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# The Migrant Reading Program at San Elizario, Texas; an Examination of the Activities of 1986-87

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THE MIGRANT READING PROGRAM AT  
SAN ELIZARIO, TEXAS; AN EXAMINATION  
OF THE ACTIVITIES OF 1986-87

by

Robert Scott Morris

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the Masters of Arts in Teaching degree  
at the School for International Training, Brattleboro, Vermont.

July 1987

THE MIGRANT READING PROGRAM AT  
SAN ELIZARIO, TEXAS; AN EXAMINATION  
OF THE ACTIVITIES OF 1986-87

This project by Robert Scott Morris is accepted in its present form.

Date July 31, 1987

Project Adviser Beatriz C. Fantini

Project Reader Darlene N. Brown

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ABSTRACT:

To support and give supplementary educational services to migrant workers and their children, Chapter 1 of the Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 established a fund for the Migrant Education System. The purpose of this case study was to describe the activities of the Migrant Reading Program of the San Elizario, Texas elementary school from October 1986 to May 1987. Additionally, the author discusses his rationale for each of the lessons, gives an evaluation of the lessons and makes suggestions for improvement of future classes.

Related topics found in ERIC:

Migrant Education

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BT Education

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English (Second Language)

Migrant Children

Multicultural Education

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## CHAPTER I

### Goals and Objectives for the 1986-1987 School Year

San Elizario, Texas is located 20 miles south-east of El Paso along the border with Mexico. It is a small farming community in one of the oldest settled parts of the U.S. Because of the agricultural nature of the area and its proximity to Mexico there exists a large population of migrant workers who earn their living by following the harvest across the U.S. This constant movement can lead to gaps in the educations of the children and grandchildren of these migrant workers. To support and give supplementary educational services to these children Chapter 1 of the Education Consolidation and Improvement Act of 1981 established a fund for a Migrant Education System. I will be working this year as the Reading and Language Arts instructor for the eligible migrant children at the San Elizario Elementary School.

As the year begins I consider the competencies I will work to develop and the objectives I hope to accomplish. Linguistically, I hope to continue developing my knowledge of how people acquire language so that I can apply this knowledge to my lessons and make them more effective. Because of the cultural nature of the program I will be working in and my relationship to it, I will endeavor to include culture in my classes in hopes of helping my students to develop a sense of personal and cultural identity and a sense of pride in what they are.

Additionally, I hope to develop my skills in the areas of observation, understanding, listening, feedback and sensitivity in order to respond more effectively to the needs and messages of my students. In the area of professional skills I hope to explore my own awarenesses in the area of self-assessment so as to be able to evaluate my work and



modify its direction.

Pedagogically, I will work to develop specific methods, approaches, techniques and materials in the skill areas of speaking, listening, reading and writing that are consistent with my beliefs about language learning and teaching.

The basis of my beliefs is that the learner is a whole person and must be treated as such in the classroom. This means that my lessons must appeal to the psychological and physical learner as well as the cognitive learner. In this respect each student is unique and learns various aspects of language under different circumstances and through different methods. Also, I feel that a student learns more effectively when he feels compelled to participate spontaneously in the class, and is not forced to produce the language. This aspect of learning is something that I feel is intrinsic in the lesson if the student has a personal investment in the learning and the lesson is absorbing, challenging and entertaining.

I will strive to integrate these beliefs into my classes in the goals and objectives I set for them, in the way I sequence and prepare the syllabus, in my teaching techniques, in my lesson plans, in my assessment and in my classroom management.

The focus of my paper will be on the pedagogical aspects of my teaching; specifically the expression of my beliefs about teaching, learning and language in my methods, materials and classroom management. I will evaluate my performance on a continuous basis and present my thoughts in monthly installments which will be assembled at the end of the school year. Through this paper I hope to maintain my focus on what I consider important in teaching and also see if I can reconcile my theory with the realities of the classroom.

## CHAPTER 2

October 1986

As reading teacher for the Migrant Education program I work with two groups, a monolingual English and a bilingual English/Spanish, from each grade first through sixth for a total of twelve groups. I meet with each group for two thirty minute periods each week to study English Language Arts or English as a Second Language. These groups range in size from two to thirteen students. Additionally, I take individual students or small groups of two or three on a regular basis for remediation on the recommendation of the student's foundation teacher.

Initially, I would like to outline some of my beliefs about teaching, learning and language. Based on the many years I spent in classrooms as a student, the studies I have completed and a considerable amount of thought I have dedicated to this I believe that teaching should be subjugated to learning, that teaching should address the student as a whole, both physically and emotionally, that teaching is an ongoing process of growth and development. Also, I feel that the expectations of the teacher set the limits to learning in the classroom.

I feel that learning should be enjoyable. It is best accomplished through a variety of stimulus and in a non-threatening atmosphere in which affective blocks to learning have been removed. Although we learn more from our mistakes than from our triumphs, success breeds active participation which in turn leads to more successful learning. Students achieve best if they know what is expected of them. Also, learning is accomplished more readily in an atmosphere in which the student feels some measure of control.

My attitudes towards language begin with the belief that it is

intrinsically learnable. Language is tool for communicating thoughts and feelings. And I feel that language is best learned in a meaningful context.

### Introductions

As I began school I tried to incorporate these beliefs into the planning and execution of my classes. In the first meeting with each of my classes I presented myself to the students, telling them about my education, my background with the Peace Corps and my family. This was an effort on my part to treat the students as whole people by telling them that I respect them enough to share myself with them. It also afforded them the chance to see me as something more than just a teacher. Now they can see me as a person with a family and a dog and a life of my own. So that everyone in the group would know the names of the other people in the group we played a round robin type game of saying one's own name and the names of all the people who had said their names in the class. In addition to having the names repeated many times, this activity was enjoyable to the students because it was something everyone could participate in successfully. It also gave the students an impression of what I wanted class to be like.

### Expectations and Class Rules

After the introductions, I discussed my academic and behavioral expectations of the students. In order to reduce anxiety over grades, I explained to the students that I grade on a scale of E for excellent, S for satisfactory, N for needs improvement and U for unsatisfactory. I specified that excellence is achieved through participation, attendance and individual effort. Behaviorally, I told them that control could come

from within themselves, or from the teacher and that I much preferred if they could take the responsibility for their own actions in the classroom. However, because of the mandate of the school we did have to establish a set of rules to post in the room. The rules that were set are that we must always speak softly in the room since we are sharing it with another teacher, if a student wishes to speak outloud in a class discussion he will please raise his hand, we must all respect one another, and the student must always obey the teacher. In closing the initial classes, I told the students that I wanted their ideas on what they would like to do in class and that if they could tell me what they liked or disliked I would try to find activities that they enjoyed and from which we could learn.

#### Total Physical Responce

During the first month I used a variety of activities to motivate the students to participate in class and to try and get a feel for what they would respond to. In the first and second grade classes I began with a Total Physical Response (TPR) activity on the parts of the body. This activity allowed the English speaking children to participate successfully in a fun, Simon Says like game. For the bilingual classes, this was a means of introducing new terms or reinforcing words that they were already familiar with. As a second step in this exercise, I invited the students to recall the names of the body parts and I wrote them down on index cards and allowed the person who had come up with the word to tape it to my body on the appropriate spot. Needless to say, I got a lot of index cards taped to my nose, eyes and even my tongue, but I also got a class full of students eager to participate. In the next phase of the exercise, we assembled all of the index cards that the students had

generated and put them on a board so that all the students could see them. We then copied the words off of the cards onto worksheets of a person's body. As a final step, I allowed the class to read the index cards for a final time and tape the cards to their own bodies in the right spots to wear back to their classes. This series of classes included active participation by all of the students, appealed to the visual, aural, oral and physical components of the learners, and involved all of the language skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading.

#### Language Experience Approach

In the third through sixth grade classes, we began with a Language Experience Approach (LEA) activity because I felt it would be equally valuable to the monolingual and the bilingual classes. The basis of our exercise was planting lima bean seeds. In the following sessions we wrote group stories on how to plant lima bean seeds focusing on sequence, vocabulary, and how to capitalize and underline titles. Next, we reread, copied and illustrated our stories. I then cut up the stories into individual sentences so that the students could rearrange them in proper order. These activities were very enjoyable to the students because they didn't perceive them as typical school activities, and it gave them something to come to class for and nurture until they took them home. The writing exercise allowed all students to participate in the creation of a story in an error-free environment so that they could all contribute and be successful. The affective blocks to learning are lowered in an LEA activity while the language is learned in a meaningful context. This type of activity addresses all of the skill areas.

### Standardized Reading Achievement Tests

One other focus during my first month was the Standardized Reading Achievement (SRA) test, a national, reference-based test that all students must take twice a year. The students viewed a video cassette film on test taking strategies and then took a test on the film in the SRA test format. The tests were discussed in class rather than graded so that the students would understand that there is a difference between learning and testing what has been learned.

In all of my classes I seek feedback from the students about which activities they enjoy and feel they learn from. I also judge my classes according to the interest displayed by the students and their participation. During class I encourage group cooperation and peer assistance in order to create an atmosphere of mutual support and pride in the group. Regarding my own personal growth, I attend classes at the University of Texas at El Paso and workshops sponsored by the district, by state educational agencies, and by national educational agencies.

In the months to come, I will work with drama in the classroom. A play will give the students a reason to read, and instill pride and a sense of cooperation in the group. We will also be able to use the material from the play to continue our examination of the skills needed to do well on the SRA test.

## CHAPTER 3

November 1986

November marked my second month as a teacher in San Elizario. I think it was a good month. The students learned and their attitudes improved about themselves, their fellow students, and me. They enjoyed coming to class and participating in what they were doing. I felt more comfortable with the routines that were established and with my timing in the classroom. Because I was more relaxed, I was better able to mentally remove myself from focusing on what I was doing and see how the students responded to what was going on in the lesson. I recognized the need for well planned lessons with a definite direction towards what was being taught. Also, I learned that every plan should have a backup lesson to fall back on to avoid frustrating either myself or the students.

Classroom Management

Classroom management presented few problems. I attribute this to the relationships we have established in the class and the lessons themselves. The students are periodically encouraged to give me feedback about what they enjoy doing and what helps them learn. Because they feel some control over their lessons, the students feel greater responsibility for the success of the lesson. When I sense that the students aren't paying attention, or aren't learning, I reassess the lesson to see how I could make it more interesting or more challenging for them. Much of the discipline in the class comes from the students themselves. I approve of and encourage this type of self-discipline as long as it is handled with respect and sensitivity towards the other students.

## Fact and Opinion

In keeping with my belief of allowing the students control of what we do in the class, I asked them what they wanted to do. The almost unanimous response was that they wanted to listen to stories on the headphones in the classroom. I agreed to that if they would agree to using the story as a basis to study the concepts of fact and opinion. A compromise was reached and we went to work.

First, we listened to the first part of a four part series on The Wizard of Oz. This allowed the students to improve their listening skills. They also developed their reading skills by following along in books. The students were all very interested in using the headphones. They had no problems paying attention except for the occasional student who wanted to pretend that he was a fighter pilot. The experience with the story gave me the idea to have students to produce their own story on a cassette tape. But that will come later.

To introduce the topics of fact and opinion we discussed the general concepts. Our talk centered on specific words that usually indicate an opinion. The students made a list of these opinion words on a sheet of chart paper which we placed on our wall. Their list contained all of the words that were included in the study guide of the state achievement tests in the fact and opinion section. Because they are required to take these tests we study the material in the format in which it will be presented.

After identifying the specific words we began an exercise to familiarize ourselves with the words and identify them in context. On the tackboard in the room I put up two headings, "Fact" and "Opinion." I then prepared twenty sentences on sentence strips, half fact and half opinion. We began working as a group. Holding up a sentence I had a volunteer read it outloud and identify it as fact or opinion. If the sentence was an



opinion, I had the student name the opinion word. After correctly saying what the sentence was, the student got to thumbtack it under the proper heading at the front of the class. We continued this exercise until the students demonstrated an understanding of the concept. I then distributed the remaining sentences to the class. One at a time the students read their sentences aloud in front of the class and solicited peer participation in identifying the statements as fact or opinion. They then placed the sentence under the appropriate heading. Again, opinion words were identified when present. This activity was extremely popular. The students got a chance to get out of their seats and move around, involving the physical participation in learning. The individuals had the support of the group in deciding if a sentence was fact or opinion. Also, it was easy for me to monitor the students' progress.

As a follow up exercise we discussed fact and opinion in our daily lives, particularly in commercials. This was something that all of the students could relate to. Here the students saw a practical application of what they were learning in class.

Finally, the students created their own statements of fact and opinion based on products they invented using the opinion word sheet they had made. Each student read his or her sentences to the class and had the rest of the class identify them as fact or opinion.

### Puppet Play

In another class, I work with J, a fourth grade student reading orally at a primary level and silently at a first grade level. I find working with one student more challenging in some ways than working with an entire class. On a one to one basis the student is always called upon to produce without having the stimulus of peers. J has class an hour a

day in the resource room where he receives exercises in phonetics. I decided to work on the whole word level with him.

I read "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" to him. He was familiar with the story. That night J took the story home with him to read again. In the next class we were going to read the story aloud, but J forgot to bring the script back to school. I adjusted my plans and had J dictate the story to me as I wrote it down. After this LEA-type activity, I had J reread the story. He excelled, reading words orally that even his fellow classmates might have had difficulty with. We prepared a stage and a background from a cardboard box and some paper and made characters from manila paper glued to sticks. Then, using J's original script, we performed the play for the special education classes. J really enjoyed performing and saw a valid reason for reading. It turned reading from something he had to do into something he wanted to do. Finally, we videotaped the play and presented it to his class. They enjoyed seeing his production and asked his help in doing their own work. J's self-confidence and esteem skyrocketed. Confidence and a feeling of self-worth breed success.

### Grading

November was my first grading period. I assessed the students on the basis of their participation, conduct and effort. My goal was to grade the students on the process of their learning, not the product. As I stated earlier I graded them on a scale of excellent, satisfactory, needs improvement and unsatisfactory. I viewed this as an opportunity to boost the students' self-esteem and also to give the parents something to be proud of their children for. All of my students earned an E in the class. I sent a grade sheet supplement home with each of my students describing

the grading criterion and stating what each child had gotten in class. The feedback that I got from the parents and the students was very positive.

As I continue teaching, I see the need to continue expanding my view of what is happening in the classroom. I wish to develop more of a metaview encompassing my actions and those of the students and the interactions between them. By doing this I hope to be able to plan my lessons with greater sensitivity to the needs and interests of the students. I want to get more in tune with the way the students think so that I can tailor the lessons to their needs and make the materials being covered more accessible.

I noticed that the students were extremely interested in the use of theater in the class, particularly in the reproduction of their work on video or audio tapes. Perhaps they feel that they immortalize themselves by being recorded, or it could be that they are a media oriented society. Whatever the reason for the interest, I will begin to capitalize upon it in the months to come.

## CHAPTER 4

December 1986

Although December was the shortest month of the school year, it was by no means the easiest. The need to be aware of what I was doing in the classroom was as great as any other month. There was a certain energy in the school, both in the students and the teachers, that pulled everyone's thoughts to vacations and presents. In the future I hope to use this focus more effectively to create an enthusiasm for learning.

This month I learned to be more flexible in the classroom. When the students did not seem interested in the task at hand I found myself pushing and cajoling them to do what I thought they ought to be doing. The students were not benefitting from doing an exercise they did not want to do. If a person is not interested or focused on something it will not be as meaningful to that person. I was tiring myself out by trying to force learning when I should have been searching for ways to allow learning to happen.

Main Idea

We began by working with the concept of main idea. This is part of our continuing examination of the skills required for the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimal Skills. First, we looked at some papers from a text designed specifically for teaching main ideas. In the lower grades the students had to identify a picture that did not fit in the group of five pictures. Another exercise called for the students to identify a word that was a characteristic of three labeled pictures (e.g. father + mother + child = family, zoo or bed). In the upper levels, the papers focused on topic sentences as a way of identifying main ideas.

We then listened to the second part of a four part series on the Wizard of Oz. Listening to tapes on the headphones is something the students really enjoy and it exposes them to a variety of literature. This set came with follow-up exercises about the main ideas. We discussed the main ideas of the story and then did the worksheets. These exercises directed the students to turn to a certain page in the storybooks and identify statements about that page as either main idea, detail, or not applicable to the page. In the lower grades, we completed the paper in the group, talking about our answers and how we had arrived at them. In the upper levels, we modeled the thinking process for the first few answers and then let the students work individually on the rest. The results were very positive. Some teachers said that their students from my class excelled when they covered this in their classes.

As a review of the activities, the students dictated a summary which we wrote on block paper and taped to the wall to be referred to from time to time.

There is one additional thing that I will do the next time I work with this concept. It is a game I started in a later class when we had a few minutes left over. I gave the students the main idea of a movie and they guessed what movie I was thinking about. After I had done this for a few movies, the students began giving their own clues for movies or stories. This activity gave them instant feedback as to whether they were doing a good job or not. If we could not guess, they had to give us more clues. They were forced to focus on the main idea in a fun, meaningful context. The students can speak about movies, books or television shows that we are all familiar with.

### Bookmaking

I recently attended a workshop where someone presented an easy, inexpensive way to make books using old file folders, paper, staples and shelf lining paper. We wrote and made a number of books in December. The younger students wrote a Language Experience Approach story. As a concession to the season and because it was all the kids wanted to talk about, we wrote about Christmas. After dictating the story, the students copied them into their own books and illustrated them. The books were a real pleasure for everyone to make and to take home to share with their families.

In the upper grades, third to sixth, the students had more flexibility to decide what they wrote about. We had one class book entitled, Who Do You Love that some decided to copy. Other books focused on families, toys and rock stars. The effort varied from book to book, but I tried not to force anyone to do anything that they didn't want to. Whenever a student finished his/her book, they read it to me and received a sticker.

I would like to do more of this type of activity in the future. Combining a number of LEA stories and personal stories into a volume, the students could learn about parts of a book such as cover pages, tables of contents and glossaries in a meaningful, enjoyable way.

### Taping a Play

We also worked on drama in December. The students have always been very interested in listening to plays on the headphones, so I decided to have the sixth graders record a play on a cassette tape for the younger students. Drama is valuable in the language arts and the students' eager participation would help learning happen.

We began by discussing what was important to consider in choosing a play. It was decided that the number of characters in the play was important, so that everyone could participate. I got some books from the library and chose a play that met all of the guidelines we had discussed. I found a play with 11 characters called, "The Little Pine Tree that Wanted New Leaves." I made a copy for each of the students and had them read it. They agreed to do the play, so we practiced reading it outloud. Parts in the play were determined by flipping a coin among all the people who wanted to be a certain character. After they had read the play twice, I borrowed a tape recorder and microphone from the local educational service center. The first time they worked with the recorder, they just said their names and anything else they wanted into it to get comfortable using the machine. I played it back and they talked about their own voices. We recorded the play, it took the whole class. I listened to it and could not understand because of a hiss on the machine. The next class, I readjusted the machine and we tried again. At the beginning, it was fine, but after the machine had been on for five minutes it started to hum again. So, the students never got to hear their own work.

The activity itself went very well. The students were enthused and worked hard on their parts. I plan to do more drama in the classroom, but next time I will do some things differently. First, make sure that the equipment works properly. Second, if the equipment does not work get some that does. The students need to see or hear the end product of their effort. Third, begin with a play that is shorter, appropriate for the age level and is meaningful to them. Fourth, the students should participate in choosing a play. And fifth, remember the audience. Our plays should be shorter and with more of a visual orientation so that the youngest students can enjoy it. The more we work with drama in the class the more

comfortable they will become with it and the more actively they will participate. As we go along I think that I will learn more about what I need to do and know.

Sometimes, as I'm driving home from school, I can feel myself unwind. My muscles feel tight from my day in class. When I feel prepared and the class is actively participating, things happen more easily and I don't feel so tight. The students learn more in this kind of class. This is what I would like all of my classes to be like. I feel a great responsibility to see that these people learn something and do not just waste their time in my class. If the students are not achieving, I can sense it and I feel like I am betraying the trust that the students, the parents and the school district have placed in me.



## CHAPTER 5

January 1987

January was a strange month. After the holiday season I expected everyone to come back renewed and ready to go, but there seemed to be a lot of anxiety over testing. People worried about both teacher evaluation and upcoming student achievement tests. At times it was difficult not to be infected with a sort of unrest. I really had to struggle to get motivated about lesson plans. However, when I got into class I forgot all about that. I find that I must decide about how I will let things effect me and stick to it and not let others get me down. If attitudes really are contagious, maybe I can help bring someone else up. I still like teaching. The mental stimulation and association with people combine to make a fulfilling profession and one in which I feel good about myself.

One thing that I did this month as a reaction to upcoming Texas Assessment of Minimal Skills (TEAMS) tests paranoia was more cognitive, test skills development. Since the students are required to take these tests and others throughout their lives, we work on test taking skills and strategies within the context of the TEAMS. Using materials specifically prepared for the TEAMS, I present the concepts and practice testing the skills in the prescribed format. I teach for the TEAMS test, but the tests taking skills required for this test are transferable to other tests. The lessons always include some reference to grammar and vocabulary just as in grammar and vocabulary lessons there is cognitive skills development.

In January, I used a variety of exercises more geared towards the needs of the individual groups that I am working with. In the lower grades we alphabetized, punctuated and wrote a Language Experience

Approach story. The third through sixth graders learned about context clues, and cause and effect. We also worked with crossword puzzles to develop mental agility and to have fun.

### Alphabetizing

According to Piaget, young children go through certain predictable stages of development. This month, I took that into consideration of my planning for the first graders. The students learned to alphabetize short words by their first letters and developed the concepts of before and after, one-to-one correspondence, mental imagery and conservation. To begin, we talked about the alphabet and sang the alphabet song. Then, the students sang the song and pointed to each letter as it was sung. The students were all pretty competent and did not have much trouble with any of this. Next, the students worked in small groups putting letter cards into alphabetical order. Then, once again as a group, we thumbtacked the letters to the board and one student would remove a letter while everyone else had their eyes closed. Once the letter was removed, the rest of the class guessed which letter was missing. Each time we played we talked about the letters before and after each new letter. Then, we made the leap to alphabetizing. Holding up two letters from the alphabet the students told which one came first in the alphabet. We played this until everyone had achieved a right answer. Then, we went on to short two and three-letter-words. The trick here was to get them to identify and use only the first letter of the words. This whole series was conducted over three, thirty-minute classes. It went very well with the students and was easy for me in that we worked together and in groups.

### Punctuation

By talking to the second grade teachers, I decided to work on basic punctuation. According to the materials from the state skills test, the students should recognize and use periods and question marks, and be able to place the comma in a date.

We began with large colorful pictures of a period, a question mark and a comma. Most of the students could name the symbols the first time they saw them. We talked about what questions are and how they are different from declaratives. I assessed their understanding by having the students raise their hands if a sentence needed a period or a question mark, one hand for a period, two for a question mark. It was pointed out that a question needed an answer and that when asking a question your voice goes up. The students then read short simple sentences and said what punctuation it needed. Finally, the students worked on a worksheet designed in the test format.

This activity was less active physically, but I think the kids are more willing to listen to what I have to say now than they have been before. I would like to think that it is because they have fallen in love with learning itself, but it is probably just because they like the variety of things we do and the general atmosphere of the class. Whatever the reasons, I have seen that spark come into more eyes recently and have noticed more intensity in the students' efforts.

### Language Experience Approach

In the lower grades, we combined science and language arts to create an enjoyable and flavorful Language Experience Approach story (LEA). Using a few cookies, a magic marker and some paper we wrote a story based on our five senses.

First, we set the background for our story by identifying the five senses and discussed how we use them. Next, an Oreo cookie was placed in front of each student with instructions not to touch it. Then, we used each of our senses to examine the cookie. We looked at, listened to, smelt, felt, and tasted our cookies. As we went, along we made notes about each sense on the board. All of the students were encouraged to contribute to our description using adjectives to express themselves. This developed the oral language of the students by limiting their responses to a certain class of words.

After the students finished describing and eating their cookies, we turned to writing a story. We wrote a short story focusing on the ordinal numbers, sequencing and the senses. The students all signed the story to share a sense of ownership. For the next class, I ran off copies of the story without any of the describing words. The students then filled in their own stories with the adjectives which were written on the board.

Everyone liked this exercise. The students all participated successfully in the process. I felt more like a facilitator helping people to learn and create than someone trying to force someone else to do what they don't want to do. The students got to eat Oreo cookies (one of my personal favorites) and they ended up with a story to show for their time and effort.

### Context Clues

One of the things that I really enjoyed this month was the lesson on context clues or "How to be a Word Detective". This skill is also required on the TEAMS, so my goal was to present it in an interesting way and end up with practicing the information in a TEAMS format.

We began by playing a limit setting game. First, I said to the

students, "I see a blank". Ideas about what words could fit into the blank were taken from the class and listed on the board. The next sentence read, "I see a \_\_\_\_\_ with legs". The ideas previously written on the board were tried to see if they made sense in the new sentence. Words that didn't make sense were eliminated and new words were added to the list. Then, "I see a \_\_\_\_\_ with eight legs". Answers were tried in context and added to. Finally, "I see a \_\_\_\_\_ with eight legs on it's web in my garden". The students participated actively and it modeled the use of context in word recognition.

Next, I let the students listen to the third part of the Wizard of Oz series. I think that the students appreciate my trying to do things that they want to do. As a result, I do not have any major discipline problems. Also, the students are willing to cooperate and pay attention to me when I lecture. The story was followed with a worksheet from the Oz series about context clues. The exercise had sentences with blanks and three possible words that could go into the blank. By reading the sentence with each of the words in the blank the students used inference to decide which was the similar word.

Next, I discussed five types of context clues and modeled each one. I told them about: inference, direct definition, synonyms, antonyms, and words in a series. Each of these types was modeled on the overhead projector. This time a word was underlined and the students had to pick a synonym to the unknown word. Using the overhead projector was something different for the students to use, and we got to model the thinking process as a group in arriving at our answers.

Finally, the students completed an exercise based on the format of the TEAMS. The class worked on the first few problems together and then finished the paper individually. When everyone had finished, the paper

was corrected orally in class. Correcting this way allows the student to see immediately where and why he made a mistake.

The introduction of context clues spanned four thirty-minute classes. It was a great pleasure for me to teach. The pace and progression of the lesson were fast enough to hold the students' interest and clear enough so that everyone could grasp the idea. Things went very smoothly and I really felt like the students were understanding. Lessons like this are what I wish they could all be like.

### Cause and Effect

Another area of cognitive development that we worked on was cause and effect. These concepts lend themselves well to physical representation. The lesson began with a line of dominoes set up on their side. It was a simple example for the students which allowed them to begin discussing to get the idea. After this quick demonstration I blew up a paper bag and twisted the end closed. The students predicted that if I hit the bag it would pop. So while I had their undivided attention I introduced the vocabulary used to relate cause and effect: because, so, then, and as a result. The students used these terms to express the relationship about the popping bag. When we had finished using all the terms to talk about it, I burst the sack.

Once I felt that the kids understood what we were talking about, we discussed how questions about this would appear on the achievement tests they will be taking. I then passed out a worksheet on cause and effect to the kids based on the format we had just discussed. We worked on the first few questions as a group to see that everyone understood what the question was asking for and deciding how to apply our knowledge.

For summation and review the students dictated a summary sheet

defining both cause and effect and listing the terms introduced to express relationships. We also spoke about how knowledge of cause and effect is applicable to our everyday lives. We talked about figuring out what had happened judging by what results we saw and how knowing about causes can help us predict results.

The students paid attention (especially when I had the inflated sack) and enjoyed participating. When the kids are focused and making an effort to learn, they can understand what we are talking about. When they understand and succeed they participate more. My lessons work best when they have a definite focus and proceed in a sequential order at an appropriate pace.

Some of the older students worked on crossword puzzles in January. I really enjoy working on puzzles and figured the students might like to work on them after they had finished their work. One thing that is very important is that the puzzles be at an independent work level. Crossword puzzles present a challenge to the students and help develop vocabulary, graphing skills and mental flexibility. They can be as difficult as the level of the student requires and can be made to teach specific vocabulary or certain contents. The students enjoyed doing the puzzles and we will probably do more of them in the future.

January also marked the beginning of a new semester at the University of Texas at El Paso. I am taking nine graduate hours including methodology courses in Social Studies, Language Arts and Math. In addition to learning new activities for my classroom I see more and more relationships between language and the other subjects. I also continue to teach my sign language classes twice a week after school. It fascinates me to see how language teaching methods can be applied to a non-verbal

communication. Teaching these classes also give me many ideas on teaching culture that I hope to use in the future.



## CHAPTER 6

February 1987

In February, I hit my stride and paced myself very well. It was a short month in the sense that there were only twenty-eight days, but long in that there were no vacation days. I was relaxed and comfortable in the classroom and I responded well to the needs and desires of my students. When I sensed that we needed to communicate, I dealt with the students on a very mature level, explaining to them what I thought and how I felt. I solicited feedback from them about what they thought and felt and what they wanted to do. The students didn't see this as a weakness, but rather as a strength. They appreciated being consulted and seeing that their opinions were taken into consideration. We are developing as responsible people (both me and the students), while we study the subject matter that has been thrust upon us.

As in January, we did a great variety of activities in February geared more to the individual needs of the students. The lessons for February included: logical conclusions, prepositions, jazz chants, songs, antonyms, books, puppets and a diagnostic test.

Logical Conclusion

In the final week before the Texas Educational Assessment of Minimal Skills (TEAMS) test, the students in the upper grades examined logical conclusions. The concept was outlined and the test format were discussed in the manuals that come from the state. From the manuals I took and copied six logical models onto block paper in the form:

Only if A happens will B happen.

A did not happen, therefore

B will not happen.

I gave a number of examples for each mode and we discussed them one at a time. Then, I gave them a test which required them to match the logical model to a statement. The students completed the test well, but I didn't sense any excitement in the learning. I felt the lesson could be improved in a number of ways. First, the students needed to be more involved in what they were doing both physically and in the sense of focus or concentration. Second, I neither taught nor tested the ability to think logically. I was teaching them to match two things. The students didn't benefit greatly from this lesson. I learned that students need a variety of stimuli to learn in an interesting valuable way. Also, the focus of the lesson must reflect something worth learning.

After the lesson on logical conclusions the students listened to the final part of The Wizard of Oz. We discussed fact and opinion, context clues, cause and effect and main idea in relation to the story. This was done in a low key, oral method. I tried to help them review what we had been covering prior to taking the TEAMS.

### Preposition Activities

In the first grade classes, we studied the prepositions. I began by holding a ball in relation to a small box and asking the students to tell me if it was over, under, on, up, down, or next to. When we had gone over it a couple of times the students came up one at a time to "teach" the class. Everyone demonstrated that they understood. I then handed out a worksheet with a picture of a playground on it. The students cut out pictures of animals with prepositions and colored and pasted them in place on the playground.

The presentation and progress through the physical examples to the

individual work resulted in a very successful lesson. The students were engaged in what they were doing and I was just there to help them as they learned. One additional benefit of this exercise was that the students developed their gross motor skills through cutting, coloring and pasting.

### Jazz Chants

One of the new things we did this month on all levels was jazz chants. All of the students enjoyed participating to the point of wanting to copy it into their notebooks. The jazz chant I chose was "Sh! Sh! Baby's Sleeping" by Carolyn Graham. We began by discussing the many ways we can ask people to make less noise. Answers ranged from "Please, be quiet," to "Shut up." We talked about how polite or rude the answers could be. Then, we looked at the format and talked about how the piece looked. I had color coded the parts so the students had no trouble telling how many people were speaking. I read the jazz chant through once, snapping my fingers to emphasize the rhythm. The students loved the chant and eagerly answered questions about the content of the the story in the chant. We talked about the polite to rude aspects of the story and how we would react in a similar situations. We also talked about pronunciation and contractions used in the chant. We labeled the work poetry and talked about the rhythm and lack of rhyme. Then we read the jazz chant as a group, keeping the rhythm with fingers and feet. After that, we read it in two groups a couple of times and then recorded it into a little tape recorder we had in the room. The students got a real kick out of listening to themselves.

The lesson went very well with everyone involved. The students liked it and learned from it, and I enjoyed doing it. I taught the lesson in

the classes of two other teachers at school. We will be doing more of these in the future but I don't want to do it so much that the students loose their excitement.

### Song

The teacher with whom I share a room, Carol Rodriguez, was going to be attending workshops for a couple of days. I decided to take advantage of her absence by doing something I love: singing. I brought in my guitar and for two days the hallways shook to the refrains of, "There Was an Old Woman Who Swallowed a Fly". This is an amusing song about a woman who swallows, in order: a fly, a spider, a bird, a cat, a dog, a goat, a cow, and a horse.

From the moment they saw my guitar case the students were hooked. I talked the song the first time and wrote each of the old lady's meals on an index card. I handed a different card to each child. After all of the critters had been distributed and the story told, I sang the song through. As I sang, the student who had each animal had to raise the card whenever I sang it. Because the song is so repetitive it is easy to learn and the students were encouraged to sing along. We then examined the song and talked about it's many aspects. It was pointed out that it had rhyme and rhythm like poetry and that it was sequenced, one thing after another. We then went a step further and discussed the logic of the sequence. The students said that it could be attributed to relative size or to the food chain. We then sang the song together slowly.

As a following activity I sang "The Name Game" song with the classes. In this song a person's name is taken and made to rhyme by changing the first letter to B, F or M. We talked about the concept of rhyme and how we could make rhyming words. Good stuff.

### Antonym Games

The third through the fifth graders talked about antonyms and practiced recognizing them. I began by introducing the concept and the terminology. We discussed opposites and listed some examples on the board. Then, I got some socks that I had tied together into a ball and began practice and review. Saying a word, I would toss the socks to a student who would give me the antonym and return the socks. The students paid attention and participated actively. As a last activity the students completed a word search game that used antonyms as it's theme.

### Books

In my third grade classes I asked the students what they would like to do. They responded that they would like to make books again. This time I decided to give more direction in the writing. We wrote several professions on the board and discussed what each job entailed. We also discussed what one had to learn to perform each job. Using a guide for writing their stories, the students produced four sentences. I checked the stories for spelling errors and gave them each a book into which they could copy their stories. The students could then illustrate the sentences and color them as they wished. Some of the students hesitated when it came to drawing pictures. I am no artist, so I can sympathize with people who don't want to draw. Next time, I will take magazines that students can cut pictures out of to illustrate their books. When the students finished their books they would read them to me and I would put a sticker on each book. I kept all of the books the students made in our classroom library for a few weeks so that they could be shared.

### Puppets

After the lesson on logical conclusions the sixth graders seemed really down and were being very contrary to anything I said. So, I decided to try putting the responsibility of what they learned on them. I explained how I felt and asked them what they would like to do. They decided that they wanted to do some sort of production. My wife was just about to give away a large bag of old socks, so I took them to school along with an assortment of buttons, felt, and yarn. Each student got to make his own puppet. Because of friendships many students made twin puppets using one pair of socks. One girl brought a worm puppet she made at home from a pair of socks and some materials she had.

The students then looked through some old Highlights for Children magazines for jokes or riddles. When they were ready, we recorded each puppeteer on video tape and then played it back. We began a process of critiquing here, deciding what we could do to improve. Another girl then brought in a puppet she had bought. The kids started talking about what play they might perform. That was as far as we got in February. The students were charged with enthusiasm and ready to go.

### Diagnostic Tests

Many of the things we do in class involve the whole word approach to language learning. In order to present a variety of approaches I decided to work on the word attack skills from reading. To locate the specific skills that the students needed to develop, I gave them a diagnostic reading test. The test was designed by King Merritt Ph.D. of the University of Texas at El Paso, Education Department. It tested skills ranging from initial consonant recognition to suffix recognition and

syllabification. The results of the tests were surprising. Almost across the board the students had problems with vowel sounds. The reasons for the difficulties the students had are two-fold. For one thing the students have not worked specifically with the word attack skills such as short and long vowel sounds, so they can not recognize words. Secondly, the students have such a limited vocabulary that even when they can pronounce a word properly they do not know what it means. The test results gave me a basis for future lessons. What I feel I need to do now is devise a way to present the materials in an interesting, meaningful way, that the students will enjoy and from which they will benefit.

The month of February was very productive for me. I accomplished a lot both professionally and personally. This sense of achievement manifested itself in my behavior in the classroom. Students could feel the emotion of the class and myself and it affected their learning. The diagnostic tests have given me a new direction to take in the classroom that I might otherwise have missed. While still doing many of the fun things we have been doing in class, I plan to add new activities that will develop word attack skills and still be enjoyable.

## CHAPTER 7

March 1987

March was a very good month for me. Everything flowed more smoothly and I found it much easier to prepare my lesson plans. We evaluated the tests that the students had taken at the end of February. Based on that information, the students themselves identified the areas that they needed to study. In March I also spiraled some of the materials from earlier in the year. I took a story that had been told to the first and second graders last year and had the sixth graders produce a puppet play from it which we videotaped. When the younger students saw the same story they had heard before in a new medium they were able to enjoy it even more than if they had just been exposed to it for the first time.

Review Tests

The first activity of March was the review of the reading skills tests given at the end of February. I feel that students benefit more from immediate feedback, so I graded the tests and returned them the next class. Each student examined his own paper and we discussed what each section meant as a group. Then, I showed the class a grid with their scores and allowed them to identify the areas that needed attention.

People like to feel in control of what they are doing and to know why they are doing it. I like the students to feel that they are participating in the decisions that guide their lessons.

Vowel Sounds

The major area that was identified as needing attention was vowel sounds. The students studied the long and short sounds of a, e, i, o and u



over the course of four classes. We began by discussing the need to recognize the different vowel sounds and comparing the English language vowel system with the Spanish vowel system. I contrasted the sounds of the short and long vowels using minimal pairs. Then, students read words aloud from the board and identified the vowel sound as short or long. The words that we used were three- and four-letter, high utility words that the students all recognized. I marked the first few words with the standard marks for short and long vowel sounds. When the students had gained some confidence, they came to the board one at a time to pronounce a word and mark the vowel. After we had marked the twenty words on the board, the students generated three rules for vowel sounds. The rules they came up with were the "CVC rule," the "CVC silent 'e' rule" and the "CVVC rule." Finally the students worked individually on worksheets marking the vowel sounds.

Each lesson progressed through the same steps. As a final review the students marked the short and long vowel sounds on word with all five vowels. On the final worksheet the students were allowed to set the standard by which they would pass. Most classes decided that correctly responding to forty out of the fifty words would demonstrate sufficient understanding. I agreed and almost everyone succeeded. With the few students that still had problems, I went over the worksheet one word at a time until they seemed to understand. I then gave them a few more words to demonstrate that they did indeed comprehend.

### Consonant Bingo

Another skill that the test results indicated as needing extra attention was initial consonant sounds. To present and practice consonant sound/symbol relationships in an enjoyable context I decided to play

consonant bingo. Each student received a game card with ten squares. The squares had pictures and identifying words. The initial consonant or consonant blend in each word was written in a different color than the rest of the word so that it would stand out more. The selection cards that the students had to match had only the initial consonant or blend. As I held up each card, the students who had a match would have to read the word aloud before covering it. We continued all of the games until everyone had covered all their squares. The students were all very involved in the lesson and exhibited a good knowledge of the sound/symbol relationships.

#### Videotaping

I decided to have the students produce another video using the puppets they had created towards the end of February. By changing the characters to a worm and a grasshopper, I adapted the story "The Ant and The Grasshopper" to a short story with sufficient dialogue. First, the students read the script silently to familiarize themselves with the story. Then, the students volunteered to perform the play. After each version the students would give a critique, commenting on what went well and what could be changed for the better. The play was well received on the whole. The students discussed stage movements and the coordination between voice and the puppets' mouth movements. The story involved the activities of a worm and a grasshopper through the four seasons. Students created backdrops and props to represent each season. For spring, they made a flower-filled background. Summer was a large, yellow sun. Fall was represented by falling leaves. A white paper background and falling styrofoam stood for winter.

The class was divided into two groups which came to the lab during

their lunch times to perform the play for videotaping. Each group consisted of seven students: two puppeteers, two readers, a narrator and two stage hands who worked the props. At the end of the play all of the participants appeared in the credits. This gave the students a greater feeling of ownership in the final products. Immediately following the recording of the plays we viewed the works as a group and critiqued them.

### Viewing Films

Watching films is an extremely popular activity with the students. They are very visually oriented and seem to enjoy sitting in front of a screen. They especially like to view films that they themselves or their peers have produced. After filming "The Worm and the Grasshopper" we reviewed the product. The class had been divided into two groups, so we watched and criticized two versions of the same play. Because the play was the same, our talk focused on the production and presentation, not on the literary aspects of the work. I insisted that all negative comments be preceded by something positive. This session served as an extension of the previous work we had done while preparing to film. The critiquing skills the students developed will be applicable to other art forms they encounter such as movies, books or television shows. Their comments on the videotapes centered on the finer points of puppetry and oral reading. Everyone came out feeling good about the comments they made and those they received.

We also watched the video in the lower grades. Many of the students recognized brothers, sisters or neighbors in the credits at the end of the play. It was exciting for them to see people they knew and the sixth graders enjoyed the recognition they got. After we had viewed the play once, we talked about the story and how the video was produced. First, we

discussed the plot and the lesson of the story. I had presented the story last semester on a flannel board, so all of the students were familiar with the storyline. Everyone contributed successfully to our conversation. Then, we talked about the production itself. I told them what each one of the people involved in the production did. The students were particularly interested in the props we used to represent the different seasons. I let them experiment with the puppets and the props and encouraged them to retell the story in their own words. The lesson was both interesting and practical. It involved hands-on work and analysis and gave us a framework for future discussions of art.

### Big Book

In March, I received a set of six big books each with six smaller read along books. The books represented various levels from primer to second grade. The format of the books is good. They have colorful pictures and large type.

I began by holding a big book up at the front of the class and reading it. We then discussed who was in the story and what had happened. The second time we went through the book I held it at the front of the class and had the students read from it. The story and the vocabulary were pretty familiar to the students by now, so each student got a small book to follow along in and read with the class. Finally, the students were allowed free reading time during which they could choose any book they wanted to read. Because there is such a variety of levels, each student could find something he or she could read and understand. This type of activity is very good for the students here who are not often exposed to books for reading pleasure. The exercise, in addition to being enjoyable, encouraged reading for fun and helped to create a reading

habit.

### Alphabetizing

The final activity for the month involved alphabetizing. I introduced the concept to the students and lead them through a discussion of how words are alphabetized. Most of the information came from the students themselves. We progressed from arranging single letters to short words with different initial letters and then to words with the same first letters. After we had covered the idea as a group, we broke up into pairs for more work. Each pair wrote down sixteen words on construction paper cards and cut them out. Taking eight cards each, the students would put them into alphabetical order then have his or her partner check to see if the order was correct. The sixteen cards were shuffled and redealt for a different set of words many times. This peer correction allowed me to move about freely to monitor the individual student's progress. Once the students felt confident with these words they added new word cards. These cards had the student's name or the names of brothers or sisters. As a final check, I gave each individual ten word/picture cards to be arranged in alphabetical order. The words were chosen randomly and sometimes included words that had up to the first three letters the same. For the final check the students brought their cards to me after having their partners verify their work. This exercise was successful on many levels. The students developed their motor skills by cutting out their own cards. They learned cooperation by working together. They were able to work at their own pace, and I was free to circulate among them as they worked and give special attention where it was needed.

I was speaking with a colleague about a lesson that was not as

successful as I would have liked it to be. She said, "Well, the kids are so spaced out today that nothing works with them." This made me wonder about the nature of a "good" class. Some of the indicators of a good class that I have observed include: active student involvement, student understanding of the material covered and joy in the classroom. When I sense that one or more of the indicators are missing, I try examining my lesson to find out why. Certainly, the mood of the students is one factor that effects how the class goes. Many things contribute to the mood of the students. Some of these cannot be anticipated, but others can. Some of the predictable factors are the day of the week, the time of day and the season of the year. All of these must be taken into consideration when planning a lesson. Also, lessons should appeal to the various learning styles of the students. All of my classes must include mental and physical activity and group and individual work. I have to consider the pacing of the lesson so that while everyone gets the ideas we are covering, no one is excessively bored. Finally, even though I take all of the aforementioned items into consideration, I must have enough flexibility to adjust a lesson as I am teaching it. By keeping my goals for a successful lesson in mind, I find that I am more responsive to the needs of the students and as such am a better teacher.

## CHAPTER 8

April 1987

April was a comfortable month. I felt as though I was constantly struggling to keep up with all my work, but I got used to it. The students were well entrenched in the routines of school. The relationships that we have established are manifesting themselves as mutual respect and trust. Some of the things we did this month included examining the dictionary, writing stories and making bag puppets. Additionally, a colleague and I made a presentation at the Twenty-first Annual National Migrant Education Conference.

Dictionary Skills

In April I decided to introduce dictionary skills to the kids. This gave them a practical application for the alphabetizing skills we had practiced at the end of March. It also afforded the students the opportunity to see a relationship among the diverse lessons we have had in the reading lab.

We began by looking at and discussing the dictionary. Our talk focused on the Key to Pronunciation, the Table of Contents and the Table of Abbreviations. I tried to help the students by relating the Key to Pronunciation to the vowel sounds we had learned earlier in the year. After we had covered the material at the front of the book, we decided to look up some words and practice applying our new knowledge to them. When we started looking up words, we talked about the guide words. The kids decided that knowing how to alphabetize helps in looking up words. We did a few words orally, allowing each student to demonstrate his understanding. They could look up words using the guide words, decode the

pronunciation and discuss word cases and origins. For a final activity, the students completed a worksheet that reviewed the points we had discussed and practiced. Each student checked his own paper against the answer key. I observed as they graded their papers and discussed any wrong answers on an individual basis. Most of the mistakes were made out of carelessness. The students all displayed a high level of understanding. One of the reasons that the students excelled was the background that they brought to the class from previous lessons we had had.

### Story Starters

I used some new materials called "Story Starters" to generate a story from the students. The materials are a series of eight, colored cartoons that tell a story. The one I chose for our lesson was about a child's visit to the doctor and subsequent shot. Before we looked at the pictures, we discussed visits to the doctor and health in general. I knew the story the pictures told, so I led the talk through a specific sequence of events. When I revealed the picture cards, the students had a preconceived story and the vocabulary to express it. The students dictated the story and I wrote it down underneath the pictures. By making copies of the blackline masters that came with the kit, I was able to assemble a book. Each student got a page and copied the words from the story onto it. Then, the student colored the page and we put them together to create our own book. On the title page the students signed their names so that they could all share in a sense of ownership and accomplishment. They really liked making a book that could be read and enjoyed by all.



### Bag Puppets

For one of our classes at the lower level we discussed characters of a story and made bag puppets. I had some fairy tale books like Cinderella, the Three Little Pigs and Little Red Riding Hood that had a listing of characters with their pictures at the end of the story. These helped the students grasp the idea of what I meant by character. We talked about most of the movies and TV shows we knew and who was in them. I showed the students illustrations of ten popular characters such as Santa Claus, a pig, a little girl, a wolf and an elf. We talked about the stories each drawing represented. After our discussion, each student selected a copy of one of the characters and made a bag puppet. They colored them, cut them out and pasted them onto bags. The lesson was successful partially because it appealed to a variety of sense. The students liked it because they got something to take home to show their mothers and fathers.

### Comparatives and Superlatives

I was going to be evaluated under the Texas Teacher Appraisal System (TTAS), so I prepared and taught a very tightly structured class based on my own ideas of a good lesson and the expectations of the TTAS instrument. I found most of the items from the TTAS to be reasonable, common sense requirements. However, I do not believe that each one of my classes touched each point every time.

In the class I prepared for observation the students were involved physically by comparing things and people in the class. The majority of the information of the class was drawn from the students themselves. Everyone participated in the discussion and practice of orthographic changes on the board. As a final examination of their mastery, the

students worked individually on a worksheet that they themselves checked. They all performed very well on the test. In summation, we discussed how this knowledge was useful and how some of the skills we used were transferable to other areas.

### Handwriting

One other lesson that the students did involved handwriting. This activity was taught at the request of some of the classroom teachers. It was a method I learned at a workshop sponsored by the Zaner-Bloser Publishing Company. Based on the theory of muscle memory, it involved the use of the gross or large muscles in handwriting. Each child got a crayon and a sheet of the want ads from the newspaper. Writing horizontally over two rows of the print, the students practiced their b's and g's in letters four inches high. This was a novel thing for the students to do and one that created a lot of interest. I feel that students learn better when they are involved in what they are doing.

### Presentation to the Migrant Conference

On April 28, 1987 a colleague and I made a presentation on how to use Bloom's Taxonomy in the classroom to the Twenty-First National Migrant Education Conference at Minneapolis, Minnesota. Julie Vanderwende, the migrant educator at San Elizario Middle School, and I based our presentation on the organizational hierarchy of the taxonomy itself. In the presentation we relied on our classroom teaching styles. We sought active group participation and appealed to a number of learning styles through our use of a variety of stimuli. At the end of our session, we solicited and received feedback from the audience on what worked and what did not work in the presentation. The experience of getting up in front

of a group of my peers to speak was good for me. Also, I feel that the responses that the audience gave will prove very useful in future presentations.

During the course of the year, I have been observed teaching by many people. The observers have consistently commented upon the rapport I have with the students. I do not consider this to be at all unusual. I love and respect the kids that come to my class and they can sense it. When I show love and respect to people they in turn show me love and respect. This is as true in the classroom as it is in the world. It is the type of learning that I hope my students pick up in addition to academic knowledge. These mutually shared emotions create an atmosphere that is conducive to learning and one in which it is pleasant to teach.

## CHAPTER 9

May 1987

May was a month of conclusion. My schedule changed due to the program in which I was working. Because of the change, I did not get to see my students as usual. They continually asked me when we would have class again. This made me feel good. It showed me that the kids enjoyed coming to class. That was one of my objectives, to have the students come willingly to class and enjoy being there.

Testing

The month of May was mostly devoted to administering the Informal Reading Inventory (IRI) test. This is a series of tests designed to identify the oral and silent reading levels of the person being evaluated. The levels are identified as independent, instructional and frustrational. The Migrant Education Program requires that this test be given so that the progress of the participants in the program can be measured as accurately as possible.

I brought the students in one at a time to give them the test. I explained to them how the test was going to be administered and how the results would be interpreted and used. My reasons for giving this introduction were two-fold. First, it gave them time to relax. Relaxing helped the students lower the affective barriers that may have affected the results of the test. Second, explaining the test procedures gave the students more of a sense of control over what was happening to them and why.

The initial step in the testing process involved the administration of a sight word reading list. This established an approximate level at

which to begin the reading comprehension passages. Using the results of the word list, I regressed one level from the instructional level of the student to begin testing. As the student read orally, I would follow along on a copy marking any mistakes or miscues that he made. After reading the passage the student would be asked ten comprehension questions based on fact, inference and vocabulary. Scoring the number of word recognition errors and the number of comprehension questions missed would give the student's level for that passage. For the test of silent reading ability the student was directed to read a passage silently. He would then answer ten comprehension questions. Based on the number of questions the student answered correctly his level would be fixed as independent, instructional or frustrational for that passage. I continued testing each child until he reached his frustrational level. Immediately following the tests, I would explain to the students the results in terms of the levels; independent, instructional and frustrational, with no reference to grade level equivalency.

While administering the test, I tried to give the student every opportunity to do as well as possible. I examined them for as long as it took to discover where their instructional and frustrational levels clearly were. I tried not to rush any of the test so that everyone could achieve to their highest ability. Also, I made every effort to start at a level as close to the instructional level as possible so that the tests did not drag on too long. Every one has their saturation point after which they do not function at their optimum.

I had two objectives in giving the tests. Primarily, I wished to comply with the dictates of the program in which I was working by assembling the data that would benefit their education. Secondly, I wanted the students to experience a feeling of success in test taking.

Judging from the feedback I got from the students, I was successful.

### Returning Papers

In the final days of school I held class for a last time to assemble all of the papers that the students had done over the course of the year. All of the students got a large envelope in which to keep their papers. On one side of the envelope the students wrote their names, their grade in school, their teacher's name and my name. I told the students to keep these papers in a safe place so that twenty years from now they can look me up to let me know how they are doing. On the reverse side of the envelope each student made a set of hand prints using their own hands and finger paint. Everyone was thrilled to review the many things we had done during the year and to see what they had produced. Having the work all together in an artistically designed envelope gave a real sense of accomplishment to the chore.

The end of the school year brought a bittersweet sense of completion. I was very satisfied with the quality and the quantity of work that the students produced. They grew immensely in their personalities and achieved greatly in their academics. However, we will now be going our separate ways. Although I am sure that they will all be taking something from my class with them, I will cease having an active influence on their lives. It is as though they have become a part of me that is now being taken away. I love them and will miss them all.

## CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

The school year has ended and the ongoing accounts of what has transpired in the classroom are complete. Now it is time to review what was learned and how much was accomplished. Perhaps the most important lesson of the year is the value of perseverance. By setting realistic goals and working diligently, great things were achieved. In addition to preparing for and teaching classes for first to sixth grades, the author devoted hours to contemplating and writing reports of what occurred in the classroom and studying education classes at the University of Texas at El Paso. By focusing on the immediate task at hand and working consistently, every goal that was set has been realized.

One of the main objectives of this paper was an examination of teaching methods in relationship to my beliefs about teaching, learning and language in general. The responsibility of having to report what happened in the classroom gave an added focus to the activities and the underlying reasons for the activities. During the preparation stages, conscious attention was paid to the underlying reasons in terms of my basic ideologies. The effects of the lessons on the students was a prime consideration in judging whether a lesson was successful or not. Student involvement and participation are key to learning, and observation is principle in discerning whether these factors are present. Observations also provided a valuable basis for the recounting of class activities. The paper aided in developing a metacognition in terms of the teacher's effect on learning that will serve me in the future for continued self-evaluation.

Another focus of this paper has been an examination of a variety of

pedagogy. A number of different activities representing different teaching theories were introduced to appeal to as many learning styles as possible. Teachers should not be limited by their own perceptions of teaching and learning, but must strive to reach everyone in the classroom as an individual. The concepts of James Cummins, that language is learned through usage, were implicit in lessons. However, as James Asher has suggested, a pre-speech period was observed, during which students were allowed to just listen in class and absorb what was going on. Additionally, the theories of stages of learning as proposed by Piaget were considered while planning lessons. Basic concepts were introduced and then built upon. Teachers must present lessons designed to appeal to various learning styles and observe the students' reactions to recognize the individual's best learning mode. The hierarchy of learning must hold the individual student as the most important factor. Teachers must adapt to their students, not expect the class to change for them.

Culture was another area that was explored during the year. The people of San Elizario are in a unique situation between the hispanic culture of Mexico and the mainstream culture of the United States. Rather than having them feel isolated between the two cultures, the students were encouraged to be truly bicultural and to participate actively in both cultures.

As they learned about the culture, the students were also encouraged to examine themselves as individuals and see how they interacted with others. The students were given an environment in which they could develop their morals. The classroom was more than a place to learn academics. It was also a laboratory of social learning. The classroom environment was one of mutual love and respect. The students treated each other and the teacher with equal consideration. These were the lessons that will be



valuable for the rest of the students' lives. They were lessons that everyone could and should have learned.

The students responded well to being the focus of the class. They enjoyed coming to the language lab and exhibited enthusiasm about learning. The joy they experienced was contagious and obvious. Many students who were not eligible for the program requested to participate in the classes. Working in that type of ambiance was pleasant and gave everyone involved a real sense of accomplishment.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Robert Scott Morris was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on January 23, 1956 to Jack and Elva Morris. He attended elementary school in San Antonio, Texas and graduated from Eastwood High School in El Paso, Texas. He received his Bachelor of Arts Degree in English, Creative Writing from the University of Texas at El Paso in 1979. Mr. Morris served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Paraguay from March 1980 until August of 1983. While in Paraguay, he learned to speak Spanish, Portugese and Guarani (an indigenous language of the region). In the fall of 1984, he entered the School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont to study for his Masters of Arts Degree in Teaching English as a Second Language with minors in Spanish and bicultural education. Presently, Mr. Morris is completing a Masters Degree in Education at the University of Texas at El Paso. He plans to enter the Peace Corps again and serve as a teacher trainer in the Philippines. His lovely wife will be working in deaf education.