that when I graduated.

The following responses from fifth year teachers state:

I am more of a dictator. I make it very cut and dried. On the board I put their assignment in the same place every day. I don't make any variances at all. We do the same thing every single day.

If you're consistent with the kids, that is going to help you a lot. I follow the same schedule every day. As far as time management is concerned, it just seems impossible getting everything done. I am organized but yet I feel there is still so much to do.

I am very oriented towards a reward system, a positive behavior. I am very strict on my expectations but I implement a lot of things that I get from other teachers or from books as far as classroom management goes. I use coupons, assertive discipline, happy notes. The rules are posted. I don't accept late papers. The parents must sign if there are any late papers. I have gum day, pop day, game day, like at the end of the week for doing a great job. We have to teach them to enjoy each other's company.
It isn't really an authoritative role. That authoritative stuff doesn't cut it with kids anymore. They don't respond to that. They're rebellious if you're that way. I have a very simple policy, to remove the problem. I use pretty much a democratic sort of policy and we come in and sit down and talk about expected behaviors. My management skills are just an instinct that I went on and by observing other teachers.

I look at it this way. I am here to do a job and each student can benefit from that but the student is not going to stop me from teaching.

No one is teaching them social skills, not even the church, not even the parents. It's just a "give the kid everything generation" and now we're seeing that kind of parenting. And now when it comes to discipline, it's not always easy to get the back-up at home. Now, the teacher is not always right.

These classroom management styles range from being a dictator to participatory management. Consistency appears to be key in their management. Assertive discipline emerges as the most widely used form of controlling behavior and preventing behavior problems.

How style acquired

Each teacher was asked how they learned his/her classroom management style. First year teachers stated:

Observing other teachers helped an awful lot. I had two excellent cooperating teachers and they had different styles of management and I learned little bits from each of them.
I have gone to alot of seminars on management and observed other teachers since I graduated.
Not from the university. On my own.
Just trial and error.
During student teaching.

Fifth year teachers stated:
Just experience unfortunately.
From student teaching and on my own.
I manage alot like the teachers in my student teaching experience. I observed alot of other teachers and wrote ideas down in my journal.
It wasn't in any of the university classes but it was in student teaching.
It wasn't discussed in any of the classes at the university.

These results indicate their classroom management style was not taught in their undergraduate program but rather from student teaching, observation, trial-and-error and simply on their own.

Problems and concerns
Interview questions in this category ranged from the concern they had before and during their first year of teaching as well as their concern about it now, to describing difficult classroom management situations from their first year teaching experience. Fifth year teachers were asked to describe difficult classroom management situations from their first through fifth years of teaching.
First year teacher responses were as follows:

Classroom management was a concern for me during my first year. I didn't experience that at all during student teaching.

I had one professor who said not to smile until Christmas and that was scary. I never believed that especially with first grade.

Yes, it was a concern for me probably because I am older and I recognize the importance of having control before learning can take place.

My first year it was of great concern because I had eight identified attention deficit disorder children and two on Ritalin. It was a real year of learning. Sometimes teachers don't teach much content and that was one of those years. I taught survival skills. That's when I had the management problems when I had the regular students and then trying to work with the disturbed students as well. I would often look in the back of my room and see a juvenile officer standing there to pick up one of my kids for shoplifting or being on the streets or runaways. These were fourth graders.

I am a real touchy-feely person and you have to be able to balance that and I guess that was my biggest fear.

I felt that classroom management was my weakness even as a student teacher.

I was concerned because I was going to be teaching in an open classroom and I had a lot of students who were easily distracted.

The students gave me a harder time than the other teachers because I was the only female teacher in the department. I guess the students saw me as the weak
link in the chain and they gave me a really hard time. It was noticeable to the other teachers.

Honestly, I was ready to quit. I was very upset. I would go home at night feeling sick because I felt like "What's wrong with me? I'm not a good teacher". I thought I was a good student teacher and I just couldn't understand what was happening.

Fifth year teachers reported:

No, it wasn't a concern for me. That's what got me my job because I was good in that area.

There are many plans out there. You just have to pick and choose and find out what is comfortable for you. In my opinion, it's just experience.

I was concerned because I student taught in kindergarten and mentally disabled and then I got a 4-5 combination room and I wasn't at all trained for that.

No, because I had a confident student teaching experience. I look back at it and each year I have grown in classroom management.

Yes, it really was a concern. That was probably one of the top concerns. Even now it is.

It was a concern because I had more problems my first year because I was too easy - way too easy. I wanted to try all these new things.

I felt like I wanted to be friends with them. I wanted to be liked. Now I don't care if I'm liked.

I spent so much time on classroom management my first two years. Now I can get through alot more material,
These comments appear to document the degree of concern these teachers had for classroom management which appears consistent with the literature and the studies completed by the Research Institute for Studies in Education (1987). Experience appears to be the vehicle for training in this area. The interviewer sensed a tremendous amount of stress and frustration on the part of a majority of the interviewees during the interview session. This was reflected in the respondent's voice emphasis of certain words such as "it was really a concern" and "I spent so much time on classroom management".

**Undergraduate preparation**

Two main questions comprised this category; one, if classroom management was taught as part of any course or courses, and second, if it was taught, describe the technique(s).

First year teacher respondents stated:

- No, it was not taught.
- Not that I can remember.
- We did talk about that in Strategies.

Fifth year teacher respondents stated:

- I can still remember the book. It was copyrighted 1942 or something. It was not appropriate as a class for freshman.

- It just had to be there in parts. How else would you know how to discipline and to organize.
None that I can remember.

Methods in Phys Ed did the most for me.

The majority of these first and fifth year teachers do not seem to remember classroom management being taught as part of any course or courses. Even the few teachers who could recall something, could not remember the specific strategy or technique.

**Suggested future program changes**

These questions focused specifically on offering a separate course or not in classroom management, the content that should be included in such a course, if a field experience should be included, and other alternatives in lieu of a field experience.

First year teachers gave these responses:

I think it should be a required course because when you're in college you just absolutely cannot imagine what is out there.

I really think it is important because learning cannot take place if there isn't classroom management. Required.

It should include information about mainstreaming and include role-playing.

Definitely yes. Even though experience is the best teacher, I feel we should have some basics in classroom management to choose from. Required.

You need to have current teachers come in and tell what they are doing.

It helps tremendously for substitute teaching. Required.
Observe actual behavior management and write what you saw.

Required. Use a variety of theories.

Use videotapes of teachers modeling appropriate and effective classroom management techniques.

No, it shouldn't be a separate course because you need to develop it on your own and see what works best for you.

Include different types of management and discipline available.

The field experience is just student teaching.

Fifth year teacher responses were:

Yes, it would be beneficial but only if you could get time in actual classrooms. It should be required.

Videotapes, role playing, simulations.

There definitely should be a course and required. You need to have "real" teachers come in - ones who are actually teaching. I just felt like the professors were in a different world.

Yes, it should be a separate course and required. It could be offered as a seminar or workshop right before student teaching. Get classroom teachers who are noted for their effective management skills.

I don't think anything can be a field experience. ISU just needs to get those students out into the classroom.

Videos would work but it wouldn't take the actual place of working with the kids.

Required. I think when you're a student you don't realize what it is really like out there and it would give them some ideas.
Both first and fifth year teachers appear to agree that classroom management should be a required course which should include a field experience in their undergraduate teacher education preparation program.

Summary

Classroom management appears to be a concern especially for beginning teachers but continues to be a concern for teachers in their fifth year of teaching though not as much. The specific incidents cited attest to the feelings of the perceived lack of preparation and the perceived lack of ability in this area and the near panic state to which some of them relayed. All first and fifth year respondents did not feel prepared well enough in classroom management upon graduation. They also perceived they learned classroom management "on the job" especially during their first year of teaching but they continued to learn and refine their skills with each year they continue to teach. The majority believe a field experience should accompany the required course on classroom management. Videos, role playing, and Teachers on Television were suggested as possible appropriate substitutes but they felt strongly that a course with an attached field experience would be of great benefit.
Peer Relationships

The theme of peer relationships includes five categories of data: (a) relationship with colleagues, (b) how peer relationships were learned, (c) problems and concerns, (d) undergraduate preparation, and (e) suggested future program changes. Each of the categories will be dealt with separately. A brief summary of the findings of each category will be discussed.

Fifteen questions were asked in this theme which lead to the five previously outlined categories.

Relationship with colleagues

Each teacher was asked to describe the relationship he/she has with his/her fellow teachers. First year teachers stated the following:

- It was very open. I would have been very nervous if I had been the only teacher in that grade level that first year. The other teacher and I got along very well and shared a lot of ideas.

- Just great. The other teachers were very good to me.

- Excellent. Part of the reason that we are so supportive of each other is because we are all involved in a lot of extra things at school. Most of us stay late and come weekends. You see your peers in here all the time.

Fifth year teachers stated the following:

- I teach in a team concept right now with three other people and as far as I'm concerned, it's the best in the country.
It's great. We communicate with one another. We share ideas and materials. Our rapport is the best.

My first two years [of teaching] I was shy and stayed in my room and worked all the time but now I think you need to go to the lounge and eat lunch and take a break with other teachers because once you get to know them, you build good friendships and talk about other things.

I think it's good. I do a lot of things socially with them.

It's real hard during the day when you're first teaching to get to know [other teachers] because teaching doesn't allow you to get out of your room a lot. When you're with the kids, there could be days when you don't see other people just because you're so busy in your room.

It's good but I had a hard time getting to know the primary grade teachers since I teach intermediate because our lunch schedules were always different.

Very good. Some of my closest friends are the teachers here.

Relationships with their fellow teachers described above appear to be positive in nature although some teachers perceive there is not enough time during the day to interact with other teachers. Some teachers socialize with each other outside the school day and some teachers have very close peer relationships.

There appeared to be no noticeable differences between the first and fifth year teachers when describing the relationships they have with their peers. One fifth year
teacher stated she worked in her room during lunch and breaks because she was shy and it took her two years to be able to move to the teachers' lounge.

**How peer relationships were learned**

Each teacher was asked how he/she learned about peer relationships. First year teachers responded:

- Just growing up. I don't think I learned it from anywhere specifically.
- I don’t think I learned about it.
- I've always been friends with a lot of teachers.

Fifth year teachers responded.

- I don't know [how I learned it]. It's just part of you.
- You have peer relationships all through your life. It's similar to other professions. There are the same politics and games as other professions.
- I didn't learn it anywhere.
- It's just me. That's my personality. I had a conflict in college because of my social skills - things that I just wasn't taught before I got to college.

*Life experience.*

The results indicate that peer relationships are learned long before these students even come to college. It was just part of their personality, a part of themselves. Some did not even recall how they learned how to get along with people. Isolation even set in as stated by one fifth
year teacher who stayed in her room for most of the first two years.

Fifth year teachers were more verbal in this category than first year teachers. Both first and fifth year teachers could not recall how they learned about peer relationships. Not one person in either the first year teacher group or the fifth year teacher group mentioned any course or part of any course in their undergraduate teacher education preparation.

Problems and concerns

Interview questions in this category ranged from the concern teachers had before and during their first year of teaching about peer relationships as well as the concern they have now, to describing difficult peer relationship situations.

First year teacher responses were as follows:

It wasn't really a concern for me.

We have teachers who have been here for 25 years or more and change is hard for them. Sometimes they resent a new teacher coming in. People need to keep focused on why we are here - for the kids - or situations can snowball and pretty soon you have an entire building of people who don't like each other.

I was only concerned about it after I signed my contract because I would be team teaching and I didn't know if I would like the other teacher. I think being open and honest gets you through.
I didn’t have any concerns or any
difficult situations.

These women had these cliques and there
was no way I was going to be able to be
a peer with them. It took until the
last quarter of the year to break in.

I felt like a substitute. You know how
subs are treated. Everyone will sit
there when you’re eating and not say
anything. That’s how I was treated for
months. They already had their cliques
formed.

Fifth year teacher responses were as follows:

I can remember being really afraid but
there were six of us new that year. We
had a lot of meetings for new teachers.

I was concerned because I didn’t have
some of the social skills that were
expected.

Yes, I was concerned. I thought I was
always too busy to go to the lounge to
each lunch. I felt chicken because I
didn’t know anybody and I talked myself
into saying “I should be in my room
working anyway”. It did bother me
that I didn’t know a lot of the teachers.
I got to know one that I rode with.
These last two years I decided to have
lunch and go on breaks to the lounge.
I found out they are just like me.
They are having problems too.

I didn’t have any concerns.

These comments appear to demonstrate the overall degree
of concern that both first and fifth year teachers had which
ranged from no concern at all to a great deal of concern.
One teacher even felt guilty of going to the teachers’
lounge for fear of not getting work finished. Actually, the
person felt "chicken" because she didn't feel she knew anyone well enough to carry on a conversation. Yet another teacher felt treated like a substitute until the last quarter of the year.

When fifth year teachers were asked to recall the problems and concerns they had about peer relationships when they were beginning teachers, they appeared to have the same degree of concern as did the first year teachers. First year teachers cited resentment from other building teachers because of being a new teacher in that building, concern with team teaching after the contract was signed (this teacher interviewed with the school district for any K-6 position), to cliques that were previously formed and taking almost three-fourths of the year to "break in" and feeling like they were treated like a substitute teacher—being avoided in the teacher's lounge as well as before and after school visiting.

Undergraduate preparation

Two main questions comprised this category regarding peer relationships being taught as part of any course or courses and recalling what was taught.

For the most part, first year teacher respondents stated the following:

Peer relationships were not taught.

I cannot recall anything about it.
It was mentioned some in a seminar of some kind right before student teaching.

Fifth year teacher respondents stated the following:

I don't think it was taught at any time.
I don't remember it being taught.
It was definitely not taught. The college just expected us to know these things.
The only thing I remember about peer relationships was that the professors warned us about the teachers' lounge and how other teachers will cut down other students and then you are liable for that.

The majority of these first and fifth year teachers do not recall peer relationships being taught in their undergraduate program preparation as part of any particular course. Only one teacher stated that it was mentioned in the pre-student teaching seminar. Since these teachers could not recall peer relationships being taught, they also could not recall any techniques either.

Suggested future program changes

This set of questions focused specifically on offering a separate course or not in peer relationships, the possible content that should be included in such a course, if a field experience should be included, and alternatives to a field experience.

First year teachers responded in the following manner:

It's just part of your personality.
That is what makes the difference. It
can't be taught. It is part of the way you are raised.

Maybe a counselor could talk about peer relationships and the dynamics that are involved and the politics involved.

I think it should be optional. You can tell if you're a people person or not.

Include it in the pre-student teaching seminar.

It is just something that you learn as you grow up.

It should be included in the Strategies of Teaching course on how to get along with other teachers and learning to share and being considerate.

Fifth year teachers gave the following responses:

It shouldn't be a separate course. Just incorporate it into other classes.

It's just part of your personality and how you were raised. It's a matter of osmosis, too.

In any job you just have to learn how to get along with other people. It's just something that you learn by yourself, not in a course.

It should be included as part of a course. Students need to be aware of the politics involved in a school. It's also the professionalism that needs to be emphasized more than anything. You need to be professional to your peers.

A separate course is not necessary. I think it is just part of your personality. Our staff does a lot of things socially and our principal is supportive of all of us and that makes a big difference.

Both first and fifth year teachers appear to agree that a separate course in peer relationships is not necessary but
teaching about peer relationships could be incorporated into an existing course such as Strategies of Teaching or the pre-student teaching seminar. Both first and fifth year teachers stated repeatedly that one's personality is a major part of peer relationships. Except for one first year teacher and one fifth year teacher, both groups perceived that dealing with peer relationships could be taught as part of an undergraduate course.

Summary

For a majority of these teachers, peer relationships appear to be a positive experience. They do express a concern that there is a limited amount of time to interact with other teachers in their buildings.

Learning about peer relationships is perceived to be part of one's personality - something that is learned prior to college which cannot necessarily be taught as part of any course or courses.

Both first and fifth year teachers expressed the concern they had before and during their first year of teaching regarding peer relationships. According to some of the respondents, they had reason to be concerned. Established cliques, being able to "break in", resentment of a new teacher coming in, feeling "chicken" to go to the teachers' lounge, plus their own lack of social skills
contributed to the degree of concern for collegiality among their peers.

All the respondents could not recall being taught specifically about peer relationships in college. A few teachers suggested the possibility of including peer relationships as part of an already existing course such as Strategies of Teaching or the pre-student teaching seminar which should include such topics as the dynamics and politics involved, sharing of ideas and materials, and professionalism.

**Parent-Teacher Relationship**

The theme of parent-teacher relationships includes five categories of data: (a) relationship with parents, (b) how parent-teacher relationships were learned, (c) problems and concerns, (d) undergraduate preparation, and (e) suggested future program changes. Each of the categories will be dealt with separately. A brief summary of the findings of each category will be discussed.

Fifteen questions were asked of the respondents in this theme which lead to the five previously outlined categories.

**Relationship with parents**

Each teacher was asked to describe the relationship he/she has with the parents of his/her children.

First year teachers reported the following:
It is excellent. I’ve never had a problem with a parent other than when they misunderstood when their child told them something and they called me.

Very good. I start out the year by making a positive phone call. I have a lot of parents who tell me that they have never had a positive phone call like that. If the kids know that you’re in contact with the parents, they don’t pull as much. It’s another management technique because the students know that there is that home-school communication.

It’s pretty good. I wish there was more communication. A lot has to do with the fact that there is just one parent and that parent is working and there is just not time for talking about their child.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

I have a lot of professional parents; lawyers, doctors. They think they can tell me what to do. Every time they think there is something that irritates their kid, they are the first ones to call downtown.

This school is classified as a low income school. My conferences don’t turn out very well. The relationships are pretty good though.

The majority of parents I have I do enjoy. A lot of parents come in to help. Some don’t. Some parents have a very hectic life and school is not a priority and therefore I am not a priority.

Working with parents has been hard for me. I need to include more with parents. This was hard for me because my first year I had no contact with parents except for a parent-teacher conference.
A positive relationship appears to exist between these teachers and the parents of the students in their classrooms. However, it has not come easy for some of them. The fifth year teachers seem to have made some progress in this area over the years by gaining experience in working with parents by more frequent written and verbal communication especially at the beginning of the school year but also continuing throughout the school year as well. Fifth year teachers were more verbal in this category than first year teachers.

First year teachers continue to struggle with parent-teacher relationships but do state that for the most part they have a very good relationship with the parents of their students.

Single parent families and when both parents work outside the home are a challenge for both first and fifth year teachers. Teachers state there does not seem to be enough time for parents to communicate with them as frequently as the teachers would like parents to communicate with them.

How parent-teacher relationships were learned

In this category each teacher was asked to verbalize how they learned to relate to parents. First year teachers responded in the following statements:
I learned a lot from one of my cooperating teachers. I thought she was an excellent role model.

I do believe I had a seminar and did some role playing. The most helpful thing was during my student teaching experience when I sat in on conferences and just watched the techniques, body language, and choice of words.

Being a parent helped. Until you have children of your own, you don't realize that every little thing that the child does is so important to the parents of that child. You need to be honest with them.

Being an older student helped me a lot. I had a lot of interaction with parents in the community activities in which I was involved before I became a teacher.

Probably by first being a parent. I had a lot of parent-teacher conferences before I had to do it myself. I think it is important to put them on the same level as you are. Always start positive.

I think it comes from experience. I didn't enjoy conferences my first year. Now I bring parents into my classroom.

Fifth year teachers responded in the following statements:

When I got to student teaching is when I actually was able to sit in on parent conferences. I was able to conduct a few conferences but when there was an extra sensitive case, I was asked to leave.

I didn't (laughing). When I did my student teaching both of my cooperating teachers had me sit in on conferences and one of them actually had me give one. I was scared but it was a great experience.

I don't remember a class being taught
on it. I try to learn something from each experience so that next time I will do a better job with it and not to feel that I’m not a good teacher just because one parent is upset with me. I just try to see how much I can learn from it.

On the job.

Parent-teacher relationships appear to have been learned from three major sources; student teaching experience, being a parent or older student, and on-the-job training. Both first and fifth year teachers could recall in detail conducting a parent-teacher conference during their student teaching experience. Even though some teachers expressed a scared feeling, it was extremely beneficial.

Being a parent seemed to reduce the anxiety since these nontraditional students, who are now in their first year of teaching, had been a parent in the parent-teacher conferences and knew something about what to expect. They were also participants in community activities prior to becoming a teacher.

Problems and concerns

Interview questions in this category ranged from the concern they had before and during their first year of teaching about parent-teacher relationships as well as their concern about it now, to describing difficult parent-teacher relationships from their first year teaching experience. Fifth year teachers were asked to describe difficult parent-
teacher relationships situations during the last five years of teaching as well.

First year teacher responses were as follows:

Yes, it was a concern for me during my first year.

I was surprised how intimitated some parents are by teachers. I had no idea that it would be that way my first year of teaching. As they came into the room you could see the anxiety like I was going to knock them down or I was going to insult them because I was supposedly educated and they were not. I taught in a community where my parents had no college education.

My first year I remember feeling scared like what do I say, what if someone gets mad. I had very supportive parents. I try to be very open and honest with parents.

It was a great concern to me my first year because I had to report sexual abuse and child abuse three times. I had to do this and then I had to turn right around and have a conference with this person that I turned in to the police. That worries me because I wondered how I am going to relate to that parent after that incident.

My main concern was telling parents coming in defensive.

It's always a concern because you are dealing with a new group of parents each year.

I think it is a concern for everyone.

My main concern was so many of the parents are single parents and they didn't seem to care because they needed to work so much.

The following responses were from fifth year teachers:
I do try to send a positive note home once a month. It doesn’t always get done. There is just so much to do.

The most difficult situation was when a parent accused me of not doing enough for their child who needed extra help. I feel the same thing with the exceptionally good student who is not being challenged enough.

Working with parents is still a concern for me because you don’t know what to expect.

I don’t really worry about it. I feel confident in what I’m doing and I do defend what I’m doing with parents and sometimes we just can’t come to an agreement and they get mad but I just continue on with what I am doing.

The parents come in complaining about three basic areas - their child’s social, academic, or homework areas.

Working with parents continues to be a concern for me even more now especially with the emerging lifestyles of people, divorced parents, separated parents, single parent families plus all the diseases and sicknesses that affect children. Teachers need to learn about these things and they need to know how to deal with these things, deal with the children and deal with the parents. There are a majority of classrooms where the kids are not with their biological parents and they seem to have a lot of problems.

No. I’ve never been afraid to meet with parents.

No. I feel like I have a good rapport with people and I just call the shots like I see them. I talk straight.
The main concern that I have is just getting parents to come to things that we offer here at school like QUEST, Open House, and PTO.

My first year I required the kids to put book covers on their books and I told them they would get a zero if they didn't [cover them]. The parents didn't know what a zero was but the kids knew. So the child went home and told the parent that they are going to flunk social studies for the year if they don't get a book cover on. I had parents just screaming "How can you do that"? Then you have to listen to the parent until they get done screaming and then you can explain. I learned my lesson. Now I send home my policies the first day of school and I don't have that problem anymore.

Parents are still a problem for me and I don't know why. They were a problem my first year and it still is now but it has lessened somewhat. Again, I don't think I came out of college realizing that I was the boss.

It's still hard for me to tell a parent that their child is lazy or their child is working to their capabilities and that is a "D". It's really hard to do that.

These responses indicate a concern from both first and fifth year teachers about parent-teacher relationships. However, all first year respondents stated that parent-teacher relationships were a concern for them. All but two of the fifth year teachers stated that it was a concern for them as well.

This category yielded the most data from all five of
the categories. Both first and fifth year teachers easily recalled both general and specific situations in dealing with parents.

Some of the problems and concerns for first year teachers were the anxiety of a parent becoming angry and what to do about it, informing parents of unpleasant news, meeting a new group of parents each year, carefully choosing appropriate words, contacting working parents and scheduling conferences, and reporting child and sexual abuse cases and then meeting those same parents for conferences.

One first year teacher stated when one of her parents found out she was a first year teacher, they immediately requested that their child be transferred to the other first grade teacher who was not a beginning teacher. The principal granted the request. The first year teacher said she was initially upset but the principal assured her that this happens and not to worry about it. The teacher's attitude was positive when she decided that she had one less student then and could devote more time to the remaining students in her classroom.

First year teachers did, however, recall parents who were very supportive, pleasant, and attended conferences regularly.

Fifth year teachers were able to easily recall situations from their first year of teaching as well as the
ensuing years, such as parents accusing them of not doing enough for their child, having to defend their teaching, emerging lifestyles of people such as divorce, separation, single parents, illnesses, classroom rules, informing parents of inappropriate behavior and low grades. One fifth year teacher summarized her experiences by stating that she didn’t realize when she graduated from college in teacher education that it meant she was the boss.

Undergraduate preparation

Two main questions comprised this category. The first question asked if parent-teacher relationships were taught as part of any course or courses and if so, which course(s). The second question asked them to describe the technique(s) they were taught.

First year teacher responses stated:

I only remember the role playing that we did in a seminar prior to student teaching. They told us some words to say and don’t sit across from the parents. Try to use the side approach or a circle table.

No. I don’t remember any course or courses.

It was in Ed Psych when [the professors] were trying to explain Iowa Tests of Basic Skills to parents. I mean, how we are to explain it in parents’ language. The only technique that I remember them talking to us was not to sit behind our desk and not to sit across from a parent. Try to make parents feel comfortable.
Fifth year teacher responses stated:

If it was in any course or courses, I didn’t learn it.

No, just in student teaching by observing during conference time.

There was no course or courses, just in student teaching and that did help.

I do remember the instructors trying to share a few experiences. I’m not sure at that time if I grasped the concept because it was taught indirectly. They may have mentioned it but it did not have an impact on me.

If definitely was not taught. When I was student teaching, I was able to sit in on a parent-teacher conference and that helped alot.

Boy, it’s just one of those things that you are not going to learn from a textbook. I’ll guarantee you that.

Only one first year teacher was able to recall learning about parent-teacher conferences in a course which was Educational Psychology. The only other place which was cited by both first and fifth year teachers was the pre-student teaching seminar and then student teaching itself. One fifth year teacher summed it up by stating "It's one of those things that you are not going to learn from a textbook".

Suggested future program changes

This set of questions focused specifically on the following areas: offering a separate course or not in
parent-teacher relationships and if offered, optional or required; the possible content that should be included in such a course; if a field experience should be included; if a field experience were not possible, what alternatives would they suggest.

First year teachers responded in the following:

I can't say that you would need a whole course. Bring in special people who have had experiences or who are doing these things now. Have some parents come in and tell how they feel. It's not what you have to tell them, but the way you tell them.

Not a semester course. I think it would go under interpersonal skills. You should focus on communication and furniture arrangement. Role playing would be great. At least it would give you an idea how to react and possibly what to say.

I don't think you would need a whole course on it.

Role playing especially about angry parents and a variety of difficult and different situations.

A video of an actual parent-teacher conference would be great but I don't know if any parent would consent to being taped, but they might.

I'm concerned with the parent "separate course". Maybe it wouldn't take sixteen weeks but you could pair it with peer relationships.

Focus on conferences and knowing when it's time to go to the administrator and when you don't have to take it all upon yourself.
Student teaching I think is the best time to learn about this.

I wouldn't say it would have to be taught as a separate course but I think it should be addressed more in class, somewhere prior to student teaching probably in the methods classes especially about body language and how to choose words so that you don't get someone easily upset.

This area seems as if you just need to learn it on the job. If you can show some of the techniques on how to deal with conflict and try to stay out of arguments. Eye contact. Placement in the room.

A field experience would not work (all respondents).

Fifth year teachers responded in the following:

Required course.

The classes need to spend more than just a passing moment or a story about parents. Outlining specific steps and words to say. It can make or break you especially if you have alot of parents that you are having difficulty with.

You need to have students sit in on actual parent-teacher conferences. You need to emphasize the positive side to the parents. We just can't assume that all teachers know these things. My first year, my principal offered to handle a conference with a difficult child. The situation was bad but she handled it in a positive way. It was able to observe that.

Video-taping a conference and the parents consenting to having it viewed by prospective teachers. That would be better than just reading about it.

Field experiences are not possible (all respondents).
It should be required while you are student teaching.

[The professors] should give you a list of questions that parents are going to ask. Advise your student teachers when they go out to student teach to ask other teachers in the building about parent-teacher conferences. Go to the principal.

See if the cooperating teacher will allow you to conduct a conference because it is very easy for a new person to get rattled and say things out of proportion or say something that might not be as clear to the parents as it could have been.

Actual experience is the best teacher.

Know how to interpret test scores to parents. We weren't taught about ITBs, their meaning, and how to interpret them.

It would be really good to video-tape a teacher in a parent-teacher conference because of some of the things that the parents say. One of my parents had obviously been drinking all day.

Some first and fifth year teachers stated that a separate course on parent-teacher relationships would be offered and others stated it should be included as part of another course such as combining peer relationships with parent-teacher conferences or a course title "Interpersonal Skills". All respondents stated it should be required whether it is a separate course or part of another course. Teachers perceived that an entire semester course specifically on the topic of parent-teacher relationships was not warranted.
The critical elements which should be included in teaching about parent-teacher relationships include communication with parents, furniture arrangement for conferences, dealing with angry parents, body language, dealing with conflict, interpreting test scores to parents, and eye contact. Videotaping a conference with consenting parents would prove beneficial although the teachers realized this may not be possible. Role playing was suggested frequently since a majority of the teachers stated that an attached field experience was not plausible.

First year teachers had more specific suggestions for future program changes than did first year teachers. Some of the suggestions were to outline specific steps and words to say in anticipation of difficult situations, emphasize and begin with the positive side to parents. The undergraduate courses need to spend more than just a passing moment or a story about parent-teacher relationships such as asking parents to participate in mock conferences on campus, having the professors construct a list of questions that parents are going to ask, inquire of cooperating teachers about parent-teacher relationships during a student's pre-student teaching experience, learn how to interpret specific test scores such as Iowa Tests of Basic Skills and Metropolitan Reading Test.

Experience was cited as the best teacher.
Summary

The theme of parent-teacher relationships produced, by far, the most data of the five themes. Specifically within the theme, the category of problems and concerns yielded the most data of the five categories.

Parent-teacher relationships appear to be of great concern for first year teachers as well as fifth year teachers. The interviewer detected a sense of frustration and at times helplessness from the interviewees regarding strategies in dealing with parents during the recording sessions which was evidenced by uneasiness in body language, specific incidents and details recalled when dealing with parents, emphasis of words or phrases, and tone of voice.

Parent-teacher relationships were of concern to both first and fifth year teachers and continue to be a concern to them although fifth year teachers perceived themselves as being more confident as they had progressed from their first year of teaching to the present.

Both groups of teachers did not learn about parent-teacher relationships in any undergraduate class but rather learned it through experience in either student teaching or in actual parent-teacher conferences or encounters.

Both first and fifth year teachers had similar yet considerable suggestions for program improvements in the area of parent-teacher relationships. They frequently
stated this particular area was in desperate need of being included in part of a course or courses which should be required in the undergraduate elementary education teacher preparation program. All respondents stated they lacked strategies and preparation in dealing with parents although most of them had positive relationships with the parents of their students.

Evaluating Student Achievement

The theme of evaluating student achievement includes five categories of data: (a) methods used to evaluate student achievement, (b) how methods were learned, (c) problems and concerns, (d) undergraduate preparation, and (e) suggested future program changes. Each of these categories will be dealt with separately. A brief summary of the responses in each category will be discussed.

Fifteen questions were asked in this theme which lead to the five previously outlined categories.

Methods used to evaluate student achievement

Each teacher was asked to describe the methods he/she used to evaluate student achievement. First year teachers responded by stating the following:

Iowa Tests of Basic Skills.
I use anecdotal records. It is more of an informal observation. I do have some check lists as far as skills go so when I do assess the skills, I can use that because I pretty much stay away from the basal.

I have individual conferencing with the students and I require them to set a nine week goal. The most important thing about evaluation is to let them know before you grade, what the criteria will be. I've tried a lot of forms and I post them up in the room so when they go out the door, they can see what I am going to grade on. You have to give them examples and give them guidelines. It seems so easy to me because I know what I want, but the kids don't know what I want.

Fifth year teachers responded in the following:

At the end of each quarter all of the same grade teachers get together and give a test over all the skills that we have been learning. We test the kids to see how they're doing in different areas of reading, math, and handwriting. The tests are constructed by all of us.

I put daily assignments on a five point scale. I take daily grades and it's a lot of work. My first year I tried taking grades only two or three times a week and the students just didn't do the work. They didn't understand why I took grades one day and then didn't another day. I thought that random grading would be OK but the kids sensed it was unfair.

I give announced quizzes. I don't believe in pop quizzes. I use cooperative learning but you don't have to take a cooperative grade.

My first year I just went 90, 80, 70. I don't know where that came from but since then, I've changed it. Now I go more with what the middle school expects and their percentages.
We’re on computers now for reading and math and it’s all percentages. The parent gets a print-out of that and can see how the child has done on a particular skill.

I give letter grades and also effort grades on a scale of one to five. It is not uniform with the rest of the building.

At the beginning of the year I hand out a sheet for the kids to know exactly what an A is and a B etc. I write percentages on their papers, not letter grades.

There appears to be a wide range of methods for evaluating student achievement in both the first year and the fifth year teachers. Various methods described were percentages, letter grades, anecdotal records, and computer generated skill sheets. One particular method of evaluating student achievement did not appear to stand out either in the first year or fifth year teachers.

How evaluating student achievement methods were learned

Each teacher was asked how he/she learned how to evaluate student achievement. First year teachers responded:

I relied on the other teachers alot. I didn’t know anything about grading, how to do it, what you should figure percentages on. What is an A? What is a B?

My cooperating teacher was really good. She emphasized the importance of daily recording. She had a system set up where you did daily assignments in black ink and tests in red ink and weighed them differently. She just taught me that and I guess I have just stuck with it because no one has taught me any different.
It's mostly kind of picking from here and there and from what I've learned from books that I have read since graduating and from what I have seen other teachers do.

I had to ask the other grade level teacher what to do. They gave me this grade book and it has Week 1. Do they expect me to put a grade in there every day?

The principal had to help me. I didn't know what to do or where to begin.

Fifth year teachers responses were:

I learned how to evaluate in the reading tutoring class like inventories. I don't think there were any other areas of math or anything. If it was, I don't remember.

I just learned it on the job.

Trial and error. Just trying new things.

A few techniques were taught to me because when I started [my first year of teaching] I tried many of techniques that I was taught.

Student teaching. Also, I have developed my own grading because we emphasize writing.

First and fifth year teachers appear to have learned how to evaluate student achievement both from on the job training as well as student teaching and a few techniques in some courses. The only specific course that was cited was the reading tutoring course where informal reading inventories were specified.

Problems and Concerns

Interview questions in this category ranged from the concern teachers had before their first year of teaching,
during their first year of teaching, the concern they have now about evaluating student achievement, to describing difficulties in evaluating student achievement.

First year teachers stated the following:

It wasn’t a concern. I didn’t really think about it before my first year but then it finally hit me during my first year about their [test] scores and the shock of seeing all those low scores and feeling it was all my fault. It was a concern for me before I started teaching but I did alot of reading.

During my first year I was concerned when the child has worked so hard and still didn’t do very well and you don’t really want to give them that grade so you wrestle with it and try to decide who you’re being honest with and the pros and the cons.

I wasn’t concerned before my first year because I thought I wouldn’t have to come up with anything on my own but just go along with what the system used. I did that the first year and I didn’t like it at all and then I pretty much knew what would and would not work for me.

I wasn’t concerned because I had a good example from my cooperating teacher during student teaching.

The first nine weeks I only had six main assignments and I had 20 percent of them fail. I was so upset and went to see the principal and I said “What are we going to do?” He said, “Well, you’re going to learn a lesson”. And I did. But the kids were the ones who learned the lessons better. We did math lessons on the board and showed them what two zeros did to their grade. I learned to give more assignments and they learned a lesson to do what the teacher says. It helped for the rest of the year.
It was a concern for me during my first year because I wanted to be fair and consistent.

Mostly I am doing what my cooperating teacher taught me. It works for me as well as it worked for her.

I wasn't concerned before my first year until I really got into it. I really struggled because I wanted to be fair because I knew those grades went on their permanent records.

Grades are hard to give. Sometimes it is so subjective.

Fifth year teachers stated the following:

I really had no concerns before my first year in this area. When I was teaching I became concerned that the tests that I made would really be testing what I thought should be tested.

I just didn't know what to expect.

Even though you can decide how to grade, the hard part is recording areas like creativity. How do you grade an oral report? It might be the best the child can do.

Our parents get a print-out of the skills their child can and cannot do but there is a problem with that. Maybe the kid is getting an A on their skills but they don't get an A on their report card. The student might not comprehend stories or something else.

The most difficult thing for me was to justify grades to parents. Grades are difficult to give. They are subjective.

It was a concern for me because evaluation is really important. I would rather have four parent-teacher conferences per year and no report cards. We shouldn't be
giving elementary students As, Bs, and Cs. A paragraph written would be alot better.

This category of problems and concerns yielded the most data from all five categories. There was an overall concern about evaluating student achievement before and during their first year of teaching ranging from establishing criteria for grades and justifying those grades to parents, to the concern that grades become a part of the student's permanent file. Very specific situations were described from both first and fifth year teachers. It appears there was equal concern before and during the first year of teaching from both first and fifth year teachers.

The responses from the fifth year teachers indicate continued concern for evaluating student achievement especially in the areas of whole language, journals, handwriting and effort grades.

**Undergraduate preparation**

Two main questions comprise this category of evaluating student achievement. The first question asked if evaluating student achievement was taught as part of any course or courses in undergraduate preparation and the second question asked participants to recall what was taught if they responded "yes" to the first question.

First year teacher respondents stated:

I know they talked a little bit about it when we got into stats but I don't recall
any particular course. It’s not enough that it made an impression on me.

I don’t really remember anything.

I can’t think of any class that stands out as far as touching on the evaluation.

No it wasn’t taught.

Fifth year teacher respondents stated:

No, it wasn’t taught.

I faintly remember a psych course of some kind but it didn’t deal with actual student papers.

Yes. I took an independent study with a certain professor of which we were looking how to evaluate kids in interpreting test scores. I think he/she turned it into a class.

There was a course on tests. The instructors presented a variety of tests and we made alot of tests which I felt were good.

Yes I remember back as a freshman I was taking a counseling course where we worked with some numbers in figuring out scores to do with teaching but I don’t remember what it was. The freshman year was way too early to do that.

These responses state that none of the first year teachers remember taking a course on evaluating student achievement and only two respondents from the fifth year teacher pool vaguely remember a course on evaluation where tests were constructed. One fifth year teacher cited a counseling course which was taken during her freshman year. The teacher believed it was too early to be discussing tests and student evaluation at that time.
**Suggested future program changes**

This set of questions focused specifically on the need to offer a separate course or not in evaluating student achievement, if a separate course should be required, the possible content that should be covered if a separate course were needed, if a field experience should be included, and if not a field experience, other suggested alternatives to a field experience.

First year teachers responded in the following manner:

Yes, a separate course is needed. We need to know how to interpret tests and test scores. We need to know which tests are important and most frequently used and why they are used. Interpreting norms.

It would help to have some tests available that students actually took and then help us to interpret those for grouping and grading purposes and to interpret for parent understanding.

I think a separate course should be required. Maybe some batteries of tests could be handed out that people have used to evaluate writing. There shouldn’t be a field experience, just incorporate it into student teaching.

Yes it should be a separate course because you need to know the different ways to evaluate student achievement and the different grade and age levels in order to grade that achievement. It should be required because as an undergraduate you don’t know what kind of a system you’re going to be in. A field experience would not be feasible. The course needs to include examples of various students’ work at various ages and content areas and allow us to give it a grade or set up criteria for grading, even art work.
No, it should not be a separate course, just integrate it into some sort of methods or strategies course but you definitely need to have a method for evaluating and include a variety of methods for evaluating students' work. A field experience is not feasible, just incorporate it into student teaching. You could have samples of students' work and then evaluate them individually and then discuss why you evaluated the way you did.

Not a separate course but it would be important to include it in some of the methods classes like how to grade journals by having some actual journals there and deciding how you would grade it. Grouping with the criteria or subjectiveness of grading those papers is what is needed.

Fifth year teachers responded in the following manner:

Yes, it should be required but it should be practical. Learn the basic test like ITBS but emphasize that the test is not the only means of evaluating or grouping. The best way is to evaluate on a daily basis in your classroom and keep notes too. A field experience would not be possible or necessary.

It should be a required separate course to include the components of the Special Ed program of MD, LD and BD courses. A field experience of observing would help but you need to actually work with these kids even just for a few days.

It should be a required separate course about evaluating students both formally and informally. It would be important for regular classroom students to be there in a field experience but I don't know how reliable it would be. Maybe doing it during student teaching and working with the kids there.
There isn't enough to warrant a special course on it. Maybe more direct contact with actual papers and then how to set up evaluation criteria. I don't think a field experience would be possible.

Specific suggestions were given by both first and fifth year teachers for the undergraduate preparation program as it relates to evaluating student achievement. A separate course on evaluating student achievement was suggested by nearly half of both first and fifth year teachers. The other half suggested that evaluating student achievement could be included in parts of methods classes or student teaching. Both groups made very specific suggestions of what should be included whether it was a separate course or not such as how to interpret tests and test scores, what tests are most frequently used and why, how to interpret norms, making tests available which elementary students have taken and allowing the ISU students to interpret those tests for purposes of grading, and then receive training on how to relate that information to the parents.

Grading journals and the criteria used for grading journals emerged as a challenge for most first year teachers. They were concerned about subjective grading, establishing criteria for grades, and then justifying that grading system to parents.
Summary

There were almost as many methods to evaluate student achievement as there were respondents. A few techniques of evaluating student achievement were acquired during courses on campus but only one course, the reading tutoring course, could be specifically named by any of the respondents. Most respondents cited on-the-job training during their first year as their training ground.

The main concern which emerged on evaluating student achievement was establishing criteria for grades whether it was objective or subjective. These respondents stated subjective grading was more difficult for them, especially when they were attempting to justify those grades to parents and when they realized those grades became a part of a student's permanent file.

Three specific areas of concern surfaced from the respondents in the area of evaluating student achievement which were grading journals, grading handwriting, and grading a student's effort.

Diagnosing Learning Problems

The theme of diagnosing learning problems includes five categories of data: (a) methods, (b) how methods were acquired, (c) problems and concerns, (d) undergraduate preparation, and (e) suggested future program changes. Each of these categories will be dealt with separately. A brief
summary of the findings of each category will be discussed.

Fifteen questions were asked in this theme which lead to the five previously outlined categories. A word of caution is necessary. Although the initial pilot study reflected a required reduction of actual clock time for the face-to-face interview, it became apparent during four of the interviews that time was a critical factor. In all four of those interviews the time limit of 55 minutes was consumed during the first four categories and the interviewer sensed a feeling of urgency and frustration at that point to come to closure quickly due to lateness of the day, family obligations, or the perception from the interviewer that the interviewee was becoming tired.

During one of the interviews an inappropriate decision on the part of the interviewer was made to continue the interview. Responses revealed very short answers and lacked depth. When the interviewer was faced with this same situation three times during the remainder of the interviews, an alternate management decision was made to exclude the entire theme strictly due to the time factor. Therefore, data for this theme lack three respondents' answers plus one respondent provided very short and shallow answers. All four respondents were first year teachers.
Methods Used

In order to gather information about diagnosing learning problems, each teacher was asked to describe what methods he/she used to diagnose learning problems. First year teachers stated that:

It would be through observation. I use journals too. If I can see no progress as far as a certain area, I make notes of that. I talk with people from the AEA and ask them for suggestions first and tell them what I am dealing with and have them suggest what I could do before I would do a referral.

I would have to say just individual observation and the informal reading inventory.

I had so many students my first year that I just couldn't spend the amount of time needed to catch problems quickly. The Special Ed teacher was new too and we both felt like "what do we do"? She would come into the class instead of pulling out. She has been very helpful in diagnosing learning problems. I could detect big problems but she could pinpoint things for me or show me ways to find out certain information.

Fifth year teachers stated the following:

I don't. I refer them. I look for anything out of the ordinary. I had trouble when I first taught because I didn't know what was ordinary and what wasn't. My first two years I didn't refer anyone because I didn't know exactly what to expect.

Because I had the MD endorsement, that helped. The other teachers that didn't have MD courses have come and asked me "How did you know to test this kid?"
My first year I didn't do a whole lot because I was unfamiliar with how you go about getting assistance.

I keep an eye on them and keep notes and save their work and document as much as I can. If there is a possibility of a learning problem, I'll bring it before the Special Education staff. I have to make a pre-referral and they will come in and watch and observe the student.

In reading I use word lists. I used to use informal reading inventories, but not any more. They're too time consuming. I don't have that much time to do it. [The students] just read orally to me, workbook pages, skills to diagnose or a key test from a book.

First year teachers used observation, journals, notes, AEA consultation, and specialized faculty within the building to attempt to diagnose students with learning problems. One teacher experienced specific frustration in diagnosing learning problems due to the large class size and her inability to identify learning problems quickly.

Fifth year teachers used referrals, notes, saving student's work, documenting as much as possible, and making a pre-referral to the building Special Education teacher prior to completing forms for the Area Education Agency. One fifth year teacher who had taken extra courses to receive the Learning Disabilities endorsement stated those courses had aided her in identifying learning problems.

A few of the fifth year teachers stated they did not refer
any student during their first year of teaching because they were unfamiliar with the procedure of referral.

**How methods were acquired**

In this category each teacher was asked how they learned to diagnose learning problems. First year teachers stated the following:

**On the job.**

The tutoring class that I took helped alot with that.

Mostly through experience. There are certain routes you go through for the AEA. I had to ask my principal what to do because I had already tried on my own to work with [those students] independently.

I had already contacted the parents too. When those students failed to show improvement, I went to the principal and said, "Now, what do I do"?. I didn’t know anything about the AEA.

Fifth year teachers stated that:

Through experience I started knowing what was normal. Kids were doing sloppy work and I had them do it over and over. But now I am aware that maybe if they continually misspell, there might be a learning problem and I would refer them.

It’s hard being departmentalized and seeing them only 45 minutes a day. It’s harder to identify. Now I’ve learned that if there are any suspicions, then I talk to the rest of the teachers. I do this more often than I did my first two years. If the other teachers see problems too, then I check it out further.

The extra course that I took in the Special Education program.
I had a couple of LD classes and I'm sure I learned it there.

I've had MD and LD training and I don't know if I could diagnose it if I didn't have that. You can just identify these kids when compared to other kids in your classroom.

The informal reading inventories and also reading methods. Actually giving it to the student was great, that was the best part to actually work with the student.

Both first and fifth year teachers stated that experience was the method most used to learn about diagnosing learning problems. First year teachers appeared to need assistance to understand the procedures and paperwork involved to refer students to specialized building personnel or to the Area Education Agency.

Most of the fifth year teachers had taken courses from the Special Education program in either Mental Disabilities or in Learning Disabilities which they believed aided them in identifying learning problems. A few fifth year teachers were hesitant to refer students who appeared to have learning problems because they thought they did not have adequate training or knowledge to identify critical signs associated with a learning problem.

Problems and Concerns

Interview questions in this category ranged from the concern each teacher had both before and during their first year of teaching as well as each one's concern about currently
diagnosing learning problems, to describing difficult situations during their first year of teaching. Fifth year teachers were asked to describe any difficult situations during the last five years of teaching as well.

First year teacher responses were as follows:

I really didn't think about it because I was so worried about everything else that had more priorities. I figured that even if it did occur, it would be only be one or two kids.

It became more important as the year progressed because I found out that after I had tried different things, I needed to know what to do next, like the AEA.

It's still a concern just making sure that I observe, document and refer.

It wasn't a concern for me [before I began teaching]. I didn't think I would have this many problem students. But it was a concern for me during my first year because had to work with the Special Ed teacher alot to help me.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

It wasn't a concern for me [before I began teaching] because I had additional training [in Special Ed classes]. I was concerned my first year but I had so many other things to do also.

All the situations were difficult. Getting them referred, tested and on to the teacher they were supposed to be with was difficult. After a few years, you just learn to have an "eye" for this.

I was concerned my first year but I think I am better at diagnosing now because I know more what my kids are like. Your first year you just don't know if this
is normal but after a few years you can see how this really stands out - what is normal and what isn't. I guess it just comes from experience.

There were no difficult situations. I still think it just comes with time. Not knowing what is normal is difficult your first year.

I felt I was prepared because of the special education courses that I took.

I wasn't concerned before I was teaching because I really didn't know what to expect.

Just being able to tell the difference between normal and not normal took me two years.

First year teachers expressed concern both before and during their first year of teaching about diagnosing learning problems. They were unsure of the process to refer students to specific teachers or agencies such as the Area Education Agency or to the Special Education teacher. Observation, documentation and referral were the main tools used by first year teachers to attempt to diagnose students with learning problems.

Fifth year teachers' main concern during their first and second years of teaching was how to distinguish between what is normal and what is not normal in regard to student behavior, academic progress, or a learning disability.

First and fifth year teachers who elected to take special education classes in their undergraduate training
stated they were better prepared in diagnosing learning problems than those teachers who did not take those classes.

Fifth year teachers stated they had acquired more refined observation skills and learned how to document more precisely and more frequently the more years they were in the classroom. They were not hesitant to point out that they are continuing to learn both how and when to refer a student who appears to demonstrate a learning problem.

Fifth year teachers also stated that diagnosing learning problems just comes with time and after a few years they just learned to have an "eye" for [diagnosing learning problems].

Undergraduate Preparation

Two main questions comprised this category. The first question asked if diagnosing learning problems was taught as part of any course or courses in undergraduate preparation. The second question asked participants to recall what techniques were taught if they responded "yes" to the first question.

First year teacher respondents stated:

Yes it was taught but not specific learning problems. The MD classes that I took with syndromes was where I got most of my information.

None that I can remember.

I took the course on the Exceptional Child but it focused more on categorizing between LD, MD and BD.
Fifth year teacher respondents stated:

Yes, it was taught in the reading, math and science classes and also the kindergarten classes. The only specific strategy was the informal reading inventory in the reading tutoring class.

None that I can remember.

No it wasn't taught. Just student teaching helped alot.

No. Just the courses that I chose to take in special ed.

If it was, I didn't learn it.

The majority of both first and fifth year teachers either did not recall a course or courses in undergraduate preparation dealing with diagnosing learning problems or they do not recall the content or the techniques involved. Those first and fifth year teachers that could recall a specific course or techniques which were taught were those teachers who had taken additional courses in the special education program in either learning disabilities, mental disabilities, or behavior disorders.

Suggested future program changes

This set of questions focused specifically on the need to offer a separate course or not in diagnosing learning problems, the content which should be included in such a course, if a field experience should be included, and other suggested alternatives in lieu of a field experience.

First year teachers stated the following:
Yes. There should be a separate course mainly because there are so many kids with learning problems and you, as a teacher, are responsible for referring them. If you do not recognize it as a learning problem you will not request testing or staffing. It should be required and should include what to look for specifically in behavior, reading, language, dyslexia. A field experience would not be necessary.

Not a whole course. It just needs to be focused on in student teaching and the tour at the AEA. I don’t think there is a whole lot that teachers can do with diagnosing learning problems besides observing and getting to know each student as best as you can.

Learning how to refer should be included especially. Knowing what to do is really important after you have done all that you can do in working with the child in your classroom. A field experience would not be possible.

It should be a required course in learning how to diagnose the different disabilities and referring them to the proper agencies or people. It’s not an easy area and it can easily be overlooked in the undergraduate program.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

Yes, it should be a required separate course then maybe it wouldn’t take two years to identify these kids. The course should include talking to actual principals or other teachers as well as observing other classes.

The undergraduate preparation taught too much to the normal and not to the extremes of identifying them. More observation would help. When I was student teaching I observed the teachers and not the kids. I think we should have been told to look and see how they are responding.
It should be a required course because teachers need to know how to diagnose and work with these students. The average teacher just doesn't know. We have so many kids that do have problems and they are not always academic but social and this is affecting their academic progress. Being able to understand why a kid is always out of their seat should be included. Retention doesn't always help.

The required class should include coursework in MD, LD and BD because as a first year teacher, you are so concerned with details, you could overlook some of these kids. I would like to see a field experience, but I don't know how it would be executed.

I don't think a separate course is necessary. I think they should require a few of the MD, BD, and LD courses that are already offered. Some teachers here didn't even know what LD and BD meant. I think one or more BD classes would be beneficial because my first year, the principal sent all the BD kids to my room to see if it would work. She wouldn't have sent them to me if I didn't have that extra training. You really need some type of training in those three areas. Just observing would help but you really need to actually work with these kids even just for a few days.

Yes it should be included because we don't do a very good job of it now. It's scary to be responsible for diagnosing each student's learning problems. The reading approval should be something that everyone goes through but it should be mandatory because we're all reading teachers whether we want to or not.

The field experience with reading helped a lot. We did have field experiences in math and science but we did not diagnose any learning problems.
Both first and fifth year respondents were able to specifically verbalize the need for changing the undergraduate program in the area of diagnosing learning problems. Approximately half of the respondents stated a separate course was needed and the other half stated a separate course was not needed but all respondents agreed that specific content should be included for students to be able to learn to diagnose learning problems more effectively.

The content should include specific information on how to diagnose behavior problems, academic problems, language problems, reading problems, and social problems; anything that would be a stumbling block to a student's learning. Additionally, teachers stated the content should include the specific steps of how and when to refer a student, how to complete the necessary papers for referral, and how to become familiar with specialized teachers in their building and agencies in their district and state which are associated with learning problems.

The respondents who stated they were the most prepared in diagnosing learning problems were ones who chose to take additional courses in the special education program on mental disabilities, learning disabilities or behavior disorders.
Summary

As stated previously in the introduction to this theme, data are missing from three respondents due to time constraints and one set of data from a respondent is somewhat incomplete due to time constraints and rushing through the questions. Therefore, the summary for this theme may not be as conclusive as it should be.

Fifth year teachers' methods of diagnosing learning problems appear to be more sophisticated than first year teachers because of additional experience in the classroom. Fifth year teachers were able to identify specific techniques which should be included in a course or part of a course in the undergraduate preparation program on diagnosing learning problems and to reflect a more intense study in this area to assist future teachers in this area.

Even though first year teachers were able to identify methods they used to diagnose learning problems, they were more general in nature. First year teachers were frustrated by the lack of preparation they received in this area and cited the many attempts they sought to alleviate their inadequacies in diagnosing learning problems. These first year teachers were able to provide specific suggestions for undergraduate preparation program improvement in this area.

The category which generated the most data from both first and fifth year teachers was 'problems and concerns'.
They felt poorly prepared in four main areas: 1) distinguishing between what was normal and was not normal, 2) how to refer a student, 3) when to refer a student, and 4) where to refer a student.

Fifth year teachers stated that diagnosing learning problems comes with time over a few years experience in the classroom and developing an "eye" for diagnosing learning problems.

This second section includes five general areas: 91) preparation program satisfaction, 92) preparation program strengths, (3) suggested preparation program improvements, (4) general program comments, and (5) comparison and contrast of first and fifth year teacher responses. Each area will be dealt with separately. Results are summarized at the conclusion of each area.

The Elementary Teacher Education Preparation Program Satisfaction

The area of elementary teacher education preparation program satisfaction includes a ten point rating scale to evaluate three specific subareas: (1) the previously outlined five themes; classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement, and diagnosing learning problems, (2) the overall Iowa State University elementary teacher preparation program, and (3) the elementary teacher
education preparation program as they compare themselves to other college and university elementary teacher education graduates. Each sub-area will display the mean for (1) first year teacher respondents, (2) fifth year teacher respondents and (3) combined first and fifth year teacher respondents. Each question will be replicated from the original interview questions (see the Appendix) for ease in reading this data.

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<th>First Yr</th>
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<td>a) classroom management</td>
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<td>b) peer relationships</td>
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<td>c) parent-teacher relationships</td>
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<td>d) evaluating student achievement</td>
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<td>e) diagnosing learning problems</td>
<td>5.7</td>
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First year teachers rated their preparation in classroom management lower than fifth year teachers but the combined mean remained above average.
Fifth year teachers rated their preparation in peer relationships lower than first year teachers but the combined mean remained slightly above average.

Fifth year teachers rated their preparation in parent-teacher relationships much lower than first year teachers. However, the mean was slightly above average.

Fifth year teachers rated their preparation in evaluating student achievement only slightly above the first year teachers. The combined mean remained above average.

Fifth year teachers rated their preparation in diagnosing learning problems somewhat higher than first year teachers.

2). How would you rate your overall ISU elementary teacher education preparation program? 9.2 7.4 8.3

First year teachers rated their overall preparation very high. Fifth year teachers rated their overall preparation above average.

3). As you compare yourself to other college and university
elementary teacher education graduates, how would you rate your ISU preparation program? 7.2 9.0 8.1

Fifth year teachers rated their preparation as compared to other graduates very high while first year teachers rated their preparation as compared to other graduates above average.

Summary

First year teachers perceived they were the least prepared in diagnosing learning problems followed closely by peer relationships and evaluating student achievement. Classroom management followed next. Of the five rated themes, first year teachers perceived themselves as being the most prepared in parent-teacher relationships.

Fifth year teachers perceived they were the least prepared in parent-teacher relationships followed by peer relationships, then classroom management and evaluating student achievement. Of the five rated themes, fifth year teachers perceived themselves as being the most prepared in diagnosing learning problems.

These first and fifth year teachers rated their overall elementary education teacher preparation program well above average. They also rated their teacher education
preparation program well above average as they compared themselves to other college and university teacher education graduates.

The Elementary Teacher Education Preparation Program Strengths

The area of elementary teacher education preparation program strengths includes one question: "What areas do you feel are Iowa State University's elementary education teacher preparation program strengths?"

First year teachers reported the following strengths:

The faculty was very supportive of the students. I can remember several very good instructors.

You could tell they had a lot of classroom experience and could relate [that information] to you. They were always there if you needed to go in to talk to them.

Fairly small classes. I didn't feel the classes were too large.

I remember being very impressed with the computer classes and I enjoyed them. I thought that was a big strength.

I felt the block was excellent and the reading tutoring. I felt great due to the response that I received because I was an older student.

One course really impressed me where I got out into the schools and I got a chance to teach computers and I observed. I think it is very valuable because there are a lot of students who are sophomores and are still unsure of what they want to do and they
need to get in that environment and know for sure.

Teacher on Television was good too. I never minded sitting in there. I didn't always agree with everything they taught but that's like it is anywhere you go. It just gives you an idea of what is going on in different classrooms.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

ISU gave us a better knowledge base. I knew more about what to do when I got into trouble and where to go. I think I was more realistic because of that. I think other programs paint too rosy of a picture and I really appreciated that ISU told us all the time that it would be tough. I think that type of attitude is much better.

The eight week split student teaching was good.

ISU did a good job of teaching about interviewing.

I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for Dr. Baum.

Dr. Downs had particular influence on me. He stressed the hands on approach.

Dr. Merkley was the biggest influence on me. She stressed being positive with the kids and building their self-esteem. That is something that has stuck with me.

The reading classes prepared me well for teaching reading. I took courses for the reading approval.

Student teaching and block. The actual reading tutoring class.

Making things for actual classrooms. The media course was definitely beneficial on how to run a film projector and slide projector and the overhead.
Summary

First year teachers perceived strengths of the elementary education preparation program to be varied. The most frequently cited strength was the reading courses, especially the reading tutoring course. Other reported strengths were supportive faculty, experienced professors, fairly small classes, block, observation field experience prior to student teaching, and Teacher on Television.

Fifth year teachers perceived strengths of the elementary education preparation program to be varied as well. Again, the most frequently cited strength was the reading courses, especially the reading tutoring course. Other reported strengths were an excellent knowledge base, split student teaching of eight weeks each, interviewing, block, constructing games and activities, the media course, and particular professors were cited as having an impact on them.

Both first and fifth year teachers cited the computer class(es) as beneficial. Those students who were non-traditional (over age 25) stated they were comfortable and accepted in the elementary education department and on the Iowa State University campus.
Suggested Improvements for the Elementary Education Teacher Preparation Program

The area of suggested improvements for the elementary education teacher preparation program includes one question: "What areas do you feel the Iowa State University elementary education teacher preparation program could be improved?".

First year teachers reported the following:

Teaching us how to evaluate and justify cooperative learning grades. How do you evaluate a picture a first grader has drawn? Those are difficult questions and are very subjective.

Evaluating student achievement.

They need to tell us what areas of teaching are more in demand so we can get certain endorsements.

I do wish they would have taught more on wholistic teaching.

I have written ISU specifically about this one. They really need to have more in-classroom experience. I think the minute you want to be in education, you should be out there spending time in the classroom.

The professors will tell you all these ideas and how it is in the classroom and give you this great information, but then by the time you can use it, it is two years later and you have forgotten half of the information. You don't have a chance to go out and try some of these ideas and strategies.

A field experience attached to each methods class would be great, maybe for four or five weeks. I know it's not easy trying to find all the teachers to take all these students.
How to write proper lesson plans. What does an administrator expect to see when you hand in your lesson plans?

I wish I would have student taught in the fall and then gone back and taken classes in the spring. You could then think about all those students you had in student teaching while you were taking courses. It becomes real when you think about individual children.

Why not let the cooperating teacher be the general methods teacher?

Letting us see different report cards because there are so many. Also record-keeping, cumulative folds. I never even saw a cum folder in undergraduate. I never knew that I had to keep up with these folders. Where did the reading grades go? The other grade level teacher was what saved me.

Get students into actual classrooms more. The more experience you can get, the better off you are. There are just some things that you can't learn except through experience. I know that is difficult to line up and it takes a lot of work on somebody's part, but it would be well worth the trouble.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

I wished ISU would have professors that have just come from the classroom or are actively involved in a classroom while they are teaching.

The professors need to stress being positive with the students and with us as well.

They need to teach us more about problem solving skills and how to teach that to the kids.

They need to teach us how to take a curriculum and read it.
Take courses in BD, LD and MD.

Learning little duties like cumulative folders, health records, weighing the children. Your first year you are just overwhelmed trying to learn all those little things.

The professors need to treat the education students like they don't know anything about education. Too much is assumed. Life is more than a textbook and you have to be willing to go out after it.

The elementary education professors need to work more cooperatively. This person is off in their own corner. They each have their own labels on their door and that's it. What sort of communication do they have [with one another]? I know they are interested in getting their publications out but their main job is the student - it's teaching, not research. There are only certain things you can learn on the job but you need to teach models, to observe those models and see how they function in the schools and in your life.

They need to improve in teaching about classroom management. Show the students more realistic situations, more simulations, more what you will do. Watch a tape and turn it off before the teacher continues.

They should include more thinking type situations.

I didn't realize the consequences of being too friendly with the students.

Summary

There were almost as many suggestions for improvement as there were respondents. First year teachers focused on cooperative learning, whole language, more in-class experience, writing lesson plans, fall student teaching,
evaluating student achievement, having the cooperating teacher be the general methods instructor, and informing the students which endorsements are more in demand than others.

However, most of the suggestions for improvement from first year teachers were in the area of requiring more field experience at any and all levels even from the moment that you decide to become a teacher.

Fifth year teachers had a slightly different focus. They stated they needed more problem solving skills, how to read a curriculum, take special education courses, more of a cooperative effort within the elementary education department from the professors, classroom management, and critical thinking skills.

**General Program Comments**

The area of general program comments for the elementary education teacher preparation program includes one question: "Are there any other comments that you would like to make"?

First year teachers reported the following:

*I would go to Iowa State again.*

*I think the reading endorsement was important because I am the only one at this school with that endorsement. So as the job market goes, I would recommend that for sure. It's not that many [extra] classes to get it.*

*I wish I would have become endorsed in more areas and even in coaching. You just don't take advantage of those classes because you are so busy with your*
other classes and you tell yourself that you don’t need that.

I wouldn’t choose another university, but if I had to do it all over again, I don’t know if I would go into teaching after all that I have been through. I would choose ISU again. I don’t regret it. I don’t know if I’ll be a teacher for that long. I already feel like I’m on burn-out. I took so much responsibility for the failings of last year’s kids which made me feel very guilty and that got me down. I learned not to do that and I’ve learned some new techniques.

Principals or other teachers nominate you for committees. They say “You’re single, you’re young, you have more time than we do”. I don’t ever want to hear that phrase again. It’s not fair. I have turned some things down now or else I won’t survive next year. I need some time off.

Fifth year teachers reported the following:

The professors should be actively involved in the schools somehow, not necessarily through research. I mean they should teach a reading group and be responsible for that, or a math group or whatever.

I just can’t express how much of an influence that Donna Merkley had on me. She built my self-confidence and now it’s easy for me to see how important it is to build the student’s self-confidence and be your very best and to teach them the best that you can.

I am happy with Iowa State and I wouldn’t have gone anywhere else but I feel ISU is ahead compared to a lot of other places especially the length of the student teaching.

I remember dragging home every curriculum because I didn’t understand how to go
through it. No one at the university tells you how to set up your reading or your groups.

I am really glad that I took a variety of classes at Iowa State. I think I used my electives wisely. The advisors need to direct students in that manner because you never know what you're going to teach.

I wish the advisors would be more strict with the students who don't know what they want.

I would agree with a Liberal Arts degree first and then a teacher preparation program after that.

Another thing ISU told me was to be friends with the janitor. That has helped me so much.

Overall, unfortunately, some of teaching just has to be experience. You just can't prepare them for everything.

Summary

The general comments question was an attempt to allow each respondent one last opportunity to say what was on their mind about their preparation. Most of these comments seemed to capture a variety of areas such as emphasizing the reading endorsement as well as other teaching areas to be more marketable. They would like to see professors become more involved in the schools and they would like to see the advisors play a more critical and active role in the shaping of the student's program of study to include a broader range of electives as well as additional teaching areas or coaching.
Both first and fifth year teachers stated they were happy with their preparation and that they would attend Iowa State again if they had to do it over.

One beginning teacher in particular appeared to have had an extremely stressful first year of teaching which was documented in her responses and also in her voice inflections and body language. She seemed to sum it up best, though, when she was given an opportunity in this general comments category by stating that she is near burn-out because of the burden she places upon herself for student failings and not having the assertiveness to say "no" to her principal and other teachers for extra committee work and extra duties. She felt she was taken advantage of because she was single and young and the staff and administration felt she the additional time to assume more responsibilities.
The purpose of this study was to utilize the retrospective face-to-face interview from first and fifth year full-time teachers to glean information that would provide programmatic direction for teacher preparation programs.

Nine research questions served to structure and organize the examination. Within this section, those questions are reiterated and conclusions relating to each question are drawn as well as recommendations.

Research Question 1

How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in classroom management?

All thirty respondents did not feel prepared enough in classroom management during their first year of teaching. These first and fifth year teachers felt they learned classroom management "on the job" and even now continue to learn new management techniques and refine their classroom management skills. Some respondents became very frustrated while discussing this theme by use of voice emphasis, nervous laughter, and body language. They stated their entire success as a teacher and continuation in the profession hinged upon this one area – classroom management. Respondents stated a course in classroom management should
be added to and required for the elementary teacher preparation program and should include an attached field experience.

It is recommended that Iowa State University seriously consider adding a course on classroom management which would include specific management techniques for the classroom as well as student behavior management. Classroom management should not be interspersed in the methods or strategies classes. Too often an instructor will assume it has already been taught in a previous methods class or the instructor assumes that his/her content is of utmost importance. Some respondents stated that certain professors did not have enough or any teaching experience in classrooms or that these professors were too far removed from the elementary classroom to remember what it was like. It was frequently suggested that current elementary classroom teachers either be the main instructors or at least the co-instructors for a course in classroom management.

If an undergraduate elementary preparation program does not have a required classroom management course, it is highly recommended that a Scope and Sequence be established for the entire elementary education program to ensure specific techniques in classroom management and student behavior management are addressed, taught, and discussed. Designing and implementing an appropriate field experience
would be a challenging task. Student teaching might well be the proper setting for this topic. However, a carefully designed and implemented accompanying field experience would be extremely beneficial to future teachers and would ease the anxiety and frustration of classroom management and student behavior management during their first year of teaching. A block approach similar to the present Reading and Language Arts field experience would be recommended.

Research Question 2
How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their ability to relate professionally to peers?

Professional isolation continues to be a concern for both first and fifth year teachers but particularly for first year teachers. These first year teachers express a concern of the limited amount of professional interaction in their buildings, the established cliques, being able to "break in", and the resentment of a new teacher.

There comes a point, however, where undergraduate preparation needs to cease and the school district, building or principal must assume the responsibility. This appears to be one of those areas. The respondents repeatedly stated that learning about peer relationships is part of one's personality - something that is acquired prior to attending college. But nurturing that sense of collegiality among the staff in a building is crucial to the emotional and
professional development of a beginning teacher which can only be supplied by the administration and staff in a building.

The undergraduate teacher preparation program, however, needs to assume the responsibility of informing future teachers of the difficult and challenging realities of teacher isolation and attempt to arm them with even minimal skills of how to relate to fellow teachers. A mini course or seminar in assertive training might prove beneficial.

Research Question 3
How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their ability to work with parents to improve the education for their students?

Both first and fifth year respondents expressed a great amount of concern about parent-teacher relationships and this concern diminished only slightly by their fifth year of teaching. However, fifth year teachers continued to be challenged by parents of their students.

Even though both groups of first and fifth year teachers stated they did not learn about parent-teacher relationships in undergraduate preparation, they frequently stated that a course in how to deal with parents should be required by all future elementary teachers. Even though a field experience would be ideal, it would not be practical. Role playing, video taping an actual parent-teacher conference and stopping
the tape for discussion purposes before continuing, as well as very specific strategies and a wide range of strategies were some of the suggestions. If at all possible, it would be extremely beneficial if the cooperating teacher would allow the student teacher to conduct at least one parent-teacher conference. If that would not be possible, a very focused observation during parent-teacher conferences would be highly recommended.

This theme generated the most responses of all the themes and in turn the most paper. These teachers need help in dealing with parents. The interviewer sensed a tremendous amount of anxiety and frustration from the respondents during this theme especially in the area of problems and concerns.

Research Question 4
How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in evaluating student achievement?

Subjective grading appeared to be the problem and concern most cited among both the first and fifth year teachers. Objective grading emerged as a concern as well. These respondents suggested that the undergraduate program offer a hands-on course in evaluating student achievement which should include specific criteria in grading both objective and subjective material, especially journals, handwriting, art, and student effort. It should also
include actual student examples of both objective and subjective tests of a formal and informal nature.

Solving this problem at the undergraduate preparation program level appears to be fairly simple by honoring the requests made by the respondents to include actual examples of students' tests. Gaining permission could be sought and given either by parents or by the school building or district and removing the student's name for anonymity. It would also be beneficial for actual classroom teachers to openly discuss their own struggles about how they arrived at the criteria for grading both objective and subjective papers. Another necessary component in this course would be to include the interpretation of standardized tests for the classroom teacher and then in turn how a teacher could translate those results in lay terms for parents to understand more readily.

Research Question 5
How do first and fifth year teachers perceive their effectiveness in diagnosing learning problems?

First and fifth year teachers who elected not to take additional special education courses in their undergraduate preparation perceived themselves as deficient in diagnosing learning problems. First and fifth year teachers who did elect to take additional special education courses in their
undergraduate preparation perceived themselves as adequately prepared in diagnosing learning problems.

Fifth year teachers cited similar problems and concerns when recalling their first year of teaching as did the present first year teachers. Four main areas where first and fifth year teachers requested additional undergraduate preparation emerged from both groups. These four areas were 1) distinguishing between what was normal and what was not normal, 2) how to refer a student, 3) when to refer a student, and 4) where to refer a student.

Both fifth year teachers who elected additional training via special education courses as well as fifth year teachers who did not elect additional special education courses stated they were better able to diagnose learning problems after a few years in the classroom by developing an "eye for diagnosing learning problems through their teaching experience.

From these data it would appear that the elementary education preparation program should give serious consideration to either requiring or suggesting highly that one or more courses in the special education program be added to the present program in addition to the course for the exceptional child, which appears to be more of an overview and does not contain specific methods or techniques to identify or diagnose learning problems.
These teachers definitely need help. Some of them do not know where to begin to diagnose let alone refer. They do not know the difference between what is normal and what is not normal. They do not know how, when or where to refer a student.

A cooperative effort needs to be established by both the undergraduate preparation program and the school district or building in which the new teacher is being assigned. The undergraduate preparation program needs to assume some of the responsibility but the school district also needs to assume some of the responsibility. An intense seminar or in-service from the school district both prior to and during a teacher's first year appears to be needed and critical. When teachers are void in the area of diagnosing learning problems, the students are the losers. If a teacher cannot effectively diagnose and then refer a learning problem, the student can never benefit from testing, intervention and appropriate measures to meet that student's need.

Research Question 6
How do first and fifth year teachers perceive the overall quality of their elementary teacher education preparation program?

First and fifth year respondents rated their overall elementary education teacher preparation program well above average. These respondents also rated their teacher
preparation program well above average as they compared themselves to other college and university teacher education graduates.

The combined lowest rating for first and fifth year teachers was in the area of parent-teacher relationships followed very closely by peer relationships. Classroom management, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems ranked next in order.

Fifth year teachers rated their teacher preparation lower than first year teachers in the areas of classroom management, peer relationships, and parent-teacher relationships. Fifth year teachers rated their teacher preparation higher than first year teachers in the areas of evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems.

These data appear to be inconsistent with the amount of verbal responses given and the amount and types of problems and concerns these respondents have given in the interview itself. Parent-teacher relationships generated the most information as well as paper. Diagnosing learning problems was perceived by the interviewer to be the most frustrating of the five themes for both first and fifth year teachers.
Research Question 7

What were the perceived strengths of first and fifth year teachers of their undergraduate elementary education preparation program?

Cited most frequently by both first and fifth year teachers as a strength was the reading courses, but more specifically the reading tutoring course. This would be consistent with the overall request by both first and fifth year teachers for additional hands-on experience prior to assuming a beginning teaching position. The reading tutoring course provides for the direct contact and responsibility of one elementary age student whose parents have requested special and individual teaching in the area of reading. The ISU student is responsible for testing, diagnosing, providing interventions, constructing appropriate accompanying activities, and writing a final report to the parents as well as direct parent contact.

Most of the remaining strengths listed by both the first and fifth year teachers seem to be grouped into a category of actual classroom experience. These include block, sophomore observation field experience, Teacher on Television, accompanying field experience with math and science methods classes, and the eight week split student teaching.
Research Question 8
What areas of improvement do first and fifth year teachers perceive to be needed in the elementary education undergraduate teacher preparation program?

Both first and fifth year teachers stated very specific areas of improvement but neither group had the same suggestions. First year teachers focused more specifically to include additional field experience beginning with the very first education class. No fifth year teacher suggested that specifically.

Since fifth year teachers did not suggest additional field experiences during undergraduate preparation, it could well be noted that the years of teaching since graduation have added to these teachers' experience in working with and teaching children to the degree that these fifth year teachers perceive themselves as being prepared enough in the actual classroom and have possibly removed from their memory the need or desire for additional field experience at the undergraduate level.

Research Question 9
Do fifth year teachers perceive classroom management, working with peers, working with parents, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems in a different perspective than first year teachers? And if so, how?
Both first and fifth year teachers perceive classroom management as a critical area in which they were barely prepared during undergraduate preparation. Both first and fifth year teachers perceived they acquired classroom management skills on the job. Both groups stated they are continuing to refine these skills as time progresses.

Fifth year teachers perceived a lesser degree of professional isolation than did first year teachers. First year teachers perceived a lack of professional interaction and were hesitant to become assertive in this area due to the established teacher cliques, the resentment of a new teacher, or just being shy. The building administrator was perceived at times to contribute to the feeling of professional isolation by not being included in either professional or casual conversations. Time appears to be the advantage for the fifth year teacher in this area.

Both first and fifth year teachers expressed a great amount of concern about parent-teacher relationships. This concern diminished only slightly by their fifth year of teaching. Fifth year teachers continued to be challenged by the parents of their students.

First year teachers struggled with grading both subjective and objective papers and tests with a great amount of consternation. Justifying those grades to parents became the next greatest concern to them. Fifth year
teachers expressed a concern in this area but they stated that over the previous five years, they had found a grading and evaluative system that worked for them. For these fifth year teachers, evaluating student achievement was perceived to be acquired on the job using trial and error.

Both first and fifth year teachers who did not take special education courses perceived themselves as extremely deficit in diagnosing learning problems. However, those first and fifth year teachers who did take special education courses perceived themselves as adequately prepared in this area. Both groups had difficulty distinguishing between what was normal and what was not normal, as well as how, when and where to refer a student who had a special need.

Summary

The portrait of this group of first year teachers who are concerned with classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement, and diagnosing learning problems closely parallels the portrait of Veenman's perceived problems of beginning teachers (1984), Johnston and Ryan's common problems of beginning teachers (1983), Barnes and Huling-Austin's research on the beginning teacher (1984), Wise and Darling-Hammond's study of the beginning teacher's time

Even though these first and fifth year teachers have perceived their overall undergraduate preparation program as very high, they relate specific areas of concern in which they were inadequately prepared; classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationship, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems.

These teachers appear to find the above listed areas challenging and more difficult than their undergraduate study had prepared them for. Beginning teachers stated they were overwhelmed at the responsibilities which were assigned to them during their first year in which the administration and other building teachers and supervisors assumed these first year teachers were sufficiently prepared. These findings are consistent with the research of Huling-Austin (1989), Hawk (1984), Huling-Austin & Murphy (1987) and Ryan et al. (1980).

Of the five themes of this paper, parent-teacher relationships were rated by first year teachers to be their highest concern but fifth year teachers rated parent-teacher relationships as their lowest concern. These results appear to reflect that more experience in working with parents reduces anxiety in working with parents.
On-the-job training, or classroom experience, was cited by both first and fifth year teachers as the main vehicle for learning about classroom management, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems. Peer relationships were perceived by both first and fifth year teachers to have been acquired prior to teaching their first year and part of each one's personality. These results appear to be consistent with previous research by Jordell (1985), and Dreeben (1970).

Are there certain skills in teaching which can only be acquired through classroom experience when learning how to deal with parents, diagnose learning problems or evaluate student achievement? How much of a responsibility does an undergraduate preparation program need to assume to minimally prepare prospective teachers for "the world of teaching"?

Dreeben (1970) compares teacher training institutions to medical training institutions which provide for supervised apprenticeship. Do we need to move more in this direction so beginning teachers are not left alone to figure out their jobs by trial-and-error?

Do beginning teachers actually possess sufficient classroom experience, along with their academic preparation, to survive not only their first year of teaching, but also
Based on this study the investigator makes the following recommendations. The undergraduate elementary education program should be redesigned to intensify field experiences to include classroom management, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement and diagnosing learning problems. This could be accomplished by including a focused field experience related to one of the above areas or attached to one or more elementary methods classes.

One complete academic year of student teaching, or apprenticeship, would also be recommended to gain additional classroom experience. The student would then be able to observe and participate in procedures, management, and conferences, for both the beginning and the end of the school year. This would add continuity to a student's program to be able to experience an entire academic year under the direct guidance and supervision of a cooperating teacher.

It would also be recommended that the student teacher should be placed one semester at the primary level and one semester at the intermediate level but in the same building. This provides continuity for development and growth in the five themes presented in this study. By remaining in the same building the university student would receive
professional and emotional support from two cooperating
teachers within close proximity. The university student
would begin to experience a collegial relationship between
staff members in one building over a period of a year.

Another recommendation from the results of this study
would include a more cooperative effort or partnership
between the undergraduate preparation program and the public
and private schools. A selected group of master teachers
from the public and private K-12 schools could serve as the
practical methods instructors while the college or
university could provide the theory based education. This
learning experience between the schools and the colleges or
universities could be concurrent. In other words, space
could be provided by the schools for the college or
university professor to instruct in theory, and the master
teacher could instruct, model, and supervise in the
practical instruction. The college or university supervisor
could assume the role of coordinator to integrate theory
with practice.

A trend currently under way in this country is a
teacher induction program, sometimes called a mentor
program, which bridges the gap between the recent teacher
education graduate and functioning practitioner. These
programs are usually funded and supervised by the public or
private school district. A number of states have begun
mentoring programs and many states are contemplating beginning mentoring programs in the near future.

Another recommendation would include a combination of the two previous suggestions. A mentor program could be established, funded, and supervised by a joint effort between the school district and the college or university. Since teacher attrition is high during not only the first year but also years two and three, it would seem beneficial to provide a two year intense mentorship program with an additional year of phase-out mentoring.

When analyzing these data, a language of pedagogy did not seem to emerge from many of the respondents. Did these teachers not acquire the pedagogy during their undergraduate preparation, or did they actually acquire it during their preparation program but do not recognize it in pedagogical terms when responding to this interview?

Recommendations for Further Study

This research study provides a data base from which additional research should be accomplished. These first and fifth year teachers have confirmed the degree of concern and lack of undergraduate preparation in the areas of classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement, and diagnosing learning problems.
A more intense investigation of each theme needs to be completed to reveal if the undergraduate preparation program has indeed prepared these teachers in the five areas of concern but in a more subtle fashion, one in which they are not consciously aware during their undergraduate training. These teachers are not void in classroom management, peer relationships, parent-teacher relationships, evaluating student achievement or diagnosing learning problems. They only perceived themselves as underprepared. Since experience was frequently cited as their "teacher" for these areas, a study investigating the impact that additional field experiences at the undergraduate level would have on a first year teacher warrants serious consideration.

Since these two groups of teachers have graduated from the program, a revised field experience in the block program has been implemented. A study should be conducted to determine the degree of impact this revised field experience has had on classroom teachers in the five themes and areas previously outlined in this study.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is a result of the combined efforts and support of many people. First, I thank the respondents for taking the time from their busy teaching schedules to complete the face-to-face interview. Without their participation this dissertation would not exist.

I thank my family, my colleagues, and many friends for their support, patience, and understanding. My daughter, Lindsay, and son, Christopher, have provided emotional strength to me throughout this dissertation. Thanks, kids!

I also want to thank the administration at Grand View College for their continued support and understanding by allowing me the opportunity to complete this dissertation while continuing to work full-time.

I express my deepest appreciation to my oncologist, Dr. Thomas Buroker, who provided not only superior medical treatment which has allowed me live a rich and normal life, but who was my cheerleader and literally sustained me from day to day. His positive attitude and spirited character was an inspiration during times of near depression.

I express my appreciation to my co-major professors, Dr. Larry Ebbers, and Dr. Thomas Weible, and to my committee members; Dr. Richard Warren, Dr. Frederick Duffelmeyer, and Dr. Dianne Draper.
A special thank you, though, must be expressed to Dr. Ebbers for compassion and understanding which was afforded me during a critical time because of illness while taking exams as well as writing this dissertation. Words cannot begin to express my appreciation!

This study was supported in part by a grant from the Research Institute for Studies in Education.
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APPENDIX

Interview Instrument
Thank you for giving me the opportunity to interview you about your ISU elementary teacher education preparation program. As I mentioned to you earlier on the phone and with your permission, I would like to tape record our conversation to give me an opportunity to listen to exactly what was said. No one else will hear this tape and you can be assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Your name will not be used anywhere in the data or the report. The tape will be erased at the end of the data collection period.

The purpose of this study is to gather data about the effectiveness of the elementary teacher education preparation program at ISU. All participants will be asked the same set of questions.

I would like to begin with some general questions.

1. What grade level do you presently teach?
2. (For fifth year teachers) What other grade levels have you taught?
3. Tell me a little about your school district such as number of students, number of schools.
As a result of previous research, a few areas in elementary education have been identified in which teachers have communicated a need for improvement in their preparation programs. I will be focusing our interview on these particular areas. These areas are classroom management, interpersonal relationships and evaluating students.

The first area is CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT.

1. How would you describe your classroom management style?
2. How did you learn this?
3. Was classroom management a concern for you before you began your first year of teaching? Why or why not?
4. Was classroom management a concern for you during your first year of teaching? Why or why not?
5. Do you recall your most difficult classroom management problem as a first year teacher? Please describe it.
5a. (Fifth year teachers) Do you recall your most difficult classroom management problem in all your years of teaching? Please describe it.
6. As a first year teacher, what other difficulties did you encounter in classroom management? If so, please cite specific examples.
7. Is classroom management a concern for you now? Why or why not?
8. (If answer to #6 is YES, then) What steps are you taking to become more effective in classroom management?

9. When you were attending ISU, was classroom management taught as part of any course or courses? If so, which one or ones?

10. (If the person can cite a course or courses, then...) Describe the classroom technique(s) that you were taught.

11. In your opinion would it be beneficial to prospective elementary education teachers for ISU to offer a separate course in classroom management? Why or why not?

12. (If the person says YES, then...) Do you think it should be optional or required? Why?

13. If a classroom management course were offered at ISU, what do you think would be especially important to include?

14. If a classroom management course were taught at ISU, should it be accompanied by a field experience? Why or why not?

15. (If the answer is NO, then...) What other alternative would you suggest in lieu of an actual field experience? (If the person cannot think of any, prompt with simulations, videos, role playing, etc).
The next area is INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS which will be divided into two areas; first, PEER RELATIONSHIPS and second, PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS.

I’ll begin with Peer Relationships.

1. How would you describe the relationship with your fellow teachers?

2. How did you learn about peer relationships?

3. Were peer relationships a concern for you before your first year of teaching? Why or why not?

4. Were peer relationships a concern for you during your first year of teaching? Why or why not?

5. (If YES, then...) Do you recall the most difficult peer relationship as a first year teacher? Please describe it.

5a. (Fifth year teachers) Do you recall your most difficult peer relationship(s) in all your years of teaching? Please describe it.

6. As a first year teacher, what other difficulties have you encountered in peer relationships, if any?

7. Are peer relationships still a concern for you? Why or why not?

8. (If YES, then...) What steps are you taking to improve your peer relationship?
9. When you were attending ISU, were peer relationships taught as part of any course or courses? If so, which one or ones?

10. (If the person can cite a course or courses, then...) Describe the technique(s) you were taught.

11. In your opinion would it be beneficial to prospective elementary education teachers for ISU to offer a separate course that dealt with peer relationships? Why or why not?

12. (If the answer is YES, then...) Do you think it should be optional or required? Why?

13. If a course on peer relationships was offered at ISU, what do you think would be especially important to include?

13a. (If the answer is NO, then...) If you think it should not be a separate course, where would you suggest that learning about peer relationships be included?

14. If a peer relationship course was taught at ISU, should it be accompanied by a field experience? Why or why not?

15. (If the answer is NO, then...) What other alternative would you suggest in lieu of an actual field experience? (If the person cannot think of any, prompt with simulations, videos, role playing, etc.)
The next set of questions deals with PARENT-TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS.

1. How would you describe the relationship with the parents of your students?
2. How did you learn this?
3. Were parent-teacher relationships a concern for you before you began your first year of teaching? Why or why not?
4. Were parent-teacher relationships a concern for you during your first year of teaching? Why or why not?
5. Do you recall your most difficult parent-teacher relationship as a first year teacher? If so, please describe it?
5a. (Fifth year teachers) Do you recall your most difficult parent-teacher relationships in all your years of teaching? Please describe it.
6. As a first year teacher, what other difficulties have you encountered when working with parents, if any? Please describe.
7. Is working with parents a concern for you now? Why or why not?
8. (If the answer is YES, then...) What steps are you taking to improve your working relationship with parents?
9. When you were attending ISU, were parent-teacher relationships taught as part of any course or courses? If so, which one or ones?

10. (If the person can cite a course or courses, then...) Describe the technique(s) you were taught.

11. In your opinion, would it be beneficial to prospective elementary education teachers for ISU to offer a separate course in working with parents? Why or why not?

12. (If YES, then...) Do you think it should be optional or required? Why?

13. If a course on working with parents were offered at ISU, what do you think would be especially important to include?

14. If a course on working with parents were taught at ISU, should it be accompanied by a field experience? Why or why not?

15. (If NO, then...) What other alternative would you suggest in lieu of an actual field experience? (If the person cannot think of any, prompt with simulations, videos, role playing, etc.

The third area is EVALUATING STUDENTS which will include two areas: EVALUATING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT and DIAGNOSING LEARNING PROBLEMS.
1. Describe the methods you use to evaluate student achievement.

2. How did you learn these methods?

3. Was evaluating student achievement a concern for you before you began your first year of teaching? Why or why not?

4. Was evaluating student achievement a concern for you during your first year of teaching? Why or why Not?

5. As a first year teacher, do you recall your most difficult moment in evaluating student achievement? Please describe it.

5a. (Fifth year teachers) Do you recall your most difficult moment(s) in evaluating student achievement? Please describe it.

6. As a first year teacher, what other difficulties did you encounter in evaluating student achievement?

7. Is evaluating student achievement a concern for you now? Why or why not?

8. (If YES, then...) What steps are you taking to become more effective in evaluating student achievement.

9. When you were attending ISU, was evaluating student achievement taught as part of any course or courses? If so, which one or ones?
10. (If the person can cite a course or courses, then...) Describe the classroom technique(s) that you were taught.

11. In your opinion, would it be beneficial to prospective elementary education teachers for ISU to offer a separate course in evaluating student achievement?

12. (If YES, then...) Do you think it should be optional or required? Why?

13. If a course on evaluating student achievement were taught at ISU, what do you think would be especially important to include?

14. If a course on evaluating student achievement were taught at ISU, should it be accompanied by a field experience? Why or why not?

15. (If NO, then...) What other alternative would you suggest in lieu of an actual field experience? (If the person cannot think of any, prompt with simulations, videos, role playing, etc.)

The last area is DIAGNOSING LEARNING PROBLEMS.

1. Describe what methods you use to diagnose learning problems.

2. How did you learn these methods?
3. Was diagnosing learning problems a concern for you before you began your first year of teaching? Why or why not?

4. Was diagnosing learning problems a concern for you during your first year of teaching? Why or why not?

5. Do you recall your most difficult moment in diagnosing learning problems? Please describe it.

5a. (Fifth year teachers) Do you recall your most difficult moment in diagnosing learning problems in all your years of teaching?

6. As a first year teacher, what other difficulties in the area of diagnosing learning problems did you encounter? Please describe.

7. Is diagnosing learning problems a concern for you now? Why or why not?

8. (If YES, then...) What steps are you taking to become more effective in this area?

9. When you were attending ISU, was diagnosing learning problems taught as part of any course or courses? If so, which one or ones.

10. (If the person can cite a course or courses, then...) Describe the technique(s) that you were taught.
11. In your opinion, would it be beneficial to prospective elementary education teachers for ISU to offer a separate course in diagnosing learning problems? Why or why not?

12. (If YES, then...) Do you think it should be optional or required? Why?

13. If a course on diagnosing learning problems were taught at ISU, what do you think would be especially important to include?

14. If a course on diagnosing learning problems were taught at ISU, should it be accompanied by a field experience? Why or why not?

15. If NO, then...) What other alternatives would you suggested in lieu of an actual field experience? (If the person cannot think of any, prompt with simulations, videos, role playing, etc.)

In summary, I would like you to evaluate your teacher elementary education teacher preparation program in the areas that we just discussed on a ten point scale with ten being the highest.
1. How well prepared were you in
   a) classroom management 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   b) peer relationships 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   c) parent-teacher relationships 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   d) evaluating student achievement 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
   e) diagnosing learning problems 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Again, using a ten point scale, how would you rate your overall ISU elementary education teacher preparation program? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. As you compare yourself to other college and university elementary education teacher education graduates, how would you rate your ISU teacher preparation program? 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. What areas do you feel are ISU's elementary education teacher preparation program strengths?

5. What areas do you feel the ISU elementary education teacher preparation program could be improved?

6. Are there any other comments that you would want to make?