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Authenticity in Education: Theory into Practice

Caitlin Stuard Lindquist
University of Denver

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Abstract
This study investigates the role of authenticity in education. By applying Fred Newmann's theoretical framework of authentic achievement to a specific, K-12 setting operating in the real world, I examined Newmann's five facets of authentic education and looked for their practical manifestations. Those facets are higher-order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive conversation, and social support for student achievement. Parker Palmer inspired the addition of the criteria of the spiritual/ineffable to the framework, which is also examined in relation to authentic pedagogy. Combined, these qualities are referred to as the authentic education framework (AEF). Qualitative data from The Spring School (pseudonym) on the east coast of the United States has been collected and analyzed through the lens of educational connoisseurship and criticism. This research method permits the researcher to provide thick description, interpretation, and evaluation and to draw on themes presented in the data analysis. Qualitative methods of data collection including interview, observation, and artifact review were corroborated. Because the administration of the school changed during the data analysis phase and no longer operates under the philosophy under which this study occurred, this paper has become an historical narrative.

The findings that emerged reveal that the following factors aid in the realization of authentic pedagogy at the elementary-school level: (1) school trust, (2) opportunities for aesthetic transformative experiences, (3) works toward a greater good, and (4) the role of the community. The notions of sincerity, honesty, relevance and wholistic teaching in the school context were also evident. Findings also underscore the importance of a well developed and thoroughly considered school philosophy. This study confirms that the processes of teaching and learning are personal in nature and relative to context and that prescribed curricula and confining pedagogical methods are antithetical to the development of opportunities for authentic teaching and learning.

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AUTHENTICITY IN EDUCATION:
THEORY INTO PRACTICE

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Caitlin Stuard Lindquist
June 2013

Advisor: P. Bruce Uhrmacher, Ph.D.
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In memory of Dr. Cynthia Anne Lindquist, who taught me perseverance, resilience and the joy in curiosity, and continues to do so.
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Chapter One

Introduction

Unless education adopts as its primary goal the nourishment and expression of the inner life of the child, it will continue to sap the life of intuitive, creative children and continue to grind them into a dull, but hostile conformity. (Garland & Garland, 2004)

The concept of authenticity has been written about by philosophers including Rousseau and Sartre, and has made a recent resurgence in the world of education. *Authentic assessment, authentic achievement, and authentic leadership* are all phrases that have come to the front of the field in the last 30 years (Frey, Schmitt, & Allen, 2012).

The business world also has embraced the notion of authenticity in an attempt to inspire workers toward more effective performance, as evidenced by the appearance of authenticity coaches and workshops (e.g., the Authentic Leadership in Action Institute), which seek to provide individuals with a different lens through which to view their practice and imbue it with traits such as self-awareness, resilience and compassion (Authentic Leadership in Action, Why ALIA? section, paragraph 5). Educational philosopher Nel Noddings discussed the distinction between authentic and aesthetical caring in her text, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Caring and Moral Education* (2003). The idea of “authentic caring” encourages teachers to wholeheartedly embrace a mutually respectful and nurturing relationship with students. Aesthetical caring is based on
extrinsic factors including academic performance instead of embracing the whole child, including the need for nurturing and the acknowledgement of their individual desires (2003, p. 21). Professors Clifford Mayes and Robert Leahy from Brigham Young University and Stetson University, respectively, have made recent contributions to the notion of authenticity by emphasizing its role in teaching and learning. Mayes’ work centers on the notion of teaching as a calling, and the role of spirituality in the practice of teaching. Leahy uses concept maps and project-based learning as tools for integrating what he considers authentic educating into the curriculum. Newmann and Wehlage (1993), from the University of Madison-Wisconsin, published a text about authentic achievement in the mid-1990s that considered criteria that can be used to gauge the types of instruction that allow students to use “their minds well” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993). The resultant framework is indicated to assist educators and researchers in identifying said types of instruction (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993).

These approaches to authenticity provide a different lens through which to consider educational reform efforts, which are currently based on quantifiable characteristics and presumably objective assessments. However, in considering the divisiveness of school closures, colocation and evaluation, it is pertinent to consider alternative approaches to education that are less harmful and deficit-oriented than those that are currently employed. By considering the idea that each child and educator is a unique individual capable of harboring and pursuing their own passions, it is possible to see how harnessing their particular interests and drive would be a boon to reform efforts. Considering the entire person, as an individual, and taking into account the important yet
often overlooked notions of school climate including the roles trust, safety and support gives learners and those in the field of education an opportunity evaluate the relative success or failure of reforms, and also to re-imagine new approaches to evaluating what schools value, and how those concepts are assessed.

With the underlying notion that authenticity gives way to high quality product because of personal investment and personal interest in the subject at hand, the concept of growing the individual and attending to the needs of the spirit also is encompassed in authentic work. Not only does this notion of authenticity in the school and workplace raise issues about the definition of the term authenticity, it also raises the question of how one defines success and achievement. Considering the current emphasis on standardized test scores in school and the consequences if certain benchmarks are not met in these evaluations, it appears that although the notion of authenticity is being integrated into concepts of achievement and assessment, educators are largely ignoring the impact of authenticity on the conceptualizations of success and educational outcomes. Some individuals and policymakers in the educational field continue to cling to the idea of examination as a yardstick with which to measure achievement and learning, (Popham, 1999) but I propose to reconsider methods of assessment, the process by which students learn, and current definitions of success and achievement to make them all more meaningful on an individual level.

The word authentic is used to refer to something real, true, or genuine, as opposed to something that is false or fake (Newmann & Associates, 1996). My curiosity lies in how this definition fits into the context of education and what the implications are for
education as a whole. Furthermore, the question arises regarding whether it is possible or even socially desirable to have an educational system that develops more than superficial knowledge. (See Friere, 1970) If so, I began to wonder what that might look like in practice. In my experience in public schools, teaching loads, schedules, and textbooks as well as the pressures of standardized testing can make it difficult to teach any type of authentic intellectual work in which students engage in personally meaningful learning. It remains important to strive for authenticity, however, to foster students who are capable of significant intellectual and personal achievement. If the expectation is that future generations will advance humanity, it is necessary to provide them with the tools needed to grow in genuine, significant ways.

“The term authentic achievement thus stands for intellectual accomplishments that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful such as those undertaken by successful adults: scientists, musicians, business entrepreneurs, politicians, crafts people, attorneys” (Newmann & Associates, 1996, p. 23, emphasis in original).

For this definition of authentic achievement, it is important to consider how one defines success. In the context of this dissertation, success is borne of one’s being true to oneself, or as stated by Parker Palmer (2004), to “rejoin soul and role” (p. 20). If one acts in an authentic manner, one will attain success if the effort meets one’s personal, internal goals, and not necessarily an imposed, extrinsic goal that holds little private meaning. Therefore, success is not measurable by the same yardstick for everyone but instead is a very personal concept that will vary from person to person depending upon what they would like to achieve for themselves, whether, as suggested by Newmann, the goal is to be a successful entrepreneur or a successful craftsperson.
Newmann’s ideas, seeing as his writing provided me with concrete examples of how authenticity manifests in the classroom, became the primary basis of the theoretical framework for this study. After delving into his writings, his research from the mid-1990s in particular, I grew curious about how his criteria might look in practice in a non-traditional educational setting. Because his ideas appear to be some of the first empirical expressions of what authenticity looks like in practice, I elected to combine it with the ideas of Parker Palmer in order to create a more robust theoretical framework.

The focus of this study is not the outcomes of pedagogy but rather to investigate the processes of teaching and learning. With so much pressure on teachers and students to produce expected test scores, grades, and evaluations, it is possible to lose sight of the importance of the journey that toward that individual destination. When discussing the balance of the demands of the community and teacher knowledge, Eleanor Duckworth (Meek, 1991) stated in an interview with *Educational Leadership*,

> The teacher can ask for help from the community, later, but the teacher has to be free to bring his or her entire capacity-intellectual, academic, emotional and interpersonal—to bear on the job of teaching. When the regulations are such that a teacher has to eliminate his or her own intelligence and insights in order to follow some rules—that is just so counter productive that it defeats most of what teaching is all about. (p. 34)

My intent is to examine the role of what is real, genuine, and true in the learning process as an indicator of authentic learning, versus the placement of emphasis on outcomes such as success and achievement.

**Statement of Inquiry**

One could argue that a primary aim of education as an institution is to create competent, intelligent, moral citizens capable of upholding democratic ideals and of
advancing humanity with critical thinking. Noddings (2006) in *Critical Lessons* contended that although students are asked to engage in surface-level critical thinking (in science or mathematics during problem-solving), the exercises in which students participate do not “challenge deeply held beliefs or ways of life” (p. 1). The notion of critical thinking as means of personal reflection and a path toward self-awareness indicates that it is important to pursue if one wishes to live a fulfilled life. The intersection of cognitive and emotional engagement found in critical thinking during learning encourages authentic education and provides the space in which students are able to develop their own unique voices (Leahy, 2009). As Leahy stated, the aim behind authentic education is to encourage growth toward authenticity, which he defined as a personal disposition that embraces responsibility for freedom and obligation and merges emotion and reason using “dialogue, reciprocal recognition, intimacy, and caring as moral individual” (Leahy 1994, p. 5).

The practice of critical thinking and challenging the norms held by educators and by society at large permit growth and education in the truest sense of the word so that students can be prepared to lead an intellectually mature life. Education as a conduit for critical thinking also is reflected in a very practical sense by Fred Newmann. As Newmann (2000) contended, “Most workers now face workplace demands for critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork that confronted only a small portion of the workforce 20 years ago” (p. 4).

For students to be capable of not just coping but functioning and even thriving in a world of increasingly complex structures and demands, it becomes the educational
institution’s partial responsibility to teach students to become capable of thinking so that they are able to engage with the world and make decisions based on sound reason. To aid the development of civic-minded adults who will contribute to society during their lives and to maintain participation in democratic ideals and social functioning, students at all levels ought to be exposed to and engaged in the development of self-awareness and understanding.

By applying Newmann and Associate’s (1996) theoretical framework to the K-12 setting, I examined five facets of authentic education: higher-order thinking, depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive conversation, and social support for student achievement. In addition to Newmann’s ideas, I have included another dimension in authentic education: the ineffable. Derived from the ideas of Parker J. Palmer (1993, 1998, 2004), the ineffable or spiritual dimension of authentic education captures a facet of education that Newmann’s framework seems to have overlooked. Combined, these qualities are referred to as the authentic education framework (AEF). The creation of the AEF, or my area of interest, and the overlap of Newmann, Palmer, and The Spring School are illustrated in Figure 1.

Demonstration of the area of focus for this dissertation lies at the convergence of all three components, in the intersection of Newmann’s and Palmer’s theories and the operations of the Spring School.
Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this study is grounded in my desire to examine an under-studied component of education that has the potential to transform powerfully the educational experiences of students and teachers. After I spent two years teaching elementary school Spanish in the Quaker system on the East coast and then three years teaching elementary school in the public system in the Denver area, I realized that the fundamental difference in educational and professional quality is one of authenticity. Namely, in contexts in which one’s living in accordance with one’s values is accepted and even fostered, as was the case in New York, teachers and pupils have a greater chance to be satisfied, happy, and enjoy their time at school. Students and teachers worked hard but found their work
intrinsically rewarding, as evidenced by the almost palpable positive energy in the air. The curriculum was structured so that teachers and students were both engaged; learning was applied to real-world problems and therefore relevant; students were regularly encouraged to dialogue and debate with one another.

It is my hope that this study can delineate and describe observations of the process of authentic teaching and learning to spur conversation in private and public educational contexts alike. Not only will this study contribute to theory, it will also contribute to practical applications in a novel setting. Perhaps, if further research in the K-12 setting is inspired, authenticity will become regular discourse among policymakers and practitioners.

I posit that when teachers are encouraged to allow their hearts to lead their professional practice, it makes for happier, healthier individuals and therefore happier, healthier schools. Parker Palmer (1998) mentioned that when one is more familiar with one’s “inner terrain, the more surefooted our teaching-and living-becomes” (p. 5). From Palmer’s perspective, to foster learning and achievement, the educational system must foster good teaching by encouraging educators to teach from a place of their identity and integrity versus from a reliance on technique (p. 10). Good teaching and subsequent learning is borne of teaching who we are. This notion refers to one’s teaching from a place of identity and integrity, which includes strengths and acknowledges shadows and limits (p. 13). Therefore, it is also exhausting because education is a “daily exercise in vulnerability” (p. 17). If schools were encouraged to develop authentic children and teachers, there would be engagement both in the context of schooling and in the content
from a deeply personal level. Learning happens from engagement and until students are encouraged to develop their identities and self-awareness in school, teaching and learning may remain a struggle.

This notion leads to the next question of whether or not it is appropriate or even possible for an elementary school system to promote the inner life of the child or whether that activity is something that should come later in life. Palmer (2009) responded,

Not only is it appropriate, and not only should we not wait until later in life, but if we don’t do that then I think we are blocking what kids do on their own, when left to their own devices. . . . Look at a child’s play life. We talk about play as if it were just kind of; as if the category were “not working,” but actually, as any good teacher of young children knows, play is a way in which kids exercise their inner lives, the way in which kids explore the questions and visions and dreams that are important to them. And so they’re not sitting in the lotus position and meditating, or reading sacred text, but they are doing what kids do, which is to exercise imagination in ways that are working out all the inner life questions that they have. Even young kids have questions about “Who am I?” and ”Where do I belong in the world; where is it safe and where is it not safe?” and a lot of play revolves around those things . . . [but] they have been told from a very young age that those are not questions that you bring to school. (P. Palmer, personal communication, 2009)

Bringing these questions to school allows for personally relevant learning, which is one of the hallmarks of authentic pedagogy (Newmann, 1993). There have been few studies about authenticity in the educational context, and those that have been done are primarily related to higher education with a few exceptions, including Fred Newmann and Associates’ (1996) work in K-12 classrooms. The majority of writing on authenticity is philosophical or theoretical in nature and is not very practical. It is my aim to put a practical lens on a previously philosophical idea because these ideas may be helpful in developing education into an institution that grows individuals who will be responsible for running the world.
Because the practical applications of the theories of authenticity have been rarely explored in the literature, I conducted a study that looks at the role of authenticity in K-12 education at a small private school in rural New England. The method employed is educational criticism and connoisseurship, which has strong descriptive and narrative characteristics that permit the researcher to investigate the subtle qualities of the ineffable alongside the criteria posited by Fred Newmann and Associates (1996) in his theoretical framework.

**Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

This study investigates the practical application of an otherwise philosophical ideal to classroom practices and advances the theoretical understanding of what constitutes authenticity in the K-12 setting. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to put theory into practice and to apply markers of authenticity to the elementary level to promote a better understanding of what authentic teaching looks like in practice.

The following research questions guided the research:

1. What does authenticity mean to school teachers and school founders?
2. What do teachers and founders do to ensure authenticity in the classroom?
3. What does authenticity look like in practice?
4. What is the significance or implications of authenticity for teaching and learning?
Definitions

I was reluctant to provide a hard-and-fast definition of the term authenticity at the outset of this study. However, to communicate my ideas effectively, I think it is appropriate to explain how I characterize authenticity for the reader’s consideration. During my fieldwork, I did not provide a definition of the term to interviewees but rather noticed that the definition emerged and became personal for each of them. In writing this dissertation, I took a slightly different approach. Although authenticity is a challenging term to define succinctly, I can confidently state that my intent was to examine the role of what is real, genuine, and true (i.e., authentic) in the learning process.

Readers may argue that it would be relevant to discuss the term inauthenticity to delineate what the philosophy of authenticity is not. However, to venture into this arena in detail remains beyond the scope of this study. On the flipside, one may become interested in the idea of people who are authentically evil, and although they may be true to their own values, they may operate outside of acceptable norms.

It also is important to consider the role of community in the quest for what it means to be authentic. Without maintaining a sense of belonging to a larger group, people in society risk becoming self-absorbed and narcissistic. Some critics go so far as to claim that the desire to uncover authenticity in ourselves is a faddish and exclusive enterprise that only causes alienation (see Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves*, 2010).

Regarding the notion of the ineffable qualities of learning, it is of import to consider what exactly is meant by such a term as “ineffable”. As previously mentioned,
the idea of the ineffable is inspired by the ideas of Parker Palmer (1998, 2004), who discusses the importance of moving soul and role into congruence for teachers. The idea of joining one’s soul with one’s work life is approached in Palmer’s text, *A Hidden Wholeness* (2009) and suggests the possibility of living in congruence with one’s inner ideals and ethical code despite that the outside world can make it extremely difficult to do so. The idea of living an undivided existence is pivotal for self-awareness and understanding, which yield personal satisfaction and fulfillment. The moments that educators may provide for students during which children may feel personally satisfied and fulfilled are referred to as “ineffable,” inspired by the notion of self-awareness and living according to one’s values.

The intention of this dissertation is not to attempt quantification of such an event as the ineffable moment, but rather to acknowledge its value and import in the field of education, in tandem with building an understanding of what the ineffable means. Some may refer to magical, ineffable moments in the classroom as “spiritual,” however I prefer not to create potential religious connotations with the ineffable because the introduction of religion is currently outside of the scope of this dissertation.

When an ineffable moment is happening, either with a student on her own, or in community, there is a palpable energy that permeates the educational landscape. A student or a class in a state of flow, a sense of connection to individuals in ones’ surroundings or to the world in a larger sense, and the opportunities for students to engage in works toward a greater good or in aesthetic transformative experiences are all components that may lead to the ineffable. As educators, there is no way to guarantee
that the ineffable will manifest in the classroom at a given moment; rather, the best we can do is set the stage for the possibility for these moments to arise in the classroom.

Despite that the ineffable will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 5 of this dissertation, the diagram below may serve to illuminate the relationship and distinction between the concept of wholistic learning, authentic learning, and the components of the ineffable: the aesthetic transformative experience and works toward a greater good.

Figure 2
Relationship of Wholistic Education to Authentic Learning
Methodological Overview

The research method of educational connoisseurship and criticism, hereinafter referred to as *educational criticism*, permits the researcher to provide thick description, interpretation, and evaluation and to draw on themes presented in the data analysis, which sheds light on teaching and learning authentically. Qualitative methods of data collection, including interview, observation, and artifact review were triangulated and data were member-checked when possible.

Numerous reasons influenced my selection of The Spring School in the Northeastern United States as the site for data collection. (To gain access to the Quaker system of Friends Schools in the United States, the researcher’s first choice, became very difficult and problematic.) Because access was so difficult to achieve, I decided to search for schools whose materials described them as authentic or that placed emphasis on authentic teaching and learning practices. The Spring School fits these criteria in that the founders have published texts, including *The Challenge of Authentic Education* (Garland & Garland, 2004). The Spring School was eager to have me conduct research at their site and invited me to live on campus and to conduct interviews with founders, administrators, and educators while also being both a participant and passive observer.

The Spring School takes a wholistic approach to education and subsequently aligns with Palmer’s notions of authenticity. The curriculum outlined on the school’s website also aligns with Newmann and Associates’ (1996) framework. For instance, higher
order thinking and depth of knowledge are both exemplified in the school’s emphasis on project-based learning. Connectedness to the world is evident in the school’s ecological emphasis. Substantive conversation is expected in student assessment, which may take multiple forms at the school. Social support for student achievement is evident in The Spring’s emphasis on inclusion and a culture of community.

The school was founded in 1967 on the premise that each student already possesses numerous gifts, an infinite spirit, and a capacity to do great things. As adults, the school’s founders remembered their dissatisfying childhood educational experiences and decided to start The Spring School. Their intent was to nurture individuals who were not part of the education system, which seemingly turned otherwise competent children into subservient beings and opted to found a school that focuses on the inner life of children and teaches them to think critically in all content areas.

“Both public and private schooling in America have, in the last century, opted for larger and larger factory-like schools inimical to the human spirit” which has resulted in “too many students with an impoverished inner life; too many children who can barely read, write, or think; too many impersonal robots who are programmed to listlessly follow directions, work in subservient roles, and [are] prepared to spend themselves into debt in order to acquire the outward trappings of respect” (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 19).

Researcher Background

My interest in authenticity began in 1997 when I began my teaching career. I had moved to New York City to teach at a small, private Quaker school for a few months. After successfully piloting a Spanish language program for grades K-4, I was asked to become faculty for the following school year. I accepted the offer and continued my undergraduate studies in Spanish language and literature at New York University while
teaching. After 16 months there, I realized I had to quit teaching to finish my undergraduate degree.

My next foray to teaching in a classroom situation occurred in 2002 when I began to teach for Denver Public Schools at a local middle school. I realized very quickly that this was not the small private school from which I had come; I expected (and was validated in my expectation) that the students would be difficult. I was instructed to “not smile until Christmas.” I did not have a classroom but an office that was a closet next to the band room. Immediately, I realized that my position as Spanish teacher was undervalued and overburdened. My preparation load and the number of students were overwhelming; I had no materials and little funding; my students did not want to take my classes but did so to fulfill a requirement. After transferring to the elementary classroom and becoming a 4th-grade generalist for two years, I decided that the public system was not the right context for me, but I needed to explore why that was the case.

I realized that the main difference between school cultures was not just demographics but that the underlying philosophies of each context were at odds with one another. The key, I realized many years later, was that one context (the Quaker school) fostered the self-awareness of teachers with activities such as a weekly silent meeting. The teachers there were concerned about their relationships with their students, and students and teachers alike were accepted and accepting of one another regardless of age, race, gender, or sexual orientation. In other words, the Quaker setting permitted students and teachers to focus on themselves and their relationships in an internal way. In Denver, the system frowned upon doing anything that was not content-related and emphasized
ensuring that students acquired test-specific skills so they would be ready to take state exams in spring; focus was thus placed on development of the external. Although there was some emphasis on relationship, there was little sense of community and teachers were primarily isolated and worked out of their silos. Race, sex, class, and sexual orientation were all big issues in this public arena, and it was a struggle to get students and teachers to be accepting of one another. The system focused on accountability measured by grades, test scores, and even pay-for-performance initiatives, instead of encouraging teachers or students to live according to their values, which may or may not be in accordance with those of the school district. I would argue that the public system did not ever intentionally ask teachers or students what their values even were. My attendance at graduate school and specifically my reading of Dewey’s (1934) philosophy of education helped me realize the importance of self-awareness and authenticity to my personal philosophy of education.

In graduate school, I realized that what Friere (1970) called the “banking system” (p. 71) of education is what I so opposed and witnessed while working in the public schools, in contrast to the educational processes I witnessed at the Quaker school. According to Paolo Friere, the banking model refers to learners’ minds being empty vessels that are to be filled with knowledge imparted to them by the teacher. Key components of this model, which I consider the antithesis of authentic teaching and learning, are listed below. The banking concept of education “maintains and even stimulates the contradiction through the following attitudes and practices, which mirror oppressive society as a whole” (Friere, 1970, 1993).
(1) The teacher teaches and the students are taught;
(2) The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing;
(3) The teacher thinks and the students are thought about;
(4) The teacher talks and the students listen—meekly;
(5) The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined;
(6) The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply;
(7) The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher;
(8) The teacher chooses the program content and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it;
(9) Teachers confuse the authority of knowledge with their own professional authority, which is situated in opposition to the freedom of the students;
(10) The teacher is the subject of the learning process, and the pupils are mere objects (Friere, 1970, 1993).

In contrast to the banking notion of education is the constructivist perspective, which postulates that students construct meaning out of their own schema and experiences, referred to as “active learning” versus the reproduction of knowledge (Newmann et al., 1996, p. 281). Eleanor Duckworth, author of *The Having of Wonderful Ideas* (1996), addressed precisely this process of active learning and construction of knowledge. She believed in placing students in a place to develop understanding instead of telling students “what they ought to be understanding. You have to put them in a situation where they develop that understanding—it’s not going to happen from your
telling them” (Meek, 1991, p. 30). Original thought and wonderful ideas emanate from students being encouraged to play around with ideas and making their own connections with relationships between ideas. Constructivist thought, from Duckworth’s perspective, provides learners and teachers to understand someone else’s understanding through the use of observation and “finding out about” (Meek, 1991, p. 32). Students become empowered and responsible for discovery and learning, and their ideas are seen as interesting and valid. As Thanasoulas (n.d.) explained,

“Against this background, the cognitive paradigm of constructivism has been instrumental in shifting the locus of responsibility for learning from the teacher to the learner, who is no longer seen as passive or powerless” (p. 5).

I hoped that during my field research, I would observe how the responsibility for learning is allocated in a school with an articulated philosophy of authenticity. Indeed, the components of the banking system of education provide a sharp contrast with what I witnessed at The Spring School during my time there. Cooperative learning, group discussion, arts and crafts time, independent research projects, and deep understanding were all approaches to teaching and learning employed by The Spring School. Gatlin and Edwards (2007) defined constructivism as follows:

The classroom environment is student-centered when questions and thinking are highly valued. Students are pushed to use primary sources and work collaboratively in groups. Student dialogue is promoted allowing the teacher to understand the students’ present mental constructs and understanding which then informs subsequent lessons and learning activities. (p. 5)

Teachers and students interacted comfortably, and if teachers did not know something, they freely admitted it. A deep, discursive dialogue happened on campus both in and out of classes. I witnessed a significant amount of interpersonal interaction that
adds to my suggestion that relationship in the educational context is of particular importance.

It should be mentioned that the theoretical framework, the Authentic Education Framework, did contribute to the establishment of prefigured ideas prior to data collection. The danger inherent in prefiguring, or assuming what one will witness in advance of conducting the research, is that the outcomes will be influenced or constrained under rigid or vague criteria that do not permit the researcher to notice the emergence of other, unexpected findings. According to Eisner (1998), the prefiguring approach is not helpful if it becomes too restrictive because little new insight will be gained. However, I remained open to revision of the framework at all times, and was cognizant of balancing prefigured and emergent ideas. I did the majority of the construction of the notion of the ineffable while I was in the field, as its nuances came to light during my observations.

Conclusion

The introduction to the study and subsequent vignettes offered herein are stories that are aimed at fostering dialogue, thought, and action around authenticity in education. Chapter two gives theoretical background around previous studies on authenticity in education, from philosophy to theory and ideas borrowed from higher education. Chapter three explains the method of this study in regard to educational connoisseurship and criticism. Chapter four provides the reader with stories of three teachers and includes the description of each teacher’s practices. The last chapter of this dissertation, chapter five, connects the vignettes, responds to the research questions mentioned above, and discusses interpretation and evaluation as well as themes that emerged from the research.
Chapter Two

Review of the Literature

“Authenticity can describe tourist sites, the scent of floor polish, and the president of the United States” (Lindholm, 2008, p. 1).

Overview

Chapter two provides theoretical background on previous studies related to authenticity in education, including theory, religion, and concepts borrowed from higher education and professional development along with what authenticity may look like in practice. In this chapter, I provide a variety of conceptualizations of authenticity. I describe the perspective of several authors who have expertise in the topic of authenticity, from the historical perspective to more modern views of the genuine ideal and critics of authenticity. Finally, I present literature related to authenticity as it pertains to education.

First, it is important to discuss what has been written about authenticity and how the term is defined. Authenticity is a broad concept that includes philosophical, psychological, and practical ideas. As stated by Lionel Trilling (1972), the term itself carries a significant amount of weight and it is important to understand its definition, although this definition varies widely between people and contexts.

[Authenticity] is a word of ominous import. As we use it in reference to human existence, its provenance is the museum, where persons expert in such matters test whether objects of art are what they appear to be or are claimed to be, and
therefore worth the price that is asked for them—or, if this has already been paid, worth the admiration they are being given. That the word has become part of the moral slang of our day points to the peculiar nature of our fallen condition, our anxiety over the credibility of existence and of individual existences. (Trilling, 1972, p. 93)

What may be considered authentic could include Newmann and Associates’s (1996) definition of the term as something real, true, or genuine as opposed to something that is false or fake. According to Charles Lindholm (2008), “Persons are authentic if they are true to their roots or if their lives are a direct and immediate expression of their essence” (p. 2).

This type of discourse “cannot be tidily tucked away into a category: at once it is psychological, sociological, historical, philosophic, theological, religious, ascetic, perhaps for some even mystical; but it is all of them because the person is all and involved in all” (Braman, 2008, p. 7).

Taylor (1991) demonstrated how religion influences conceptions of the self (as cited in Guignon, 2004, p. xi) and he saw authenticity and a deep moral and religious transformation. Lonergan, a Jesuit philosopher and theologian, saw authenticity as synonymous with the self-transcendence toward which all must strive toward to “fully realize our own humanity” (Braman, 2008, p. 48). Braman stated,

The concept of authenticity permeates the whole of culture. Whether in advertising, political life, or the moral life, to be authentic is to be true to some higher standard; it is to be the genuine article. To speak about the desire to become an authentic human being suggests the need to overcome a dichotomy between what you are and what you want to be. It is to overcome both personal and cultural alienation. (p. 3)

He argued that the need is not to undermine the idea of authenticity nor the blind acceptance of it but rather to understand the authentic human existence. Braman used Augustine as inspiration and saw the self as “an integrity one struggles to bring into
existence” versus “a substance one unearths by peeling away layers until one gets to the core” (p. 55).

**Authenticity Derived from Philosophy and Religion**

Charles Guignon, in *On Being Authentic* (2004), had two main goals in his writing. The first was to challenge assumptions about authenticity including those that support it. He also aimed to trace the history of the notion of authenticity. The ideal of authenticity assumes that everyone has a true self. “This real, inner self contains the constellation of feelings, needs, desires, capacities, aptitudes, dispositions and creative abilities that make the person a unique individual” (p. 6). This creates the first of two facets of authenticity. To tap into the true self, according to Guignon, usually happens with introspection and self-reflection. The second facet involves the expression of these inner traits to the world in terms of careers, relationships, and activities that lead to self-fulfillment. Parker Palmer (2004) referred to this as bringing soul and role into congruence.

Guignon (2004) contended that there are two conceptualizations of authenticity. First is the idea of “enownment, self-ownership, or the ideal of achieving self-possession” (p. 7, emphasis in original). The second ideal is quite the opposite of enownment: self-loss, which is the evasion of self-centeredness and giving the self over to something greater. Self-loss is intended to avoid self-absorption and individualism that dominate contemporary life. Guignon explained,

The model of self-loss directs you to turn your back on the self-preoccupation and self-inspection demanded by the culture of authenticity. The highest goal in living, in this view, is to become a new person by becoming responsive to the call of something greater than yourself. This “something greater” may be thought of
as God’s will, social solidarity and reform, the sanctified callings of ordinary life, the cosmic order of things, or even “Being” (the philosopher Heidegger said that humans are the “shepherds of Being”). The suggestion here is that we should seek release from the bondage to the ego, not ever greater involvement in the “I.” (p. 8)

**History of Authenticity**

In tracing the modern worldview of authenticity, Guignon (2004) cited Polonius’s words: “This above all: to thine own self be true / And it doth follow, as the night the day / Thou canst not then be false to any man.” This quotation implies that to be authentic is not an end in itself but rather that to be true to others, one must be true to oneself. This glimpse into Shakespeare’s time denotes the beginning of a social shift that would change Western civilization’s conceptualization of the individual.

From the sixteenth to eighteenth century, Western Europe underwent a transition that led to the formation of what we today call the modern worldview. It is only by gaining some insight into the nature of this distinctively modern cultural outlook that we can see the scaffolding of ideas that made the ideal of authenticity possible. (Guignon, 2004, p. 27)

Three phenomena led to the aforementioned modern perspective. First was Martin Luther’s tenet that salvation depends on devotion to God versus participation in the purchase of indulgences. The de-emphasis on the performance of external rituals or the creation of accomplishments led to a focus on the internal versus the extraneous. Coupled with the role played by science in challenging beliefs and the perspective of society as something manmade and socially constructed versus preordained put new focus on the role of the self (Guignon, 2004). This newfound notion of the role of the self, coupled with three features of romanticism, contributed to the modern conceptualization of authenticity. Those three features or notions are (1) the recovery of a sense of wholeness
is possible with reunification with nature; (2) truth comes from introspection and not
from rationality, and (3) the self is the highest form of being (Guignon, 2004).

Guignon (2004) credited Jean-Jacques Rousseau with major contributions to both
romanticism and to the subsequent development of authenticity. Rousseau, along with
some of his contemporaries, found society suspect and considered it the “cause of the loss
of wholeness and unity characteristic of contemporary life” (as cited in Guignon, 2004,
p. 55). When liberated from social norms, humans live in a free, uncomplicated way; in a
“state of nature” (p. 56); modern life (as of 1755) deformed humanity by creating
oppression. Rousseau contended that a return to nature could cure social ills and was . . .

. . . committed to the belief that if he truthfully expresses what he feels at any
moment, he is assured of being authentic in the sense of “being himself.” The
crucial concern for Rousseau is being true to the inner self as it reveals itself and
expressing it openly, with full candor, without any embellishing or editing.
(Guignon, 2004, p. 151)

Like Rousseau, Trilling (1972) held a negative view of social existence because
authenticity involves . . .

. . . a wider reference to the universe and man’s place in it, and a less acceptant
and genial view of the social circumstances of life. . . . Much that was once
thought to make up the very fabric of culture has come to seem of little account,
mere fantasy or ritual, or downright falsification. (p. 11)

The introspective nature of humans and the rewards of introspection supposedly lead one
to a transcendence of self.

According to Guignon (2004), the idea of self and the new culture of authenticity
took shape in the 19th century, during which time a backlash against rationalism
highlighted art and creativity. As society is something that can cause one to be
inauthentic, “The authentic self is the individual who can stand alone, shedding all status
relations and social relations and social entanglements” (p. 72). To be authentic, individuals must be solitary and not ensconced in social trappings.

The modern worldview divided conceptions of life’s purpose into two camps: the rationalists and the romantics. The rationalist camp espoused that to lead a happy and successful life, the individual ought to be involved in some objective business. This camp is the basis for the self-help market, which emerged during the beginning of the 20th century. The more romantically inclined view is that there must be some deeper meaning to life than standardized routines and enacted roles.

What matters most, in this view, is getting in touch with who you really are, developing your talents, blossoming as a creative individual, forming intimate and emotionally fulfilling relationships, and along the way discovering a spiritual dimension to existence. (Guignon, 2004, p. 79)

**Philosophy of Authenticity**

Charles Taylor (1991) is a leading contemporary scholar on the philosophical foundations of authenticity. According to Taylor, individualism is morally founded on one’s being true to oneself. The contemporary understanding of authenticity is founded on the notion of one’s living in accordance with one’s values with the purpose of leading a fulfilling life. Taylor aimed to understand why people see themselves as they do. To understand that, it is necessary to trace the lineage of moral sources that are responsible for the formation of individual’s identities.

Authenticity is “a picture of what a better or higher mode of life would be, where better and higher are defined not in terms of what we happen to desire or need, but offer a standard of what we ought to desire.” . . . Authenticity is a moral ideal that ultimately answers the question of what constitutes the good life. (Taylor, 1991, p. 16)
In the text, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation*, Merton (2003) explored Western and Eastern practices of contemplation. Authenticity cannot exist without one’s awakening to or being in touch with what Merton called the *inner self*. He warned that there is no method by which to awaken or uncover one’s inner self because he believed it to be “a spontaneity that is nothing if not free” (p. 6).

It is probably safe to say that no man could arrive at a genuine inner self-realization unless he had first become aware of himself as a member of a group—as an “I” confronted with a “Thou” who completes and fulfills his own being. . . . We are not capable of union with one another on the deepest level until the inner self in each one of us is sufficiently awakened to confront the inmost spirit of the other. (p. 22)

The dangers of knowing one’s inner self (which I, among others, would argue leads to one’s acting in congruence with one’s values and therefore authentically) are tempered by humility and renunciation of the desire to exploit circumstance. Merton’s ideas resonate with those of Krishnamurti, Palmer, and as discussed later in this study, Kessler, who emphasized community over individualism as a safeguard against potential insulation that can occur when one is stolidly on one’s own path. It could be argued that community is the antidote to staunch individualism, which other philosophers and theorists (e.g., Lasch) have argued feed narcissism. Contemplation and subsequent self-awareness are common threads in the literature, and in some circles, there is some controversy regarding whether or not self-awareness contributes to isolation.

Krishnamurti (1953) was a proponent of self-awareness in education and self-awareness was lacking in schools. Because of the connection between authenticity and self-awareness, namely that one must be self-aware to be authentic, Krishnamurti contributed to the body of literature on authenticity. The antidote to conformity, which
leads to mediocrity, according to Merton (2003), is independent thinking. Social intelligence comes only if one teaches the integrated, whole individual. In this view, education involves the training of the whole individual and not just the mind. “To understand life is to understand ourselves, and that is both the beginning and the end of education” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 14). There is a right kind of education that is founded on self-awareness and self-knowledge and not merely on development of the intellect. “Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness” (p. 23). Educators are not mere conduits for information; “rather [an educator] is one who points the way to wisdom, to truth” (p. 96).

Krishnamurti (1953) admitted that to develop an integrated individual, the educator also must be integrated. This requires that teachers engage in critical reflection to be free from status quo thought and action because one teaches what one believes. Therefore the teacher must be educated.

The current state of education contributes to shallowness instead of “helping us to uncover the deeper layers of our being, and our lives [become] increasingly disharmonious and empty” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 64). Education coupled with social conditioning and the results of individual upbringing have made individuals afraid to be different, to think for themselves, and to question tradition. To keep intelligence wide-awake and to healthfully reject orthodoxies, one must be in contact with one’s intuition and develop self-knowledge. Education ought to help humans flourish into integrated, intelligent beings. However, the present system is mind-numbing and thoughtless and does not leave room for development of self-awareness:
The ignorant man is not the unlearned, but he who does not know himself, and the learned man is stupid when he relies on books, on knowledge and on authority to give him understanding. Understanding comes only through self-knowledge, which is awareness of one’s total psychological process. Thus, education, in the true sense, is the understanding of oneself, for it is within each one of us that the whole of existence is gathered. (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 17)

Technique in education is assigned too much value. There “is no method by which to educate a child to be integrated and free” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 21). This can be said today, as current educational systems attempt to classify children and to put them into categories via aptitude achievement testing, which Krishnamurti stated only creates divisiveness and further separates the human being from opportunities for self-awareness. “The right kind of education consists in understanding the child as he is without imposing upon him an ideal of what we think he should be” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 25). Children ought to be given the chance to flourish and to become individuals who know themselves well enough to live by their values, therefore growing into an authentic individual.

Krishnamurti (1953) stated,

The purpose of education is to cultivate right relationship, not only between individuals, but also between the individual and society; and that is why it is essential that education should, above all, help the individual to understand his own psychological process. (p. 34)

Love and loving relationships are necessary for learners to become integrated people.

The right kind of education contributes to inner harmony and to social peace as children educated in Krishnamurti’s philosophy are not as prone to prejudices as others. To develop children who are so perceptive, it is necessary to be in close relationship.

“We have to talk things over and let him listen to intelligent conversation; we have to
encourage the spirit of inquiry and discontent which is already in him, thereby helping him to discover for himself what is true and what is false” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 74).

Regarding pedagogy, Krishnamurti (1953) contended that students have a natural propensity to want to learn. “Most children are curious, they want to know; but their eager inquiry is dulled by our pontifical assertions, our superior impatience and our casual brushing aside of their curiosity” (p. 40). Schools need to develop the intellect (defined as rational thought that functions independently of emotion) and intelligence, which is “the capacity to feel as well as to reason” (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 63).

To stimulate rather than quash student interest and curiosity, it is imperative to permit learners to explore learning and their own belief systems. To experience freedom, students must be allowed freedom to learn and to grow their own intelligence. As Krishnamurti (1953) stated, “Freedom and intelligence should be evident also in the child’s studies. If he is to be creative and not merely an automaton, the student should not be encouraged to accept formulas and conclusions” (p. 93). To make a critical decision about which social norms to accept and which to reject, children must know themselves by having opportunities to experience freedom and intelligence.

Krishnamurti (1953) wrote about context in relation to what schools ought to do and what they ought not do. Not surprisingly, he defended the notion that exploration again is key to self-knowledge and that to make a critical decision about what norms to associate with the students to support them in their quests for self-discovery. “The school should help its young people to discover their vocations and responsibilities, and not merely cram their minds with facts and technical knowledge; it should be the soil
in which they can grow without fear, happily and integrally” (p. 44). Imitations of what one should be “breeds fear; and fear kills creative thinking” (p. 57). This mindless imitation is akin to inauthenticity because it creates individuals who do not live in accordance with their values.

Krishnamurti (1953) stated that the “right kind” of education begins with the teacher who has to “understand himself and be free from established patterns of thought; for what he is, he imparts” (p. 98). To create truly intelligent individuals, it is necessary to awaken intelligence in the child. To do so, teachers must understand their own perceptions and definitions of intelligence. It is not possible, according to Krishnamurti, to create intelligent people if educators remain “unintelligent in so many ways” (p. 103).

In terms of trust, Krishnamurti (1953) stated that the school hierarchy ought to be egalitarian instead of a top-down system. Instead, each teacher ought to feel responsible for the whole of the school, which will facilitate cooperation. Teachers also ought to be flexible in that they exercise autonomy while simultaneously keeping in mind the good of the school mind. Cooperation includes regular staff meetings at which difficulties are discussed in a communal setting and decision-making is a shared endeavor. Equal distribution of labor will result in a working environment that supports camaraderie and mutual support among staff. At the same time, it is important for “individual freedom and intelligence [to] pervade the whole school at all times” (p. 92). This freedom and intelligence should be pervasive in students’ courses as well. The culture of the school is one of balance between trust, respect, and autonomy. Trust is the underlying component
that makes shared work, mutual respect, and autonomy possible, both as an element of the overall school’s infrastructure and at the classroom level.

**Modern Authenticity**

The notions of discovery and self-awareness discussed by Krishnamurti (1953) are related to Parker Palmer’s writings on education. Palmer integrated the concepts of self-actualization and authenticity into his writing when he discussed the spiritual sides of education. Palmer, in *Evoking the Spirit* (1998-1999), contended that questions of the spirit are not relegated to religious orientations or perspectives. Rather, questions about the spiritual have to do with the meaning and purpose of people’s lives, how they can know themselves better, how they know whom to trust, and how they deal with larger existential issues such as death. These questions are not beyond the purview of the student; however, teachers fail to acknowledge and discuss these concerns openly in the classroom.

Parker (1998-1999) discussed his notion of the ideal education:

Such an education would root ethics in its true and only ground, in the spiritual insight that beyond the broken surface of our lives there is a “hidden wholeness” on which all life depends. In such an education, intellect and spirit would be one, teachers and learners and subjects would be in vital community with one another, and a world in need of healing would be well served. That, finally, is the reason why the spirituality of education deserves and demands our attention. (p. xix)

Questions of spirituality are not a burden nor are they something to be feared. They have nothing to do with the question of prayer in schools. Rather, these questions always are exist in schools whether or not they are openly acknowledged. Ideally, as set forth by both Palmer and Krishnamurti, teachers would be supportive of students’ finding the meaning in their lives. This is the path to the creation and education of authentic
individuals who can think critically for themselves and can accept or reject the social norms referred to by Krishnamurti (1953). After all, these are questions that are alive in teachers, students, and content. The question becomes why educators choose to ignore or are dissuaded from investigating such inquiries.

In *To Know as We Are Known* (1993), Palmer discussed the importance of relationship, not only between the student and teacher but with epistemological knowledge. He stated in the introduction, “Real learning does not happen until students are brought into relationship with the teacher, with each other, and with the subject” (p. xvi). Relationship in this case is something to be fostered between individuals and subject matter. Understanding takes place on multiple planes and is not just transmission of information from one person to another but instead relies on interpersonal connection. This is the stuff of real learning, based on trustworthy relationship founded on individuals’ living in congruence.

I spoke with Palmer about the meaning of authenticity and whether or not it is important:

In every aspect of our lives we, in every relationship we have, we are asking about the person’s congruence. . . . I think that’s the question kids are asking about their parents, their teachers, workers are asking about their bosses, citizens in a democracy are asking about their political leaders. When the answer is more or less yes, what we see is what we get, again none of us is looking for perfection, but within the realm of possibility when the answer is more or less yes, then things really sing. That’s the definition of a trustworthy relationship. (P. Palmer, personal communication, March 16, 2009)

He stated that, as the decades passed, he learned from his mistakes and is unlikely to repeat his errors. However, he noticed that even with age, new, pressing questions arise
that have to do with authenticity, which he stated, “for me, means congruence between my inner and outer life” (P. Palmer, personal communication, March 16, 2009).

Palmer stated in To Know as We Are Known (1993), “The practice of intellectual rigor in the classroom requires an ethos of trust and acceptance” (p. xvii). Knowledge is not neutral; Eisner (2002) contended that curriculum is not neutral but instead is value-laden based upon what teachers choose to teach, what they choose not to teach, and the “hidden curriculum” (Palmer, 1993, p. 6). Education itself is an enterprise rife with values and non-neutrality, and it is important for one to acknowledge this fact when deciding what to teach. Palmer continued, “But I have come to see that knowledge contains its own morality, that it begins not in neutrality but in a place of passion within the human soul” (p. 7).

That is not to say that learning is always intuitive or painless. Instead, learning can be a difficult and challenging opportunity for one to stretch, which may be painful. Regarding the context of the classroom, and environment in particular, Palmer (1993) discussed the importance of strife in human growth and self-awareness.

A learning space needs to be hospitable not to make learning painless but to make the painful things possible, things without which no learning can occur—things like exposing ignorance, testing tentative hypotheses, challenging false or partial information, and mutual criticism of thought. (p. 74)

What happens when the individual is authentically negatively motivated? Like Taylor (1991), Palmer (1993) addressed the potential dangers of those who are authentically corrupt individuals:

People who are controlling, and power-hungry are also notorious for corruption resultant from a lack of basic ethical values. However, another passion can tame
this kind of knowledge and comes from compassion instead of control. This is lacking in our intellectual spheres, but is apparent in spirituality. (p. 8)

As stated by Krishnamurti (1953), to educate teachers to be self- and morally aware is key to the avoidance of conditioning that might create individuals who act from a place of negativity. Therefore, it is important to use the social conditioning of schools to decondition children on the one hand and on the other, to condition them into positive attributes including compassion, patience, and understanding. Palmer (1993) stated,

We are well-educated people who have been schooled in a way of knowing that treats the world as an object to be dissected and manipulated, a way of knowing that gives us power over the world. With those scientists I have succumbed to the arrogance that comes when we see what our minds can do. (p. 2)

Curiosity and control, when left without critical reflection, distance individuals from each other and from the world. People become numb to ethics and compassionate understanding of the world as it becomes objectified. The antidote to this problem is love, which will “wrap the knower and the known in compassion, in a bond of awesome responsibility as well as transforming joy” (Palmer, 1993, p. 9). Palmer (1993) contended that this state of being loving and compassionate is much more difficult than it is to be controlling because it requires self-reflection and possible change.


“The purpose of education is to show a person how to define himself authentically and spontaneously in relation to his world-not to impose a prefabricated definition of the world, still less an arbitrary definition of the individual himself” (p. 12).

Critical reflection is necessary to prevent individuals from forming internal distortions because reflection reconnects self and world and prevents a skewed formation
of the world in distorted self-image. The self creates the world by projection (Palmer, 1993) and if the self is violent, violence will manifest in the world.

Kreber, Klampfleitner, McCune, Bayne, and Knottenbelt (2007) stated that authenticity is associated with answering large questions about the world, including human existence, by permitting self-actualization and empowerment. The definition of authenticity is still up for debate:

However, as long as authenticity remains only vaguely understood and ill defined, which we suggest is the case at present, it is, in a strict sense, not feasible to articulate a persuasive rationale for why we should be concerned with the phenomenon in the first place. (p. 25)

To move beyond the vague understanding of authenticity, it is important to allow teachers to come into contact with the concept and to reflect critically on its meaning. Most of all, it is difficult to create the climate in which to foster authenticity among both teachers and students because of institutional constraints and the lack of conversation about authenticity in education. Not only is the concept vaguely understood, it does not share as much attention and importance as standardized testing in the current educational climate.

**Authenticity and Effective Teaching**

Memorable teachers are memorable because they are trustworthy and honest.

If the teacher is effective, it is because she combines the element of having something important to say, demonstrate and teach with being open and honest with students. The former quality is that of credibility, the latter the concept of authenticity. (Brookfield, 2006, p. 5)

Authentic teachers are honest, helpful, and trustworthy allies who want their students to succeed.
In a climate of standardized tests, prescribed curricular strategies, and high-stakes accountability, it is understandable that many administrators and policymakers might construe a focus on teachers’ inner lives as a luxury or at least as secondary to such issues as pedagogical technique and curriculum development (Intrator & Kuzman, 2006).

Brookfield (2006) contended that over the years, he witnessed four specific indicators of authenticity in his own teaching: congruence, full disclosure, responsiveness, and personhood. *Congruence* refers to one’s words and actions being in harmony with one another such that what one says is what one does. This leads to relational trust and “since being trustworthy is at the heart of authenticity, it’s clear to me that being responsive to students in this way is crucial” (p. 10).

Full disclosure refers to the teacher’s being straightforward about the expectations, assumptions, and criteria that guide the teaching. It is important to communicate these because it allows space for the teacher and student to build trust between one another. “Students would much prefer to know what you stand for—even if they disagree with it—than to like you personally but be in the dark as to what it is you’re expecting” (Brookfield, 2006, p. 8). Responsiveness is an indicator of how helpful a teacher is to students as a way of being student-centered. This facet of authenticity has two components:

One is the teacher’s constant attempt to show that she wants to know how and what student are learning, what inhibitors and enhancers to learning are present in her teaching, and what concerns students have about the course. The other is her public discussion with learners of how this knowledge affects her own teaching including the extent to which some elements of the course can be negotiated. (p. 9)
However, responsiveness is not capitulation, and at times it may be important for a teacher to deny the majority of students’ wishes to address their concerns appropriately. Personhood is the understanding by students that their teacher has an identity outside of school. This principle is illustrated when teachers use autobiographical examples to demonstrate concepts and theories, when they discuss application of skills to the real world, and when they discuss their own struggles to which students may relate.

Self-awareness is central to the development of authenticity in one’s teaching practice. Teaching is . . .

. . . intimately bound up with the self of the teacher in relationship with his or her students. . . . The quality of one’s teaching is deeply intertwined with and mediated through the interactions and relationships that teachers establish with their students. (Dirkx, 2006, p. 28)

Therefore, teaching is an enterprise steeped in emotion and affect, which may at times result in emotional exhaustion. “Parker Palmer (1998) demonstrates how even the most committed teachers can, after years of dedicated service, lose heart” (as cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 28). Dirkx contended that self-knowledge is the core of authentic teaching, much in the same vein as Palmer’s (1998) contention that “we teach who we are” (p. 2).

The idea of “authenticity” (Cranton, 2001; Cranton and Carusetta, 2004) places emphasis on qualities of the teacher as a person, on the nature of the self. It expresses the genuine self within a community, consistency between values and actions, relationships with others, and maintaining a critical perspective (Cranton and Carusetta, 2004). “To be able to express the genuine self,” Cranton and Carusetta (2004) suggest, “people need to know who the self is.” (as cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 7)

Teacher’s actions arise from their deep senses of self, in contrast to the notion of teaching from a place of technique, which Palmer (1998) suggested is “what people use until the
teacher shows up” (as cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 29). The self is something to be embraced because it is the essential character of good teaching. Dirkx (2006) stated,

Teaching with a sense of authenticity reflects a profound sense of self-awareness and self-understanding. . . . Teaching with authenticity mirrors Palmer’s call (1998) for the teacher’s need to attend to the soul as well as the role of teaching, to how one’s identity and integrity are or are not manifest within the work of teaching. (pp. 29-30)

Higher education scholars have begun to investigate the following questions, which have gone largely unexplored in the K-12 setting. Dirkx (2006) stated that order to understand the role of the self in teaching the following questions must be probed:

(1) Who is the self from which the teaching act derives?

(2) How do we understand the development and fostering of this self-knowing that is at the center of authenticity in teaching?

(3) What does it mean to ‘know who the self is?’ (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004, p. 7), and

(4) How is that self-knowledge acquired or developed?

One way to approach these questions in exploring the self is in reflective practice. “Critical reflection represents a potentially powerful way to help teachers identify, critique and possibly modify existing assumptions and perspectives about themselves as teachers and the teaching-learning process” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 30). Critical reflection, however, is not just a process of the aware ego but refers to the intuitive side of teaching, including feelings and the affective domain. “In Jungian language, these are expressions of the soul. Hollis (2005) describes the soul as ‘our intuited sense of a presence that is other than the ego . . . the archetype of meaning and the agent of organic wholeness’” (as
cited in Dirkx, 2006, p. 253). The soul represents “an active place of wisdom, deeper than my conscious knowing” (p. 254) and the aspect of the self that animates the inner and outer worlds, bringing them to life (Hillman, 1975; Hollis, 2005, both as cited in Dirkx, 2006). The ego can become overwhelmed by the affective demands of teaching and in these states, it is important to acknowledge that something larger than critical reflection is necessary. Instead, when dealing with matters of the soul, it is important not to use critical or analytical methods to look at powerful emotions as this can force the soul “into hiding” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 31). It is imperative to become aware of self-knowledge and understanding as “we foster authenticity in our teaching by connecting with a deeper sense of who we are” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 31). One way to forge connection is by working with emotions associated with teaching that allow educators to develop a more profound understanding of their identities as teachers. “Development of identity, integrity and authenticity” (Palmer, 2004, p. 27) in teaching requires critical reflection and the work of the intellect.

These faculties alone are not enough. The development of a deep sense of authenticity also requires a symbolic approach to such experiences: Journaling can be a powerful way to engage with emotion and self-reflection for teachers (Dirkx, 2006, p. 33). Generative experiences provide a forum for the non-ego to express itself by relying on “our intuitive, imaginative capacities, such as fantasy or daydreaming” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 34). The use of specific experiences and the use of metaphor both can aid in helping one become more self-aware. Symbols and metaphors and individuals’ reactions to them can provide insight into one’s emotional reactions to certain images.
Reflection allows thoughts and feelings about teaching experiences to be explored; what is reflected back allows the development of a “deeper awareness of our emotional life” and has the capacity to “foster authenticity related to our teaching” (Dirkx, 2006, p. 37).

The development of authenticity rests with our willingness to muck around in the dark, messy, unpredictable world of the unconscious. . . . Yet as so many studies and stories suggest, teachers lose heart and end up teaching to the test rather than from the heart. The craft of teaching is intimately bound up with who we are as a person. We can teach from the heart only if we recognize its role in our life and develop a conscious relationship with it. (Dirkx, 2006, p. 37)

No relationship can be productive and beneficial unless it is based on genuineness and honesty. Caring is an important part of the relationship, and the teacher must demonstrate care for the student.

Effective education is learning that transforms the young adult in two steps: first, by establishing both the safety and the boundaries that allow and encourage the student to become actively engaged, with minimal fear; and second, by developing confidence in the ability to learn effectively (and self-assess) so as to create and internal personal safety that allows engagement in new learning situations. (Frego, 2006, p. 43)

In Institutional Constraints on Authenticity in Teaching, Russell Hunt (2006) related the story of Professor X, from Parker Palmer’s Courage to Teach (1998), which offered the following vignette:

For twenty years Professor X had tired to imitate his mentor’s way of teaching and being, and it had been a disaster. He and his mentor were very different people, and X’s attempt to clone his mentor’s style had distorted his own identity and integrity. . . . early in my career, I too, had tried to emulate my mentor with non-stop lecturing until I realized my students were even less enthralled by my cheap imitation than some of my classmates had been by the genuine original. I began to look for a way to teach that was more integral to my own nature, a way that would have as much integrity for me as my mentor’s had for him—for the key to my mentor’s power was the coherence between his method and himself. (Palmer, 1998, p. xx, as cited in Hunt, 2006, p. 1)
Palmer (1998) related this story to illustrate how teaching may not correspond with one’s values and thoughts. Hunt (2006) stated, “The way in which he was trying to teach was incongruent with his own habitual ways of thought and proceeding; it was inconsistent with what we might call his personality” (p. 52). According to Cranton and Carusetta (2004), authenticity does not just involve one’s acting in congruence with one’s values but also self-awareness and awareness of one’s role in the larger community. Based on the work of Cranton and Carusetta (2004), Hunt (2006) stated, “Authenticity can usefully be thought of not as ‘honesty’ but as coherence” (p. 52). The key is that this congruence is external and internal. It is imperative to consider the social context in which one acts in accordance with one’s values.

It is true then that authentic teaching cannot be based solely on technique but must come from the wellspring of congruence generated by the teacher. One difficulty in authentic pedagogy is that there are many institutional constraints that can impact how much a teacher is able to act with integrity and congruence.

Although Hunt’s (2006) article focused on higher education settings, it is possible to generalize his ideas to the K-12 setting. For example, one of the constraints he noted was structure. The physical layout of the classroom, schedules, and class size can all impact how a teacher works with values. At times, it may be that a teacher is forced to conform to those constraints, resulting in the teacher being . . .

. . . forced to teach in a way that does not fit her priorities . . . [and she will have] to rethink those priorities (this is not a bad thing, incidentally) or simply cope—a consequence that can lead to long-term unconscious acceptance of inauthenticity as a condition of employment. (p. 55)
Systems, Constructs, and Authenticity

Policies and practices that constitute what an institution considers good teaching may constrain educators. Pressures involved in evaluation can be damaging, and mandated evaluative actions might cause some teachers to adopt pedagogical techniques that are incongruent with their authentic selves. Cranton and Carusetta (2004) stated that evaluated teaching and the assessment of teaching have guidelines that...

...most often provide principles, guidelines, strategies, and best practices, without taking into consideration individual teachers’ personalities, preferences, values, and ways of being in the world—the ways in which they are authentic. The assumption underlying this approach is that what works well for one teacher in one context works well in general, for all teachers in all contexts. (Hunt, 2006, p. 57)

Social expectations of what it means to be a good teacher also may become a constraint to one’s acting authentically in teaching practice. The social expectations placed on educators and the rhetoric used to describe the profession may “invisibly exert pressure on a teacher to work in a fashion tending inevitably toward what we have to call inauthenticity” (Hunt, 2006, p. 57). For instance, the social assumption about what happens in courses defined as lectures may not be at all descriptive of what actually happens in the classroom. Regardless, the expectations connected to language shape the expectation of teacher behavior, which in turn may cause an educator to act in an incongruent way. The discussion of constraints is not to say that they are a bad thing, only that they must be acknowledged in how they shape pedagogy. Hunt stated,

More generally—and not at all incidentally—it is important to be clear that constraints are not a bad thing. We cannot be without them, and they help us shape our actions. As Robert Frost remarked, “You have freedom when you’re easy in your harness.” But you do need to be aware of the existence and nature of that harness, and to be conscious of how it enjoins tasks and limits flexibility—
and how it consistently, regularly, and inexorably invites us to be conscious of our own need to retain our authenticity. (p. 62)

In *Cultural Dimensions of Authenticity in Teaching*, Lin (2006) stated that authenticity and associated constraints are culturally relativistic terms that mean different things in different cultures and societies. Lin contended that class, age, generation, race, and profession are a few of the factors that shape a context.

People in turn judge (or, as Lin stated, misjudge) an individual’s authenticity based on what is considered socially appropriate. Social context is very influential in how one develops one’s authentic self. Lin stated,

> Discussions of authenticity often appear in works associated with the existentialist philosophy of writers such as Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Sartre (Kauffman, 1972), and Maxine Greene (1998). For these writers, the conscious self is seen as coming to terms with being in a material world and with encountering external forces and influences quite different from itself; authenticity is one way in which the self acts and changes in response to these pressures. (p. 69)

How does one define authenticity in pedagogy within these terms? Lin (2006) defined an authentic teacher as one who can communicate with and relate to students while holding the teacher’s perceptions at the forefront. The teacher also must be “willing to be critical of and transform her own and the students’ values and actions” (p. 71). Development of personal authenticity requires individuals to be a reflective practitioner while simultaneously interacting with the world around them. “Being authentic implies being simple and sophisticated, stable and resilient, independent and interdependent, moral and critical” (p. 71).
In *Teaching with Presence*, Lloyd Kornelson (2006) discussed his own experiences with what Csikszentmihalyi (1991) referred to as *flow*, which is a state of clarity and the loss of touch with the aware ego while simultaneously being very much in the present moment. One’s being present is key to authenticity, and as Cranton (2001) stated, “Authenticity is the expression of one’s genuine Self in the community and society” (p. vii). For teachers to, as Palmer (1998) would say, “show up” (p. 6), they must be in the present moment. This approach to teaching “means teaching in a way that encourages openness, imbues vitality, and sometimes abandons order” (p. 74). Of course, this also may mean that teachers must be able to acknowledge their shortcomings or mistakes in the classroom. The ability to do so gives the teacher credibility in the eyes of students, as teachers who admit failure or mistakes are seen as honest human beings.

Kornelson (2006) stated, “It is easier for students to trust a teacher and engage with the subject if the teacher is seen to be meaningfully engaging with the subject as well, and open to exploring it together with students” (p. 75). Enthusiasm for the content and respect for the subject matter also are important components of one’s being open with learners. This relates to Palmer’s (1998) discussion of how content manifests in the classroom. Kornelson (2006) stated,

>This brings to mind Palmer’s metaphor (1998) of the subject’s presence in the classroom: he depicts the subject as something that rests or sits in the “center” of the classroom around which teachers and students gather and together approach the “great thing” in their midst. (p. 77)

>Teachers must be able to engage meaningfully, which also might mean one’s letting go of the intended structure of the day to attend to more pressing matters so that the teacher may connect with students. This process may result in the group’s feeling
“heightened feelings of consciousness and synergy and a sense of physical and emotional well-being” (p. 77).

Kornelson (2006) noted that people can be most present and that “the traits of openness and vitality are the most effectively exercised (present) when teachers feel free to be themselves” (p. 79).

To help facilitate a connective, flowlike learning environment, a teacher needs to be open to meaningful student participation, and not fear the messiness or chaos that results. Teachers need to be themselves and trust themselves. They can be more effective if they worry less about fitting into some prescribed teaching template or style and concern themselves more with the well-being of their students and the integrity of the subject-content. (p. 81)

**Authenticity as Professional Development**

Regarding the professional development component of reflective teaching, Dutch researcher Fred Korthagen and his colleague Angelo Vasalos (Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005) developed an approach to professional development that uses insights drawn from psychotherapy and research on human consciousness to support intensive reflection on teaching practice. This approach, which they call multilevel learning, invites teachers to think about specific events in their teaching and to engage in a process called core reflection. The idea behind core reflection is that a teacher’s core personality—including identity and mission—profoundly influences the way the teacher practices. Teachers reflect on their core qualities by exploring such questions as, Why did you become a teacher? What do you see as your calling in the world? Multilevel learning also aims to help teachers develop specific coaching behaviors that support their community as well as their students. Because mastering such behaviors requires practice, multilevel learning is not taught in a retreat but in courses of about three days, each spread out over 2 to 3
months. Participating teachers practice specific interventions to learn how inner realities influence their teaching behavior and apply these guidelines to their own learning and problem-solving. Between course days, teachers practice using what they have learned both with their students and with their teaching colleagues. The approach is currently used to enhance teaching throughout the Netherlands, and there are plans to offer multilevel learning courses in the United States. This approach suggests that reconnection with the self is a valuable opportunity for both teachers and students.

**Creativity and Soul**

From another perspective, Kessler’s (2000) book, *The Soul of Education*, investigates the manifestation of soul in schools. The role of the soul in education connects to the topic of authenticity again through emphasis on self-awareness. Kessler addressed potentially difficult topics, including how to have conversations about the soul at school while maintaining separation of church and state.

Kessler’s (2000) conversations with students reveal stories that fall into themes: deep connection, meaning and purpose, joy, creativity, silence, and transcendence. Her themes resonate with some of those illuminated by Parker Palmer (1993, 1998, 2004), namely, those of deep connection [which Palmer (1998) would discuss in terms of community and Noddings (2003) in terms of caring relationship]. Creativity as a way to connect with the soul, to generate self-awareness, and therefore to grow authentically connects directly with the theme of authentic education. *Creativity* emerged as another theme to consider in terms of authenticity in education, as it was a central component of Kessler’s (2000) book. Kessler stated,
Creating the climate and the skills for fostering creativity is essential to educating a generation of young people who can visualize new solutions to the problems of today and tomorrow’s work force, social fabric, and environment. To these practical rationales for honoring the creative drive, I want to add the call from the soul. An 8th grade girl best captures this connection: “Creativity is an outreach of your spirit into form,” she said. “Then, you can see it, hear, feel, touch it.” (p. 94)

If creativity is one mode of authentic expression in schools, why should it be limited? After reading Kessler (2000), I expected to see and witnessed creative expression in both arts and other content domains of the children I observed at the Spring School. Her ideas are exemplary of authenticity in practice and the emphasis she places on creativity-as-gateway to the inner life is intriguing.

**Critiques of Authenticity**

Authenticity is not without critics. Christopher Lasch, for instance, found the “cult of authenticity” narcissistic (Braman, 2008, p. 5).

Moreover, the idea of authenticity is discounted by post-strucutralists, deconstructionists, and philosophical postmodernists-Foucalt, Derrida, Lyotard and Rorty because the term which “conveys the illusory myth of a totalizing, harmonious, unitary self, which they seek to replace with the image of a fragmented, plural, centerless and irreconcilably split subjectivity”. It is with Theodor Adorno that we find the most extensive and passionate criticism of the “jargon of authenticity.” (Braman, 2008, p. 5)

Adorno argued, “In the end . . . authenticity glorifies the person who claims to be authentic” (p. 6). Lonergan and Taylor argued that the desire to be authentically human does not engender narcissism or moral relativism. Instead, Taylor saw authenticity as . . .

. . . grounded in a self-determining freedom that is ordered to something greater than the self, i.e., something noble, virtuous or courageous, Lonergan understands authentic human existence as authentic self-transcendence expressed in a three-fold form of conversion that is intellectual, moral, and religious. (Braman, 2008, p. 7)
The danger in conceptualizing authenticity as narcissism or hedonism is that it disregards this moral imperative that Taylor connected with authenticity.

“Authenticity properly understood can shed a new and more ample light upon the project of human living. And the dangers that some critics see in the rhetoric of authenticity are grotesque expressions of something positive and essentially human” (Braman, 2008, p. 27)

To understand authenticity, and therefore the truth of human existence (Braman, 2008, p. 29), it is important not to separate the moral imperative, because in doing so, authenticity becomes discredited in modern society. Moral positions and ideals are adopted intuitively, and so it can be difficult to dissuade individuals from seeking what they consider to be their authentic selves. “Reason can’t adjudicate moral disputes. . . . So the critics of authenticity can point to the possible social and political results of each person seeking self-fulfillment”; critics also “confound it with a non-moral desire to do what one wants without interference” (Taylor, 1991, p. 21). Again, this is only true if pursuit of ones’ selfhood were to take place in a moral vacuum. For instance, it is important to be an active citizen, to take part in democracy, and to be a steward to the environment. If these or similar activities do not take place, the resultant search for authenticity is deviant.

**Authenticity in Practice**

What does authenticity look like in practice? To address this question, it is pertinent to discuss the work of Newmann and Associates (1996) in the text *Authentic Achievement*. Newmann contended that the current definition of authentic pedagogy may be relegated to student-centered activities, including small group work, hands-on projects, and group discussion. However, just because these activities are at work in the
classroom does not signify that they are working well. It is indeed possible to participate in the previously mentioned activities while intending to add to student construction of knowledge and disciplined inquiry, but Newmann found that many activities “of this sort do not necessarily support construction of knowledge or disciplined inquiry, nor do they have value to students beyond completing school assignments” (p. 32). However, when considering these three qualities that are central to authentic intellectual work (construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and value outside of school), it is possible that these student-centered activities can indeed promote authentic learning.

Newmann and Associates (1996) developed standards for instruction that offer a rubric to measure the extent to which learning experiences in classrooms are authentic. It is important to note that these standards are relegated to pedagogy and do not dictate content to be learned. Instead, specific criteria, outlined below, are ranked on a continuum from 1 to 5, and “Raters consider both the number of students to which the criterion applies and the proportion of class time during which it applies” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, p. 8).

The article ascribes standards ratings based on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 5, with 1 indicating the trait is lacking in the classroom and 5 indicating it is continually and fully expressed in the classroom. The five traits are higher-order thinking (HOT), depth of knowledge, connectedness to the world beyond the classroom, substantive conversation, and social support for student achievement.

The first criterion, HOT, requires learners to think critically so that they manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meaning and implications,
including actions such as synthesis and evaluation. Low-order thinking (LOT) is characterized by regurgitation of factual knowledge or the practice of routines and algorithms.

Second, depth of knowledge describes student understanding and “refers to the substantive character of the ideal in a lesson and to the level of understanding that students demonstrate as they consider these ideas” (Newmann & Wehlage, 1993, p. 9). Trivial understanding of concepts or surface-level learning of those concepts are examples of shallow knowledge, often seen when teachers have a large quantity of information to teach in a short time. Deep understanding comes when central ideas become focal points for arguments, problem-solving, and complex comprehension of concepts. For this to occur, fewer topics may be covered in more integrated ways.

The third criterion, connectedness to the world, measures relevance of content and its value beyond the school walls. Work that has an impact on larger social context is considered valuable beyond the context of school. As Newmann explained,

A lesson gains in authenticity the more there is a connection to the larger social context within which students live. Instruction can exhibit some degree of connectedness when (1) students address real-world public problems (for example, clarifying a contemporary issue by applying statistical analysis in a report to the city council on the homeless); or (2) students use personal experiences as a context for applying knowledge (such as using conflict resolution techniques in their own school). (Newmann, 1993, p. 10)

Fourth, substantive conversation assesses the extent of discourse used as a means of understanding a subject. Activities such as recitation and lecture are low on the substantive conversation score, and high level substantive conversation has the following three features:
Considerable interaction about the ideas of a topic (the talk is about disciplined subject matter and includes indicators of HOT, such as making distinctions, applying ideas, forming generalizations, raising questions, and not just reporting experiences, facts, definitions, or procedures);

- Idea-sharing is evident in exchanges that are not completely scripted or controlled (as in a teacher-led recitation). Sharing is best illustrated when participants explain themselves or ask questions in complete sentences and when they respond directly to comments of previous speakers; and

- Dialogue builds coherently on participants’ ideas to promote improved collective understanding of a theme or topic (Newmann, 1993, p. 3).

Fifth, social support for student achievement is evident in the social atmosphere of the classroom. High social support offers inclusion of all students, encouragement, and mutual respect. Student and teacher interactions and the malingering effects of negative behavior can indicate low social support, meaning that low support is not necessarily a result of overt behaviors.

However, Newmann (1993) explained,

Social support is high in classes when the teacher conveys high expectations for all students, including that it is necessary to take risks and try hard to master challenging academic work, that all members of the class can learn important knowledge and skills, and that a climate of mutual respect among all members of the class contributes to achievement by all. “Mutual respect” means that students with less skill or proficiency in a subject are treated in ways that encourage their efforts and value their contributions. (p. 11)
Summary

The review of the literature is broad and inclusive of theoretical and practical ideas about authenticity that provides an overview of relevant research findings. This section summarized the literature that is pertinent to the study and offers background information for an understanding of the context and rationale for the study of authenticity.

Based on the review of the literature, the most important components of authenticity in teaching and learning are the self, community, congruence, and reflectiveness. The literature prompted me to ask more questions about the concept of authenticity in teaching and learning, namely, how the concept is defined and enacted in an actual school setting. After reviewing the work of Palmer (1993, 1998, 2004) and Newmann (1993, 1995) and Newmann and Associates (1996) in particular, I grew increasingly curious about not only what authenticity looks like in practice but what the implications of the integration of authenticity into schools might include. After researching schools that intentionally state that they incorporate some facet of authenticity as they define it into their mission and pedagogy, I found one site in New England that proved to be a good match for my research. Thus, I developed research questions and selected a method to address the questions I sought to answer. The next section delineates the method of the study and offers a rationale for a qualitative approach to the study of authenticity.
Chapter 3

Methodology

Educational Connoisseurship and Criticism

Elliot Eisner (1998) is largely credited for the development of an arts-based research method called educational connoisseurship and criticism\(^1\), a qualitative research method that is narrative in format and relies heavily on description. Educational criticism has been used by researchers across the world to investigate issues including ecology (Moroye, 2007), bullying in schools (Bennett, 2008), the science of well-being in education (Cloninger, 2009), and Waldorf education (Uhrmacher, 1991). Dissertations, theses, and a plethora of publications have used educational criticism as a method for inquiry for topics that range from outdoor education (Kime, 2008) to texts on qualitative evaluation (Fetterman, 1988) and evaluation theory (Shufflebeam & Shirkfield, 2007). Educational criticism is taught in methodology courses across the United States (e.g., Indiana, Colorado, Florida), and has become well-represented as a legitimate qualitative method in the field of education for studies that are intended to improve education.

\(^1\) From this point forward, referred to herein as *educational criticism*. 

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The criticism component of educational criticism grew out of the art of disclosure from the field of professional criticism, namely that of art, theater, and film. Criticism used here is not defined in the usual sense. In *The Educational Imagination*, Eisner (2002) stated, “Once again, by *criticism* I do not mean the negative appraisal of something but rather the illumination of something’s qualities so that an appraisal of its value can be made” (p. 214, emphasis in original). Criticism in this context is used in the Deweyan sense, meaning to “lift the veils that keep the eyes from seeing. The function of criticism is the reeducation of perception of works of art” (Dewey, as cited in Eisner, 2002, p. 213).

The art critic is charged not with passing judgment but rather with the creation of a gateway of perception so that the eyes are able to see and perceive the artwork with which they are engaged. Criticism, in this case, although similar to that used in the arts, is instead directed toward issues of education in hopes that findings will contribute to knowledge in a way that more scientific or linear approaches to research may overlook. Criticism as disclosure aims to help an audience understand the context under scrutiny. Eisner (1998) stated, “Effective criticism functions as the midwife to perception” (p. 6), meaning that educators need to work on becoming critics and making their voices heard so that others can understand their experiences.

Connoisseurship is the art of appreciation. “Connoisseurship is a private act; it consists of recognizing and appreciating the qualities of a particular, but it does not require either a public judgment or a public description of those qualities” (Eisner, 1998, p. 215). Connoisseurs become involved in the art of appreciation and perception; they are
given the ability to see. However, to develop educational connoisseurship, two criteria must be met. First, there must be an opportunity to become involved in educational life in a conscious, cognizant way. Second, to be involved in connoisseurship, one must have the opportunity to compare one’s findings and to discuss them. What is observed, which has not been seen before, must be noted and a last appraisal of what has been seen must take place (Eisner, 1998). These appraisals are to be made public.

These qualities point to the four facets of educational criticism, known as description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics. These four qualities aim to help the researcher appreciate the complexities of the context. It is important for the researcher to see and understand multiple facets of situations and how those situations are relational. Individuals’ biases can be revealed to connect the researcher’s values to the study’s findings.

*Description* refers to the “attempt to identify and characterize, portray, or render in language the relevant qualities of educational life” (Eisner, 1998, p. 226). These qualities might include description of the environment or culture of a school or might involve more abstract characteristics, including student-teacher relationships and the hidden curriculum in a classroom. Regardless of what content is portrayed, the language used in this component of educational criticism is permeated with nuance and vivid verbiage in an attempt to explain whatever experience the critic deems necessary to inhabit. It is important to note that like an artist, the educational critic describes what is seen as pertinent, just as a visual artist might portray whatever experience is bracketed. In this dissertation, I offer a description of each classroom and teacher, including the
physical surroundings and pertinent observation. I also offer rich descriptions of the campus as a whole, which serve to illuminate the culture of the school.

The interpretive aspect asks what bearing the situation holds for those involved. The focus is on what major ideas and theories can be drawn upon to clarify its relevance. It is in this section of the study that social sciences are frequently invoked to explain observed events. Eisner’s (2002) questions related to interpretation offer the reader some guidance to make sense of the data. The questions, “What does the situation mean to those involved?” “How does this classroom operate?” and “What ideas, concepts, or theories can be used to explain its major features?” allow for the integration of the authentic education framework into observational data as a method for interpreting the data collected.

Judgments are inevitable in research, and therefore, the evaluation component of educational criticism seeks to “appraise the value of a set of circumstances if only because, in the process of description, selective perception has already been at work.” Evaluation, as I have already indicated, “pervades the perceptual processes themselves” (Eisner, 1998, p. 231). It is the three components of description, interpretation, and evaluation that facilitate the distillation of larger themes (thematics) that can be gleaned from the work.

Thematics, the last component, seeks the larger implications or lessons of the research. It provides a summary so that the essentials are obvious and the reader comes away appreciating the larger lessons involved. Thematics offer the opportunity to
consider how this study may be applicable to other settings while simultaneously revealing the overarching issues at hand.

Description, interpretation, evaluation, and emerging themes help the critic to provide multiple perspectives to readers and educators to create a nuanced picture of the complexities of education in the chosen context. As Eisner (1998) contended, his method is used “to transform the qualities of . . . a classroom or school, or act of teaching and learning into a public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced” (p. 86). The descriptive component of the method permits articulate, narrative text to be used to illustrate for the reader the context, as experienced by the researcher. In sharing this narrative voice, the researcher makes public what was once held as private. The facet of interpretation involves the application of ideas to the events that have been researched so as to make linkages that more clearly explain the situation. Evaluation is the point at which the researcher asks whether or not there is educational value in the observed experience. Themes are then extracted in a sense similar to generalizability in quantitative research. That is, themes create larger purviews in which the research can be situated and possibly applied to the work of others.

Eisner’s (1988, 1998) ecology of schooling is a framework that helps illuminate the impact of school systems on authentic pedagogy. The dimensions of schooling investigated by Eisner are all interconnected and function somewhat as a system in that if one dimension is changed, the others are affected. The five dimensions of schooling are intentions, curriculum, pedagogy, school structure, and evaluation. Intention refers to what schools aim to accomplish in a general sense (Eisner, 1992) and
by way of subject matter. Curriculum refers to what is taught and how it is taught in terms of both content and organization of educational materials. An important consideration here is the null curriculum, which refers to what is not taught, which is equally important as what is taught. As Eisner stated, the arts are often relegated to this category, as they are frequently seen as somehow unnecessary. Pedagogy refers to how curriculum is delivered by teachers. The structural component of schooling relates to how subjects, time, and roles are organized. For instance, one may investigate the use of space and classroom layout and length of time during the school day and school periods to inquire about how a school is structured; the subjects themselves are often taught independently rather than being integrated. Structure and its associated paradigms (and therefore, constraints) overflow into reform efforts that may be hampered by these constraints that otherwise may not be reimagined. Evaluation refers to assessment of student and teacher performance but should not rely solely on outcomes, according to Eisner. Instead, evaluation should provide information that encompasses what the school and its constituents value from an educational perspective. “Schools cannot move in one direction and assess teachers and students using procedures that represent values in quite another direction” (Eisner, 1992, p. 625). Again, it is imperative to realize that all of these ecological components of schooling interact. Uhrmacher and Matthews (2005) noted that when one dimension is changed, the others change in response, whether or not it is a conscious or obvious change. Uhrmacher and Matthews also contributed to this list by adding administration and school-community relations to the framework as elements that interact in the school setting.
The Site and Participants

This qualitative study took place at one school on the East coast of the United States known as the Spring School (a pseudonym), whose founders published a series of texts on authentic teaching and learning. It is this series of texts that explicitly use the term *authentic* to describe the school that inspired me to reach out and ask for permission to conduct research at the Spring School. I sought out the school because it was considered authentic, and I wanted to understand how the founder’s conceptualization of authenticity was operationalized.

The school was founded 45 years ago in the northeastern United States. The founders currently live on the school grounds. The Spring School began with a very small number of students, which were the founders’ children, nieces, and nephews, who were educated in the main building, which also was the founders’ place of residence. Today, the campus occupies 70 acres and includes multiple school edifices, a theater, a farm, sports fields, and a community kitchen.

At the time of data collection, the school comprised 130 students with the average class size at 13 pupils. The grades at the school were pre-kindergarten through high school, although the high school only consisted of three pupils and was discontinued during the beginning of my fieldwork. During data analysis, and taking into account the changes that have taken place on the campus from curricular, administrative and structural standpoints, I decided to treat the data as historical information. What I observed was the reality of the school at a certain moment in time, at which point The
Spring operated under the conditions described in this study. As such, this dissertation intends to reflect what I experienced and can be seen as a phase of the school’s history.

Community is a central component of The Spring School’s mission statement, as is emphasis on wholistic development of the child. The mission statement expressly states,

Education is not merely the training of the mind, but the development of a full range of human potentials: intellectual, artistic, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The inclusion of rigorous academics, music, art, yoga, meditation, communication, dance, theater, competitive sports, and daily jobs enriches both mind and heart. (The Spring School, September 29, 2009.)

In the book *The Challenge of Authentic Education* (Garland & Garland, 2004), the founders stated that self-awareness is a key component of learning and that teachers must be able to appreciate the potential in each child. “If I cannot discover and express the greatness in others and keep those gifts in the forefront of my mind each day, then I do not meet the requirements of being an authentic teacher” (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 88). Authentic curriculum, therefore, needs to allow learners to make choices for themselves while simultaneously supporting “their inner self, and helping them to integrate the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of human nature” (p. 128).

Authentic teaching aligned with authentic curriculum leads to an education that helps people to “confront his own fear, doubt, shame, and limitation in order to experience the greater power and brilliance of self” (p. 115).

In an attempt to witness authentic pedagogy, I requested at least three volunteers that are classroom teachers to participate in my study; participants included two female and one male teacher of elementary-level content areas who participated in observation
and semistructured interviews as well as informal conversations. The volunteering teachers, from 1st, 3rd, and 4th grades, were from grades K-4, which is my level of connoisseurship. However, I remained open to teacher participants of other grades and content areas including art and theater. I tried to obtain a fourth volunteer but was unsuccessful. I spent a total of four weeks in the field observing grades K-8 and interviewing teachers and school founders about their thoughts on authenticity in education. Table 1 outlines the schedule of data collection.
Table 1
*Schedule of Data Collection*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interview Date 1</th>
<th>Interview Date 2</th>
<th>Interview Date 3</th>
<th>Interview Date 4</th>
<th>Interview Date 5</th>
<th>Interview Date 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hobart</td>
<td>09/29/09</td>
<td>09/30/09</td>
<td>10/16/09</td>
<td>04/16/10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Garrett</td>
<td>10/06/09</td>
<td>10/08/09</td>
<td>10/09/09</td>
<td>04/05/10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Andrews</td>
<td>10/13/09</td>
<td>10/14/09</td>
<td>10/16/09</td>
<td>04/13/10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin</td>
<td>09/27/09</td>
<td>09/28/09</td>
<td>09/29/09</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founders</td>
<td>10/02/09</td>
<td>10/04/09</td>
<td>10/08/09</td>
<td>10/14/09</td>
<td>10/15/09</td>
<td>04/15/10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation Dates</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Age in Years</th>
<th>Special Event Observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr. Hobart 09/28/09 – 10/02/09 &amp; 4/12/10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8-9</td>
<td>Hiking Mt. Manadnock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Garrett 10/05/09 – 10/09/09 &amp; 04/14/10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6-7</td>
<td>Retirement Home Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms. Andrews 10/13/09 – 10/16/09 &amp; 04/14/10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9-11</td>
<td>Shakespeare Performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Founders N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Additional participants included school founders, who were interviewed; content-area teachers, who provided me with insights through informal conversations; and the students I observed. I conducted a total of 21 interviews with teachers, administrators, and school founders. Although I did not anticipate using learners as research participants, I spent a significant amount of time in classrooms at the site. One week of observation was conducted per classroom for a total of three weeks at the site from September to October, 2009. In April, 2010, I returned to the site for one week to conduct secondary interviews and to observe the fourth-grade performance of *A Comedy of Errors*.

A purposeful sampling procedure (Creswell, 2003) was used to select the participants in the study. Because of the explicit nature of the founders’ mission to create an authentic school, as evidenced by the publications of books including *The Challenge of Authentic Education* (2004), it was the only site studied.

**Data Collection**

This study seeks to understand authentic teaching and learning practices and what they look like both theoretically and when operationalized. Therefore, interviews were an important part of the data collection phase because they allowed me to grasp teachers’ understanding of authenticity. During my first visit, I spent one week in each participating teacher’s classroom. During my second visit, I spent an additional five days at the site; one day was spent in each classroom and other time was spent conducting interviews. I observed a variety of content-area instruction with each teacher and spent off-hour time with each teacher as well. In all cases, the interviews were an opportunity for teachers to speak openly about their practice and its relevance to authenticity.
The following steps were taken to conduct this research project:

(1) Prior to data collection, a review of pertinent literature was conducted to situate the study in the appropriate niche among other authors. Authors have contributed practically and theoretically to the notion of authenticity in education;

(2) After the proposal defense, the researcher gained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to proceed;

(3) School administration at the site was contacted via telephone and email. The researcher was informed that three classroom teachers at the site were interested and excited to participate in the study. Consent from the site was obtained;

(4) Dates for the site visit were secured, as were the days that I was to observe each teacher;

(5) Observations, conversations, and interviews began after consent from individual teachers;

(6) Semi-structured and informal interviews were conducted with three teachers at The Spring School in the northeastern United States over the course of 29 days, divided into two visits (9/27/2007-10/17/2009 and 4/10/2010-4/17/2010). Semistructured interviews consisted of a predetermined list of questions that I had formulated prior to conversing with each teacher, which were loosely followed. These questions are provided in Appendices C and D;
One special event was observed in each classroom; the first visit included a hike with the third grade and a visit to a retirement home with the first grade. The second trip to the site occurred so that I could witness the fourth grade production of *A Comedy of Errors*;

The founders of the school agreed to participate in data gathering by participating in interviews and provided consultancy on the research project;

Artifacts and documents from the school, including faculty and student handbooks, disciplinary policies, calendars, the mission statement, and photographs were reviewed;

Data were coded and analyzed for emergent themes according to the chosen method and theories described above;

Data were presented to participating teachers and administrators for member checking, although only one response was elicited and will be elaborated on below; and

The review of the literature proved to be ongoing and was augmented during the last phase of the study to ensure inclusion of all pertinent material.

Multiple methods of data collection were implemented to ensure triangulation of data. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), “Triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p. 5). Therefore, data collection added a broad understanding to the study.

- *Phase 1: Observation.* Observation was the primary method of data collection in this study. In the 1st- and 3rd-grade classrooms, I was an active participant,
aiding the teachers, listening to students read, and involving myself in class meetings. In all three rooms, I was introduced to the class as a researcher from Denver who was interested in learning and writing about the school. By and large, student curiosity in my presence faded, and the children came to expect me in their classes.

The fourth-grade teacher was not interested in my involvement and therefore asked me to remain a passive observer. I sat at tables with students with the exception of the fourth-grade classroom, where I was seated at a table by a window in the front of the classroom. Notes were handwritten and later typed. I focused on the environment of the classroom in the beginning, in an attempt to understand the decisions behind the environment that the teacher had so intently organized for students. The impressions of the personalities of each teacher were noted, as were details including dress and demeanor.

Phase 2: Document and Artifact Review. Documents and artifacts used by the members of my site—students, educators, staff, administrators, and parents—were helpful in fostering an understanding of the context of this study. Public documents including the mission statement, photographs, and educational manuals and curricular material utilized by the school help create the school’s identity and provide a sense of character to the setting. Other documents and artifacts including handbooks for students, parents, and faculty, describe the daily workings of the campus and the policies and boundaries that are set to maintain smooth operation of the school. The documents and artifacts were
analyzed alongside other data, as a means to describe the social organization of the school.

- **Phase 3: Semistructured Interviews.** Observation and interviews that allow for open-ended responses can yield important, nuanced, qualitative data that enhance the study overall. This is one of a few methods that aim to contribute “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness, and depth” to the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5).

Participants were initially interviewed over the course of three weeks in October, 2009, and then again over the course of a week in April, 2010. The preliminary interview focused on the theoretical underpinnings provided by Newmann and Associates (1996) and Palmer (1993, 1998, 2004) and their contributions to the authentic education framework (AEF). The follow-up interview included the intentions, structure, discipline, and assessment for each classroom. After observation, interview data were the second most prevalent method of data collection for the study. Each interview lasted a minimum of 30 minutes and a maximum of two and a half hours. Interview protocols are attached in Appendices C and D.

The data collected were contextual, perceptual, and demographic in nature. Table 2 outlines the types of data gathered in each category with specific examples of each.
Table 2. *Data by Category*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contextual</td>
<td>Organizational background, history, structure; mission and vision; organizational leadership; descriptions of staff and site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptual</td>
<td>Participant descriptions of authenticity as it relates to this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic</td>
<td>Descriptive statistics including participant age, gender, ethnicity, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Table adapted from Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008.

**Data Analysis**

Once collected, the interviews were transcribed and field notes were entered into the computer. Documents and artifacts related to the school and its surroundings were collected and kept together. Photos were downloaded and viewed multiple times. After data were compiled, transcripts were reviewed and font was color coded according to categories that data fell into. Categories included Context and Description (red), School Philosophy as indicated by the Garlands (orange), Curriculum (green), Pedagogy (blue), Teacher Background (yellow), Eisner’s ecology of the classroom (light blue), and Vignettes (black). After similarities emerged between interview data, it was color coded according to these categories, printed, and put into a large 3-ring binder.

While I was in the midst of analysis, over the course of a year and a half, the leadership of the school changed. The administration that had so warmly welcomed me to campus no longer directed the school, and the founders had become less involved in the operations of the school. Therefore, prior to my diving back into analysis, I wanted to be sure that participants were still willing to member-check and none of the parameters regarding confidentiality had changed. I learned that the new administration wanted the study to remain confidential and therefore removed identifying information from the
dissertation. A memorandum of understanding was submitted to and signed by the administration and founders and passed along to the university for approval (see Appendix E). Once I was assured that we were all functioning under the same agreement, I proceeded with data analysis and conclusions.

Pertinent sections of the dissertation were offered to the school founders, school administration, and all three participating teachers. The founders were not interested in providing feedback but were interested in reading the final dissertation. School administration did not respond to my request for member checking and one teacher responded with feedback (one did not, and the other could not be reached despite multiple attempts). The teacher’s feedback was nonspecific; however, she appeared displeased with my writing style and perhaps with some of the interpretations that came from my observations. Her response to my request for member-checking, which took three months to obtain, is included in Appendix E, and my reply to her follows in Appendix F. I was informed by this teacher that my data could be used in the university context but that she was not supportive of my publishing it anywhere else. I replied to her and told her that I would comply with her request.

The data gathered were analyzed according to the tenets of educational criticism by dividing findings into the categories of description, interpretation, evaluation, and thematics (Eisner, 1998).

The *description* section explains the physical surroundings of the campus and the activities that took place in each of three classrooms. Because the site comprises a number of significant buildings, including the main building, the founders’ home, and an
eco-village where many faculty and their families reside, the description section is relatively lengthy. Of course, to capture the essence of each moment experienced on campus was difficult at best; however, the intent was to offer nuanced description to the reader to communicate the experience in a detailed manner. I also described events and attitudes that bolstered the culture and intentions of The Spring School.

**Interpretation**, the subsequent section, uses the observational data and orients the descriptions based on Eisner’s five dimensions of schooling: the intentional, the structural, the curricular, the pedagogical, and the evaluative (Eisner, 1998). The third phase, **evaluation**, delves into the research questions that guided this study and utilize the authentic education framework alongside other data to highlight emergent themes from the research. **Thematics** are discussed in the last chapter of the dissertation.

**Research Questions and Study Design**

“I believe that the creation of educational criticism, a form of criticism not unlike that found in the arts but directed to educational matters, could provide a kind of utility that scientific studies and quantitatively treated phenomena neglect” (Eisner, 2002).

This study focuses on students, teachers, and founders at a school in the northeastern United States and their experiences with authentic education as set forth by the book written by the school’s founders on which the school itself was based. This research specifically addresses the following questions:

(1) What does authenticity mean to school teachers and school founders?
(2) What do teachers and founders do to try to ensure authenticity in the classroom?
What does authenticity mean to school teachers and school founders?

Authenticity may refer to multiple definitions of the term, which are personal to the individual. After taking some time to gather their thoughts about the concept, the teachers were able to communicate their own understanding of authenticity. The school founders offered a definition rooted in more academic and theological principles and language, and it became obvious that they had spent ample time pondering what the concept of authenticity means to them.

What do teachers and founders do to try to ensure authenticity in the classroom?

In this instance, I looked for how participants answered interview questions that explicitly investigated how authenticity is intentionally manifested in the classroom. Observations provided the unintentional manifestations of authenticity in the classrooms. The first two research questions were answered primarily by interviews, in which teachers explicitly considered and discussed the meaning of authenticity within their specific teaching context.

What does authenticity look like in practice?

This question addresses the pragmatic side of authentic pedagogy. Specific classroom practices and cultural aspects of The Spring School were investigated as a means to answer this question. I looked for the facets of the AEF during observations and interviews.
What are the significance or implications of authenticity for teaching and learning?

To answer this inquiry, I considered the potential impact of authentic pedagogy on teaching and learning. By applying the AEF to the K-8 setting, I uncovered a host of implications for education that can be applied to institutions of private and public learning. I have gained insight into what it means when one is not living in accordance with one’s values, as Palmer would say, while simultaneously experiencing what it means to be aligned with one’s values in the educational context.

Observations, interviews, and pertinent documents were reviewed and coded according to the AEF. The information was distilled to derive the best approaches to authentic teaching, which serves to embed the theory into practice. Implications of the research are evident from data analysis. Four to five days (four days in the fourth grade because of school holidays) were spent in each of three classrooms during my visit in September-October, 2009. During a subsequent visit, three days were spent in the classroom (one day in each grade) and two additional days were set aside for interviews. The AEF was applied to the site. If at any time its components were not helpful or useful tools, they remained open to modification or to being dropped all together; however, the AEF was not modified nor were components dropped at any point during field research.

All social research has inherent limitations (Keller & Casadevall-Keller, 2010). Limitations of the study include narrow cultural and socioeconomic diversity of the school site, thus providing me with a relatively homogenous sample of individuals. Also, one site was studied, so the results are only a reflection of one specific site and context, which is important to keep in mind when discussing ideas including generalizability and
transferability. Despite these seeming limitations, the purpose of the study was to illuminate ideas and occurrences regarding authentic pedagogy with the intention that individuals in the field of education may wish to apply these ideas to their own settings.

Regarding the literature, it is important to acknowledge that the majority of literature on authenticity reviewed here is produced by white philosophers, with a few exceptions. This dissertation is based mostly on Euro-centric conceptualizations of authenticity that hardly encounter notions including cultural relativism; however, such content is beyond the scope of this study.

Another limitation of this study is inherent in the conceptual understanding of the term authenticity in itself. It was important that I not uphold one as being right or more correct than another during my field research, as my desire was to have teachers and school personnel involved in the study define the term for themselves.

Regarding the definition of the term authenticity, I invite readers to consider what their own definition may include and to disagree with my conceptualization if it feels inaccurate. “Appeal to the child’s or pupil’s authenticity is a commonplace in a major debates in the philosophy of education. Nuances of the disputes, however, reveal that no evident uniform conception of authenticity informs the dialectic” (Cuypers & Haji, 2007, p. 63).

Cranton and Carusetta’s (2004) definition, which I partially adopt for this study, is that authentic teaching is bringing a “sense of self into our teaching” (p. 6). This sense of self allows one to question content, to develop teaching style, and to “thereby communicate with students and others in a genuine way” (p. 6). Though many definitions
and perceptions abound regarding authenticity, the definition I have adopted for the purposes of this study is that authenticity, in the educational context, pertains to meaningful, personally relevant learning in a way that advances personal development.

**Credibility and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are quantitative measures of trustworthiness of a study. Because this is a qualitative study, it is necessary to control for potential biases in the design, implementation, and analysis of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). The credibility of the study in terms of matching the research method to the research questions has been considered and educational criticism rendered the appropriate method to employ. To counter any concerns regarding the validity of the study, researcher bias is revealed, member-checking is used along with peer debriefing and thick description. The accuracy of the findings was checked using these strategies (Creswell, 2003).

Reliability was ascertained by ensuring that the researcher made a good researcher-as-instrument. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a valid and reliable person who gathers information must have the following qualities:

1. Some familiarity with the phenomenon and the setting under study;
2. Strong conceptual interests;
3. A multidisciplinary approach, as opposed to a narrow grounding or focus in a single discipline; and
4. Good investigative skills, including doggedness, the ability to draw people out, and the ability to ward off premature closure.
Methodological and interpretive validity are matched to the research method and to the researcher.

Credibility in educational criticism is sought in three primary ways: structural corroboration, consensual validation, and referential adequacy. *Structural corroboration* includes triangulation and bolstering of data from multiple sources. It is important to recall that although data may be triangulated, different researchers may come to different interpretations based on the same event. *Consensual validation* includes member-checking and agreement by participants and others who are deemed competent. In this case, participants were invited to read pertinent descriptions and respond to the data if desired. *Referential adequacy* is the extent to which the criticism discloses aspects that would otherwise go unnoticed (Eisner, 1998): “An educational critic’s work is referentially adequate when readers are able to see what they would have missed without the critic’s observations” (p. 114). With the AEF paired with Eisner’s method, the reader is able to see educational practice in a different and nuanced light.

I employed all three aspects of educational criticism in the research as a way to bolster the credibility of the study. Structural corroboration was achieved by triangulation of observations, interviews, and artifacts. Consensual validation was achieved by asking participants to check the sections written about each of their classrooms and the school as a whole. Referential adequacy was integrated into the study by revealing details of the pedagogy and school’s culture that might have been difficult to detect on first glance.

It could be argued that it is not possible to generalize research grounded in constructivist ideas because of the limitation of bias. After all, if the researcher offers
considerations and subsequent interpretation of field research, the interpretation becomes only one of myriad possible lenses through which to view a subject. As Hatch (2002) explained,

Eisner and his students have made an impact on qualitative research, working mostly within the assumptions of the constructivist paradigm. It is constructivist because educational criticism assumes that multiple realities exist, the researcher is portraying only one, and the researcher interpretation is at the center of analysis procedures. (p. 29)

Therefore, because of the interpretive nature of the method and the fact that a specific reality is presented through the perspective of the researcher, it would not be plausible to generalize. As Eisner contends, generalizations that do occur in education regardless of research method ought to be treated as “tentative guides, as ideas to be considered, not as prescriptions to follow” (1998, p. 209). Context is imperative to consider when evaluating educational research as every student and school is different; what is appropriate in one setting may not be appropriate in another. Themes that emerge recurrently in the data serve to illuminate the salient features of the educational situation being studied. Accordingly, themes in educational criticism become the most akin to generalizable qualities in the traditional sense.

**Who May Benefit from this Study**

Those who may benefit from this study include students, educators, school administrators, researchers, and policymakers. Individuals interested in the cultivation of awareness of more and less authentic pedagogy and behavior and opportunities for teachers to engage in self-reflection may find this study interesting. My hope is that at the very least, consumers of educational research will use this study to consider new and
current avenues of reform and will utilize the information presented to evaluate critically a variety of reform efforts. Implications of the study and suggestions for further research are included later in the dissertation.

**Summary**

Qualitative methods of data collection, including artifact review, interviews, and observation, are corroborated and data are member-checked. The site of data collection, The Spring School in the northeastern United States, was founded in 1967 as a response to the realization that schools in the United States are in an educational crisis according to the founders’ own educational experiences as students. Carl Jung stated, “The heavy-handed pedagogic approach that attempts to fit irrational phenomena into a preconceived rational pattern is an anathema to me” (as cited in Garland & Garland, 2004, p.19); this was the founding premise for The Spring School. The founders’ intent was to create individuals who were not part of the public education system, which seemingly turned otherwise competent children into mindless drones. The founders opted to establish a school that focuses on the inner life of children while teaching them to think critically in all content areas.

Due to the changes in administration at The Spring School between the time of data collection and analysis, this dissertation became a historical narrative. The school remains a dynamic place, and changes are made based on the needs of students, administrators and teachers. The fact that this dissertation represents one moment in the school’s history does not have any bearing on what was witnessed or learned during time in the field.

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Chapter 4 provides descriptions of each teacher’s teaching practice. To help the reader make sense of the observations, each description is interpreted. I then evaluate and arrive at a set of themes for each participant after examining their practice. Chapter 5 integrates interpretations and themes to elucidate the larger implications of the study and how it might inform other arenas of education.
Chapter Four

Presentation of Data

The Spring School

**Context and description.** To understand how the classrooms fit into the school context, one must first consider the school context as a whole. Following the school description, I have outlined the intentions of the school along with its mission statement. This chapter reports on an investigation of the structural dimension of the school, including how physical space is utilized, the roles of individuals in the community, and subjects taught. Before delving into the descriptions of each classroom, I also discuss in depth the curricular and pedagogical dimensions of The Spring School.

Note that during the time that elapsed between data gathering during the 2009-2010 school year and the time of data analysis, the administration of the school changed and a new director was designated. She explained that The Spring School would be moving in a different direction, perhaps away from implementation of ideas in the text written by the founders. The school had evolved, and although the values remained relatively unchanged, the execution of those values and patterns of interaction have shifted. For instance, the eco-village, which is described below, is no longer considered part of the school but rather is its own separate entity. The policy on electronics also has changed. The director wanted to ensure that I understood how dynamic and vivacious
The Spring School is and that it is responsive and shifts to adapt to community needs. Because of her concerns and the desire not to feel wedded to any one philosophy of education, we decided to keep the school, teachers, and students confidential in this study by using pseudonyms. The dissertation also became an historical narrative, in that it captures what the school was as originally envisioned rather than what it became subsequent to data collection. I hope to illustrate the school’s condition and atmosphere at the time that I observed the campus, although I also hope that readers understand that all observation is contextually based and offers only one perspective, including what is written here. The director was invited to member-check and to write a section about the present state of the school if she so chose for inclusion in this dissertation.\(^2\) The campus consists of 40 acres in the woods outside of a small town of approximately 6,185 residents in New England. The school, founded in 1967, is certified to provide education for preschool through high school (although the high school closed while I was there; The Spring School currently serves children in preschool through grade eight). Campus includes a main building, made of old brick, which houses the administrative offices and the lower school classes from (grades one 1-4). Directly in front of the main building is the residence of the school founders.

\(^2\) Any discrepancies between my data and the current state of the school are not intentional. I have made every effort to eliminate misconceptions of the campus. The perspective offered here is based on my interactions with the former administrator, Lisa.
The middle building consists of two classrooms: one for pre-K and one for kindergarten, plus the theater, the art room, and the lunchroom. Across the soccer field is the upper school building, which houses grades five and up (see Figure 3).

*Figure 3. The lower building.*

The school, at the time of data collection and observation, enrolled 130 students, which is the campus capacity. Whereas the entire school population used to be together during lunch and recess, at the time of this research, staggered classes accommodated the burgeoning student body. The Spring School offers full-day schooling during the school
year and a number of summer programs during the off-season. Students can attend school by the semester. At the time of this writing, tuition for grades one 1-4 was $5,650 per semester and $11,300 per year.

The Spring School is a not-for-profit organization. Therefore, a board of directors runs the school. The founders of the school no longer play a role in its operations. The founders’ son, Advani, reports to the board. He manages the maintenance people; farming staff; and his wife, the assistant director, Lisa. Lisa organizes everyone else. Although she is responsible for admissions, she has been releasing responsibility to Esther, who reports to her and assists with a multitude of administrative duties. Kim manages her kitchen staff on her own.

The Eco-Village: A Verdant Community

The campus houses an ecologically friendly village of six homes and one community kitchen where some of the staff live with their families. Each home is equipped with solar panels that charge battery-powered lights. The heat comes from a heated floor using output from a shared wood boiler that is used by all of the houses in the community. Figure 3 below shows some of the homes that were constructed in the village.
The structures themselves are built of wood, which was taken from the school grounds, kiln-dried, and cut into beams and planks for each home on site. Construction of each cabin takes approximately seven months. The small cabins each have one bathroom. I inhabited a one-room cabin, furnished with two couches, a table, and a futon. The battery-powered lights provide a minimal amount of illumination. Indoor plumbing and a small bathroom off to the side provide the needed amenities. A ladder in the center of the room leads up to a fairly large, currently unused loft space. The cabins have no kitchen space because of zoning restrictions, which is why one of the buildings houses a separate
community kitchen. Inhabitants may choose either a bathroom or a kitchen in their houses, and everyone chose to have a bathroom. A utility sink in the main living area serves as a makeshift kitchen. I find the Spartan accommodations quite comfortable and aesthetically pleasing. There are no televisions, radios, or computers anywhere in the village, and children are expected to entertain themselves. There is a fire pit in the center of the green, which is lighted so that villagers can gather and socialize. It is not unusual for those who live in the community to have one another over for dinner or a glass of wine. The community kitchen in the center of the village consists of two sinks and a very old propane stove.

Several teachers live with their families on the property. During my second evening at The Spring School, administrators Lisa and Advani, who live in the village with their two high-school aged children, hosted a dinner in my honor and prepared two chickens harvested from the grounds. Because the community kitchen has no power, we prepared the meal by candlelight. While we waited for the chickens to cook, Lisa taught me how to stoke the wood boiler, which heats water for the village. The hot water is piped below the floors of the village homes and acts as a source of radiant heat. The boiler must be stoked between 1 and 3 times per day depending on the outside temperature.

According to founders, their son, Advani started the eco-village in 2007. With his interest in financial and ecological sustainability, Advani thought that a sustainable community where teachers could live would be a good idea. He decided that if he had teachers on board, he could build a village that is off the grid and made of lumber from
the lumberyard and from another property he owns. The construction of the community kitchen from local lumber proved arduous. It soon became apparent that it was too time-consuming to use materials from the site. Therefore, the builders purchased much of the lumber. Framers were hired for the houses and the tenants were to finish the interiors. That worked out well for the four families who lived in the eco-village: the McKeons; Kim, the school chef, and her elementary-aged son; the Greens; and the founders, the Garlands. The high school did a fair amount of finishing work on the guesthouse. Toni Garland stated, “It’s a different spirit when people want to finish their own homes.” It should be noted that only a handful of Spring School families reside in the village with their children; the rest of the student body lives off campus in the surrounding areas.

The following section reports on my review of the school’s mission statement helps to determine the school’s intentions and the aims of the campus structure.

**Mission Statement**

The Spring is, first and foremost, a community. Its symbol is water, the source of all life; its purpose: the sharing of that life; its ruling principle: seeing and honoring the greatness in others. As a community we (parents, fellow students and teachers) support and guide students in developing responsibility, discipline, integrity, and consciousness.

Education is not merely the training of the mind, but the development of a full range of human potentials: intellectual, artistic, social, physical, emotional, and spiritual. The inclusion of rigorous academics, music, art, yoga, meditation, communication, dance, theater, competitive sports, and daily jobs enriches both mind and heart.

The key to the effectiveness of our school is the high level of active, enthusiastic participation of its entire population. Our school's expectation that 'everybody does everything with a positive attitude' empowers students to dive into and explore the unknown. What makes us unique is that everybody studies, sings, dances, meditates, acts, plays hockey, cleans up, plays a musical instrument.
Teachers who teach what they love and bring out the greatness in each of their students are sensational, inspirational educators. Students who surrender to the process have no limits. A vital community naturally results when all participate. (September 29, 2009)

The mission statement indicates that The Spring School is a unique institution that seeks to develop the whole child. Interestingly, the roles of teachers, parents, and students are all included in the mission statement, which demonstrates the emphasis placed on the school as community. Other clues about the intentions of the school are found in the Garland’s book, *The Challenge of Authentic Education Book 2: Consciousness as the Key to Learning* (n.d.).

The Spring School’s main guiding principle is inclusion, which is intended to create a community of children and adults who are devoted to the creation and expansion of consciousness in each individual, as “authentic education is powered principally by the elevation of consciousness” (Garland & Garland, n.d., p. 6). Only when consciousness is developed and furthered can students develop to their full potential, which is the main reason behind authentic education. Conscious children are precocious, responsible and self-motivated, capable of expressing their own opinions and ideas (p. 9). The vehicles for development of this consciousness by inclusion and responsibility embody the following characteristics:

1. Inclusion. To be part of the greater whole. When all children are prized they experience trust and comfort. In such an environment, where peers function as brothers and sisters, human growth, personal expression, and academic progress flourish together.
2. Responsibility. When students are given extensive responsibility and held accountable for their actions, they develop a sense of ownership of the school community. As a result they usually participate fully in discussions, and demand an understanding of ideas.
3. Sustained Creative Activity. Authentic creativity requires the regular practice of disciplined focus and purpose. Creative work deepens when self-awareness is suspended in favor of simple, but fully sustained attention to an object, an idea, or an activity. Daily practice in full attention interrupts the flow of distracting thoughts and allows one to completely focus on what is at hand. After focus becomes a habit, one can re-enter the zone of concentration at will and surrender to its dynamic energy.

4. Attention to Beauty. Beauty is also a portrayal of creative power. Contemplating whatever we find beautiful also balances and grounds us. (Giving thanks creates the same effects.) In contemplation, we pay attention to a wondrous scene and let our impressions simply be. We flow with the beautiful energy that is present, rather than react with personal judgments about it.

5. Guided and Unguided Meditation. Guided and unguided meditation also leads us into a zone of stillness where we become vulnerable and sensitive to higher levels of consciousness. In this state, we can listen to the wisdom of our own inner voice and allow forces greater than our own to lift us, to penetrate us, to help us with our anxieties and problems, to lead us into green pastures. Meditation is the process of surrendering our ego and awakening our inner being, of relaxing into our deeper truth.

6. Self Examination. To know oneself, to discover our attributes and talents as well as our dark, shadow nature, allows us to overcome the limits of the ego and move deeper into our essential being. It allows us to learn directly from our inner being simply by allowing ourselves to enter its sacred realm.

7. Awareness of Subjective Life Experience. Subjective experience allows us to know the reality of the invisible aspect of creation. It is only through embracing those experiences and exploring our depths that we can be liberated from the illusions of mind. It is, in fact, by experiencing mindlessness that we access creative potential. To move from mindful to mindlessness and back again is both cause and essence of an inspirational, creative act.

8. A Belief that Anything is Possible. What some have called ‘positive thinking,’ or living in the spell of ‘anything is possible,’ sets the creative energies in motion as well. Adopting such an attitude opens doorways inaccessible to rational thought it short circuits attempts to manipulate our environment to gain what we want, and show us that through a trust in our creative ability, we can participate in creating what we deeply want.

9. Working Together in Joy. An energy that binds groups together and at the same time develops a healthy pride is that which underlies active, joyful, community projects. When individuals accept responsibility to make group projects successful, they invest in a positive and purposeful energy that makes work satisfying and easy. Once a group repeats this experience many times, and gains the satisfaction of transforming difficult work into pleasant sharing,
it can re-enter that energy field at will, and simply enjoy getting the job done well. (Garland & Garland, n.d., pp. 9-10)

The aforementioned points are intended to provide opportunities for students to work and live together in community. This community honors a variety of facets of each individual, including integrity or spiritual nature, talents, the need to be both spiritually and intellectually independent, the need for self-expression, the ability to assume responsibility, the ability to be kind yet straightforward, the personal and collective search for truth, and the need to be connected to nature and the universe.

Teachers in this type of community also must embody certain qualities, including respect for each child; passion for the subject; curiosity about the inner self and the exterior world; and sensitivity to one’s own definitions of goodness, beauty, and truth. The expectation is that teachers will let go of negative experiences and be alive and that parents also will be involved in community, ideally by teaching and/or sharing a passion with the school community.

The purpose of education, according to the Garlands, is to create an educational community of individuals whose ideals and attitudes support “unlimited emotional, intellectual, and spiritual development” (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 12).

The Structural Dimension

This section reports on the school’s structures that are designed to ensure that the aims of “unlimited emotional, intellectual and spiritual development” (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 12) are met. The structural dimension, including space, roles, and what is taught, provide insight.
The lower school classrooms, located in the brick building along with administrative offices, are intentionally laid out to foster group dynamics. In every classroom I visited, students sat together at tables instead of at individual desks. The classrooms also had enough floor space for the students to sit in a circle for class meetings, reading groups, and discussions. There was no sense of isolation in the classrooms, and the layout suggests that community is a central component of the school’s philosophy.

The dining hall, which is more like a very inviting kitchen, is where parents can gather in the morning for coffee and homemade scones while they mingle. The students also eat lunch in the dining hall. The food is made entirely from scratch; nothing processed is used. The vegetables are taken from the school’s garden whenever possible, as is the meat. When the available school-raised farm animals and vegetables are not sufficient to meet the school’s needs, Kim, the chef, uses produce from local farms.

The school has a 15-acre farm near the Eco-Village. The animals and gardens are an everyday reminder to students of the source of their food. Students have the opportunity to learn horticulture, animal husbandry, and even nutrition by experiencing all aspects of growing food. According to The Spring School’s Web site,

The process of farming also makes us more aware of the natural rhythm of the agricultural calendar. It connects to mother earth, the soil, to other beings, and reveals our dependence on soil, sun, rain, and weather patterns and our interdependent relationship with other sentient beings. It offers a window into the reality in which the interdependence of all things becomes obvious. Our farm reconnects us with our history, our roots, and ourselves. (September 29, 2009)
Relationships in The Spring School’s community are not limited to students and teachers; relationships with nature also are encouraged. Figure 5 is a snapshot of the farm component of the campus.

Figure 5. Farm pigs.

Sharing the same building with the dining hall, the kindergarten and pre-K sit across the hall from one another. The close proximity of the classrooms provides the chance for student differentiation. For instance, there may be a pre-K student who needs a little more academic stimulation and therefore goes across the hall to learn on occasion,
or there may be a kindergartener who needs to go across the hall for a little nap time in the afternoon.

It is expected all students will earn self-esteem from hard work and their own accomplishments. Lisa indicated that there is not much praise at The Spring School, nor extrinsic rewards. Once in a while, students who have gone above and beyond the normal expectations of being kind, cooperative, and respectful may be recognized for doing so. Students who have difficulty with behavior management must be proactive in taking charge of their behavior plan. Students on behavior plans are expected to make their own plan, which includes the opportunity for them to be problem-solvers for their own behavior. A visit to see Lisa, the assistant director, is considered an opportunity for students to learn about themselves and their needs rather than a punishment.

The community values of kindness, cooperation, and respect apply not only to students but also to parents and teachers. Parents are invited to participate in the community in any way they can. Some of the teachers were former students of the school; some were parents of students at the school. Other ways that parents contribute to the community include chaperoning field trips, mingling in the cafeteria in the morning, visiting classes, and sometimes teaching learners. Parents, who are held accountable for their behavior, are expected to address issues they have with other parents directly, in a respectful manner, without the interference from the administration.

The learners also are expected to comport themselves with a high level of maturity and responsibility. By fifth grade, students are expected to move about the campus unsupervised. Although trusted and empowered to handle themselves with the
freedom of no supervision, the children are expected to address social issues that arise on campus.

Community is pivotal to The Spring School, both inside and outside of the classroom. Encouraged to participate in community service activities, students may elect to fundraise for a variety of organizations. The kindergarten class goes to the local retirement home to spend time with older community members in the spirit of community service. Some Saturdays are school days on which the whole school comes together to work on a common project. For example, during Campus Care Day in October, the school community gets together to work on projects on campus including painting, planting bulbs and general cleaning. There is no custodial staff, so students are responsible for cleaning the school buildings at the end of each day. The former maintenance man, Snyder, was married to Frida, the eighth-grade teacher. He left and teachers were given toolboxes for their classrooms. When the eco-village was established, staff members were hired to help with its construction. Snyder taught in the barn when he was here and wore many hats as the upper school soccer coach, the woodworking teacher, and the maintenance man.

Teachers play multiple roles at The Spring School, which is how the small community operates with very little administrative staff. For instance, Mary teaches fourth grade and also creates continuing education courses for the teachers. Natasha Green teaches seventh grade and is the soccer coach. Tabitha was the primary eighth grade teacher and taught art to grades 5 through 8 while she mentored an artist who taught the younger grades. John Hobart taught third grade and ran a summer camp so that
he and other teachers could earn a year-round salary. Natalie, the first-grade teacher, mentors Susie, the kindergarten teacher. Not all teachers are certified. Full-time employees are offered insurance, and they have the option to add a spouse and children to their insurance coverage (the school began to hire teachers in 2002; prior to that, it was volunteer-run).

The school’s priorities can be gleaned from The Spring School’s curriculum. As there are no standardized examination requirements, the school is free to create curriculum with little intervention from the state. The school is required to teach state history, American history, and health. Other than those requirements, the school has autonomy.

The arts are integrated across the curriculum. For example, every class from the pre-K level up has a class play that it stages every year. Grades 5-8 put on one Shakespearean production and one musical annually. Students also participate in coffee houses and poetry readings every year. The school has an attic filled with costumes and props for the productions, and each costume is categorized according to garment, time period, or genre.

In visual arts, students make journal covers. Each student in the upper and lower school keeps a journal that travels between student and teacher. These are kept most regularly in the upper grades; however, all students get the chance to paint a cloth cover for their own journals.

Arts also are evident during project week, when the upper school has the chance to participate in any of 50-60 courses in building projects, arts, or history. The 5th-8th
graders have three weeks at the end of the school year dedicated to project-based learning. Students get to choose from activities such as hiking, knitting, lacrosse, weaving, painting, photography, gardening, tennis, cooking, mountain biking, carpentry, and others. Teachers get to teach their passions, and parents are invited to teach theirs as well.

Children’s Art Festival

The Children’s Art Festival has been held in town since the 1990s. The festival’s purpose is to be a celebration of community cooperation. Music, a parade of puppets, dancing, an art walk, chalk art on the sidewalks, and plenty of child and arts-friendly activities are available for student participation. The celebration is an important exercise in community for the town, and turnout is always impressive. Schools participate as well and contribute to the festival in a variety of ways. The Spring’s art teacher, Tabitha, has been a spectator and participant for the last seven years and has organized the school’s participation for the last three years. She explained the event in an email to me as follows:

A group of volunteers picks a theme every year, and all the local schools are invited to participate (both public and private). There is always a parade through town with giant puppets a key attraction. Each school is given a shop window in which to display art (for a whole month). On the actual Saturday, there are performances (music, dance, puppet shows, trash fashion shows, etc.) held all over town, both inside and out. There are activities for kids to do, all art related, and there is good food for sale in booths, provided by the schools.

Here are the last few themes:

Heroes and Heroines
Under the Sea
All Creatures Great and Small
Under the Big Top

As for The Spring School’s participation, I’ve always felt that this is somewhere we can really shine. For the last three years (since I’ve been
the art teacher), I’ve put less emphasis on the giant puppets (because it’s hard to involve more than a fraction of the students in the puppet making), and more on making pieces of art on wooden boards that can be carried by students in the parade. I also try to put together a good show that meets the theme for the windows. (Tabitha, personal communication, October, 2009)

From participation in activities such as the Children’s Art Festival, the school has decided to emphasize development of individual interests and personal identity alongside the importance of community and collaboration. Arts are an integral component of the learning experience at The Spring School, and creativity and expression are encouraged. This is a very important facet of the school’s educational philosophy in that the arts are an access point for learning and exploration. The school’s dedication to all art forms provides a different entry point for learning that complements all curriculum.

The Curricular and Pedagogical Dimensions

The curriculum at The Spring School is based on the home-schooling guide *The Well Trained Mind, A Guide to Classical Education at Home* (Bauer & Wise, 2009). The guide is a jumping-off point for teachers; some adhere to its suggested frameworks more than others. Overall, the book seems to be a general guide for the teachers and is not necessarily expected to be followed to the letter. What could be perceived as a rigid curriculum guide is used in a flexible way, which affords some space to an otherwise philosophically contradictory curriculum at The Spring School.

According to the text’s authors, a classical education is language-intensive and history-intensive. “It trains the mind to analyze and draw conclusions. It demands self-discipline. It produces literate, curious, intelligent students who have a wide range of interests and the ability to follow up on them” (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. xxii). The current
The curriculum at The Spring School is based on classical education, which according to Bauer and Wise, “depends on a systematic process of training the mind” (p. 13).

Our Classical Curriculum is an integrated, language based approach to learning. Studies of literature, science, history, technology, and Spanish are fundamental to our curriculum. Student experiences are deepened through music, the visual arts, physical education, and performance opportunities for every grade level several times a year.

By design we keep our classes small. In the lower grades we attempt to keep the classes to about 12 students per class while in the upper school (grades 5 through 8) we limit classes to 15 students per grade.

The first years are considered grammar school in that they lay the foundation for later years much the same way that grammar lays the foundation for any language. Middle school, beginning in fifth grade, is also known as the logic stage, which requires students to understand interdisciplinarity and cause-and-effect relationships. At that age, according to Bauer and Wise, students are learning to think abstractly.

**Characteristics of classical education.** A classical education “follows a specific three-part pattern: the mind must first be supplied with facts and images, then given the logical tools for organization of those facts and images, and finally equipped to express conclusions” (Bauer & Wise, 2009 p. 15).

All knowledge in the classical curriculum is interrelated. The curriculum uses history as an organizational tool, beginning with the ancients and continuing to modern-day events in history, literature, art, science, and music.

Therefore, all 12 years of education consist of 3 cycles of a 4-year pattern. First, learners are exposed to the ancients (5000 B.C.E.-400 C.E.), the medieval period through the early years of the Renaissance (400-1600 C.E.), the late Renaissance through early modernity (1600-1850), and modern times (1850-present). The first cycles in grades 1-4 are simpler versions of material to which students will be exposed in later curriculum
cycles. Regardless of the cycle or grade level, all learners use original sources and have the chance to pursue a topic of special interest (e.g., music, dance, technology, medicine, biology, creative writing).

Science. Science is studied in four-year cycles and instruction corresponds roughly to the periods of history that are studied. In first grade, learners study animal life, plants, and the human body while they study the ancients in history. In second grade, students learn about “earth and sky, a division designed to go along with the medieval-early Renaissance period, when Copernicus and Tycho Brahe observed the heavens” (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 158). Third graders learn chemistry, which corresponds with the emergence of great chemists (e.g., Antoine Lavoisier, Jon Dalton). The fourth-grade year includes physics and modernity. Table 1 helps to clarify the cycles of learning science:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancients</td>
<td>5000 B.C.E.-400 C.E.</td>
<td>Biology, classification, human body</td>
<td>1, 5, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval-early Renaissance</td>
<td>400-1600 C.E.</td>
<td>Earth science, astronomy</td>
<td>2, 6, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Renaissance-early modern</td>
<td>1600-1850</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>3, 7, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1850-present</td>
<td>Physics, computer science</td>
<td>4, 8, 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Spring School version of classical education can therefore be seen as very systematic and rigorous, which, according to Bauer and Wise (2009), has two purposes: “Rigorous study develops virtue in the student: the ability to act in accordance to what
one knows to be right” instead of allowing a student to work from “baser tendencies” such as “(laziness or the desire to watch another half hour of TV) in order to reach a goal-mastery of a subject” (p. 17).

Toni Garland explained that agreement was reached on a classical curriculum. Her answer was,

We discovered the book *The Well Trained Mind* a year or two years before we left The Spring. We gave it Advani and Lisa. We never had a curriculum. The state was demanding one, so we gave them the book. They were scrambling for a curriculum, so we gave them *The Well Trained Mind*, because [the curriculum] was all great books, which we read. We didn’t have a curriculum because people needed to teach what they were interested in. The school was small enough, so no one overlapped because everyone knew what others were teaching the year before. If they didn’t have a pace we provided one. The kids wanted to go faster than a year’s work.

Jay was interested in kids not having the textbook approach, that kids read source material. The big thing was that helped all of us that were teaching and helped all of us to understand that kids could understand and read what people didn’t think they could do. But once they learned to read they could read anything. There were things in the upper grades that were over their heads but they went back to them and really loved it. The kids loved it and when they got to college, they remembered it. Oh, Herodotus, I remember him! I think at an early age, 12, 13 maybe 14, the kids were exposed to rich materials that later became old buddies. They really didn’t get scared. That’s how it all happened. It was basically that it was source material or something really close to it, and I think everybody loved that idea.

I found Toni’s explanation of the why The Spring School chose this curriculum helpful because upon reviewing *The Well Trained Mind* (Bauer & Wise 2009), it seemed far afield from the intentions of authentic teaching and learning. The emphasis on facts and the de-emphasis on constructivist learning was confusing for me, but after I realized that the curriculum was intended as a flexible guide, I understood why the school chose to implement ideas from the text.
The grammar stage. The first years of school are referred to the grammar stage, which lays the foundation for learning during 1st-4th grades. During this time, the mind is ready to absorb information, and students in this age range enjoy memorization. This is not a time for self-discovery or creativity, however.

During this period education involves not self-expression and self-discovery, but rather the learning of facts: rules of phonics and spelling, rules of grammar, poems, the vocabulary of foreign languages, the stories of history and literature, descriptions of plants and animals and the human body, the facts of mathematics—the list goes on. (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 14)

The grammar stage requires children to collect, memorize, and categorize information, as the first grades are the most intensive for fact collection (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 21). This is not, the authors reiterated, the time for students to get in touch with their self-expression, because “when self-expression pushes the accumulation of knowledge offstage, something’s out of balance” (p. 21). The classical curriculum places value on knowledge over self-expression because the study of facts lays the foundation for learners to engage in self-expression later.

Too close a focus on self-expression at an early age can actually cripple a child later on; a student who has always been encouraged to look inside himself may not develop a frame of reference, a sense of how his ideas measure up against the thoughts and beliefs of others. (p. 23)

Children, according to Bauer and Wise, enjoy these years of lists, facts, and regurgitation. Instead of asking students to find information, the teacher is to “fill their mind and imagination with images and concepts, pictures and stories. Spread knowledge out in front of them, and let them feast” (p. 24).

The grammar stage is intended to teach children the proper use of language because the learner spends time learning the conventions and facts of each academic
subject. This means that students study four areas of language: spelling, English grammar, reading, and writing. Reading and writing are paramount for learners because they are the foundation upon which all other content is built. The subjects are taught to mastery, and a student may or may not follow the prescribed age guidelines for learning. Instead, the end goal is for the student to be at a 5th-grade level in spelling, grammar, reading, and writing by the end of 4th grade. Students are expected to read from a suggested reading list and to memorize poetry and speeches during the grammar stage. Students copy sentences; participate in narration and dictation; and memorize facts in history, science, and literature. The question then becomes whether or not this stifles the creative development of the child. Bauer and Wise contended that absolutely not, the skills that are created by these tasks are necessary for a child to become truly creative later in life. By copying great writers, students may find inspiration to write stories or poems themselves.

Mathematics during the grammar stage includes the skills of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, understanding of basic geometrical shapes and patterns, and understanding of number relationships as well as the ability to solve word problems (Bauer & Wise, 2009, p. 87). Because this study focuses on children in the grammar stage, the next two phases of learning, according to Bauer and Wise, the logic and rhetoric stages, are introduced and explained rather briefly.

The logic stage. The stage after the grammar stage is the logic stage, at which students begin to learn about interdisciplinary relationships, cause and effect, and logic. At this time, the ability to think abstractly is just beginning to mature in the student. This
phase constitutes the middle school years. The last phase, the *rhetoric stage*, allows students to apply the logic learned during middle school to the high school years. The rhetoric stage is a culmination of all skills learned in the grammar and logic stages such that students are able to express “conclusions in clear, forceful, elegant language” (p. 14).

*The study of history.* During history, students are discouraged from connecting history to themselves. Bauer and Wise (2009) stated,

> This intensely self-focused pattern of study encourages the student of history to relate everything he studies to himself, to measure the cultures and customs of other peoples against his own experience. And that’s exactly what the classical education fights against—a self-absorbed, self-referential approach to knowledge. (p. 108, emphasis in original)

The cycle of history studied in the first four years are pivotal in the preparation of students for the logic stage when they learn to connect events.

History is studied using original sources. One book that is recommended for the study of history is called *The Story of the World: History for the Classical Child* (Wise, 2006, 2007, 2004, 2005). This four-volume series is intended to be read aloud to students. It provides a narrative story that connects world events. It is suggested that this text be used with *The Usborne Internet-Linked Encyclopedia of World History* (Bingham, Chandler, & Taplin, 2001) as a supplement. The chronology of the study of history is presented in Table 4.
Table 4. *The Study of History*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Grades</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancients</td>
<td>5000 B.C.E.-400 C.E. (5400 years)</td>
<td>1, 5, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval-early Renaissance</td>
<td>400-1600 C.E. (1200 years)</td>
<td>2, 6, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late-Renaissance-early modern</td>
<td>1600-1850 (250 years)</td>
<td>3, 7, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern</td>
<td>1850-present (150 years)</td>
<td>4, 8, 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


*Art.* Art instruction involves students’ learning about artists and techniques and elements of art. It is suggested that students receive an hour or two of art and music appreciation each week. For music, it is recommended that students be required to spend half an hour twice a week listening to classical music.

**The Campus of The Spring School**

The old brick building was built in 1906 and used to serve as Jay and Toni Garland’s home and school. Currently, classrooms for grades 1 and 2 are on the lower level, and the upper level houses classrooms for grades 3 and 4, along with a computer lab with four computers and a small room that was used for the three high school students who attended The Spring School’s high school program, Novo Capite, before it closed. The lower level also has administrative offices and a small room used for faculty meetings. Student art is displayed in the hallways, from individual to collaborative projects, some created in colored pencil, as is the case with the first grade artwork, to an opus painted on wood panels in a variety of colors by a number of older students. There is a simple staff kitchen on the first floor, consisting of a sink, refrigerator, wood cabinets, and white counter space. A glass jug of fresh milk from a neighboring farm
along with raw sugar is left out for those who want to use it in their coffee. The cabinets are stocked with ceramic coffee mugs and other reusable kitchen goods.

One can access the building in one of three ways. The first is from the concrete stairs at the far end of the building, which gives entry to the end of the hallway where the first grade classroom sits across from the administrative offices. The main entrance to the building leads up a series of grey wooden stairs that reach a deck situated just outside the doorway. It is not unusual to find the campus golden retriever, Daisy, basking in the sun on the deck.

Upon entering the building from the main entrance, a large white wood door with windows on either side, one sees a set of stairs on the left that climb to the second storey. Behind the stairs on the first level is the yellow, cheery, second grade room. A large open conference area is to the right; the staff kitchen and a doorway to administrative offices and staff mailboxes are its offshoots. There is a large, black, iron woodstove in the conference room, which provides heat. Downstairs is the third portal, used mostly as an exit during recess, dismissal, and lunchtime. Upstairs, following the same staircase to the second floor, one finds the 3rd- and 4th-grade rooms, where some of my research was conducted. To the right of the top of the stairs lies the doorway to the third-grade classroom.

The following section consists of vignettes from the 3rd, 1st, and 4th grades. Each grade-level section is divided into descriptions of the classroom and teacher, the intentional dimension of the classroom, the structural dimension of the classroom, an
example of pedagogy and curriculum, and how each teacher evaluates students to ensure aims are met.

Third Grade: An Environmental Community

John Hobart, the third-grade teacher, told me that he had been a classroom teacher for eight years. He worked with young people starting when he was 16 years old, first doing volunteer work as a crisis counselor and then with children who were runaways. These experiences taught Jay that he wanted to work with children. He became involved in outdoor education, which he said “was a spiritual experience” for him. This set the stage for him to complete a master’s program in environmental studies along with his teaching certification from a small college in New England. He stated, “Teaching has meant a number of things but mostly it means becoming part of the process of watching kids become who they are and come to life in really cool ways.”

The third-grade classroom houses 13 students (5 girls and 8 boys). Students sit at birch-colored, half-moon tables in groups of three. The class changes seats once a week by drawing names. Pale, mint green colors the classroom walls, which I find soothing. Glowing torchiere lights and six large windows illuminate the room. Flags cover each of the windows and filter the light through their sheer panels. One wall is flanked by two whiteboards on either side of a door that leads to a small back room shared with the fourth grade. One whiteboard has a laminated map of the world taped to it. Above the world map hang note cards that create a timeline beginning at 300 B.C.E. and ending at present day. Important events written on index cards are situated below the appropriate date. The carpet, a dark blue Berber, covers the creaky hardwood floor from wall to wall.
Purple cubbies that line the south wall are filled with classroom books. Above the books hang charts with headings such as “self control,” “empathy,” and “responsibility.” These third-grade values set the tone for the classroom and allow students to understand exactly what is expected of them behaviorally. Adjacent to the cubbies stands the teacher’s cherry wood desk, upon which sits a stack of books. Organized stacks of student work also inhabit the desk, as does a large, round container of Sharpie™ markers in every color imaginable. The back of the door to the hallway is covered in a large, laminated sheet of student photos taken during a recent camping trip. The expressions captured on the faces of the children indicate that they are having a good time; they are in the process of making memories.

Environmental education. Student projects line the walls all the way around the classroom. Kite-shaped and colorful, they appear to be floating up toward the sky. Below one of the kites is an exploration station, filled with magnifying glasses, a variety of feathers, and other natural artifacts. Learners are encouraged to explore and discover their natural environment, with efforts as straightforward as the exploration area to hiking and camping trips. John’s passion for the outdoors is evident in his curriculum. He provides background on the natural history of the area prior to embarking on an annual hiking trip up Mount Manadnock, leads overnight camping trips, and provides students with the opportunity to get involved with environmental causes. He also is very explicit and considerate in establishing class values. Third-grade values were posted on the classroom wall, as shown in Figure 6 below.
A community of third graders. A look around the classroom reveals the values that drive the third-grade classroom and its operations. Perhaps most noticeable is a series of words toward the ceiling of one wall: “The Third Grade CARES.” Below that are the words “Cooperation, Appropriate Assertiveness, Responsibility, Empathy and Self Control.” In addition to the CARES acronym are the words “Kindness,” “Respect,” “Cooperation,” and “Responsibility” as defined by the students. Kindness incorporates scenarios from “treat everyone how you want to be treated” to “include everyone” and “be kind to living things.” Respect includes “avoid bragging” and “do not pick leaves and
branches off trees.” Cooperation is defined as “help[ing] others,” raising your hand, and talking about it if you are angry. The third grade also came up with their own rule: “Never give up!” This value held true during our hiking trip to Mount Manadnock (see vignette below).

**Honest, caring kids: The intentional dimension.** In an attempt to understand the intentional aspects of John’s classroom, I asked him about his aims or intentions for his students. He replied that he wants students to exit third grade being responsible, hard working, caring kids who hold high standards but are gentle with themselves. He also wants each child to be prepared academically in a variety of content areas, but more than that, he wants learners to get excited about what they are. His intentions for their social and emotional development are equally sincere and important. He said,

I want them to be a community of kids who are honest with one another and who care about one another. It’s such a world opening up kind of year, and I want them to get excited about the world opening up for them.

John’s emphasis on both academics and social development are evident in how he speaks of his students, his curriculum, and in the setup of his classroom, which is discussed below. He said that having fun, learning, and making friends are of primary importance to him in the classroom.

**The structural dimension: Third-grade democracy.** What structures are put into place to ensure that the aims of having fun, learning and making friends are met? The structural dimension, including space, roles, and what is taught provide insight to answer this question.
I asked John about the climate of his classroom, both physically and operationally. John volunteered that his classroom is largely democratic because he involves students in decision-making regarding how the class operates. He uses a morning meeting as an opportunity to connect with students and to build community in the room by both problem-solving and game-playing. Relationship and community are integral to the daily functioning of his classroom, and it is apparent that his attentiveness to the classroom’s climate is quite successful in its implementation. Students are warm toward one another and genuinely function as a community that is concerned for one another and for the world around them. One of John’s many strengths is the frequency with which he takes students into the community (or brings community to the students) to aids their connection with the world outside of the classroom. Hiking, field trips to historical sites, and classroom visitors all add to this sense of investment in life beyond the school walls, and the students emanate that attitude.

Curricular and pedagogical dimensions.

Glenwood sanctuary. The following vignette provides an example of the community coming to the students. An animal rehabilitation specialist named Marta from Glenwood Sanctuary comes to the class. The students are excited and the room is electric with their energy. Students were recently on a field trip to identify raptors, and they are enthusiastic to make more connections with wildlife. Marta one bird at a time from its carrier and shows it to the students. The kids are quite literally on the edges of their seats. After the broadwing hawk, she pulls out the kestrel.
Each bird she shares with the class has been injured by being hit by a car. None of them will be returned to the wild. The sanctuary is run out of Marta’s home. Children are very empathetic with her mission, asking how many animals she has and how she cares for them. Students are asked to recognize the birds, to evaluate the role of the sanctuary, to compare and classify the birds, and to summarize their experience in their journals. According to Bloom’s *Taxonomy* (1956), the aforementioned cognitive skills are exemplary of knowledge, evaluation, analysis, and comprehension respectively.

Social support is embedded in the classroom culture and also is evident in Marta’s visit. Behavioral and academic expectations of the students are high as always, and John ensures that learners are mutually respectful of Marta. All children participate equally in the conversation and by asking questions.

Substantive conversation occurs when students are engaged in dialogue. The interactions between John, Marta, and the class build on a collective understanding of falconry and of wildlife preservation in general. Students are expected to speak and ask questions of Marta in complete sentences. Nothing in the classroom, or in this lesson, is scripted.

*Enthusiasm for curriculum.* The next day, John prepares the students for the upcoming Mount Manadnock field trip, in which the class will hike Mount Manadnock (see Figure 6) together. He excitedly explains the process of fossilization, sedimentary rock, and the formation of limestone. It is obvious from his tone and enthusiasm that he loves what he teaches and is invested in the students learning the natural history of the area. The material is complex, yet students grasp it in its entirety. The understanding is
deep and the content significant. Student questions and dialogue build on one another and improve collective understanding of the topic. None of the content is scripted, which is true of the school culture, which does not support teacher-proof curriculum. Students create personal meaning from the lecture because it connects to an upcoming experience; however, it does not connect to any larger public issues for which they can advocate. The lecture is connected to the world in one sense but not in the sense of advocacy. Children are engaged in higher order thinking.

Figure 7. View from Mt. Manadnock.
Mt. Manadnock. The day is very cloudy and cold. It is drizzling outside and we are wondering whether we should call off the hike to Mount Manadnock, a mountain in Manadnock State Park about 15 miles from the school grounds. It is morning, and some students are late. Parents gather and mill about in front of the brick building while we wait for one another. Because I did not plan on hiking during my fieldwork, I borrowed Natasha Green’s daypack and an extra water bottle from the community kitchen. Kim has packed my lunch for me, which consists of a green apple, cheese and crackers, raw celery, and carrots. I have all of my warm clothes with me or on and am ready to go.

Mr. Hobart and I drive with three girls to the park. We convene, pay for our entrance, and begin to walk up a long dirt road that turns into the trailhead. John’s students know our first stop around 10:30 as Snack Rock. As the name implies, this is a large slab of rock where students stop to have their morning snack. One of the mothers on the trip, Hannah’s mom, brought along snack-sized bags of M&Ms™ and Mike and Ikes™ for everyone, and she hands them out. Once the students are refueled, we continue up the road to the Halfway House Clearing. Needless to say, the heavy clouds above are not clearing, and we are beginning to wonder whether snow is on the way. More rain clouds are approaching, much to our dismay. The parents do not seem eager to continue, and we discuss whether or not we should turn back. John decides we should keep going, and so we do. It is apparent at this point that John believes that his students can do what they set their minds to.

One of the students, Jacob, is a very physically inactive boy. New to the school, he expressed concern about having to walk from one building to another for classes once
he is in upper school. He is definitely the slowest one on the trip, aided by his father, he does quite well until he sprains his ankle a couple of miles up the trailhead. Despite the discomfort and frustration, Jacob makes the entire trip albeit at a slower pace than the rest of the group. The parents are talkative. I talk for a while with Emily’s mother and then with Huy’s adoptive mother about various subjects.

We eventually stop at the Black Precipice where John asks us all to find a quiet spot where we can sit in silence for 10 minutes. We all spread out and find our own spaces in which to relax. The profound silence, clear of chatter and the movement of feet along the trail, allows us a little respite in our day. The children are very receptive to the idea of a few moments of silence, and many appear to be gazing over the ridge toward the canopy of trees below. After what feels like a veritable eternity, we continue on our journey. We eat lunch at Bald Rock, seeking shelter behind rocky outcroppings in an attempt to prevent the wind from penetrating us. Hannah’s mother shares her coffee from her Thermos™ with me. Its warmth and sweetness are welcome in the increasing cold. Eventually, we reach another lookout and then the summit of the mountain, which is incredibly blustery and frigid. A few mothers and I find shelter from the wind behind a couple of rocks, share snacks, and chat. We mainly discuss their children’s interests, and I am asked about myself. Our group of four talks about our backgrounds and our hobbies while the children climb and play among the rocks.

*Play in the curriculum.* Once at the summit, students are given about half an hour for exploration and play. Then we begin the descent down the mountain. Once we are back below tree line, the wind is much less significant and we begin to feel warmer. The
kids stop for a photo opportunity on top of a large rock. Eventually we make it down, which takes some time because of the steepness of the trail. Jacob is with us but far down the trail behind us. We wait periodically for him to catch up.

Once at the base, John, the girls, and I get into his car and turn on the heat. We get back to campus in time to pitch tents outside of the brick building before dinner. Traditionally, the class camps out in tents overnight the night of the Manadnock field trip, and this is no exception. Most of us head into the dining hall for a feast of macaroni and cheese, hot dogs, and hamburgers. One of the mothers and I work on getting water boiling in Kim’s kitchen so we can start the macaroni for the macaroni and cheese. Eventually, we find our way around the kitchen and get the pasta boiling. Dinner is very informal with parents and students. Some of the parents who came on the trip (about eight total) will stay with the students for the campout. After dinner, I decide to retire to the Eco-Village instead of staying out in the cold to cook s’mores and listen to stories. I am just that cold.

The next day, Friday, the students and John are exhausted. Luckily, they have art in the studio with Tabitha for a large part of the morning, which affords John some comfort. The campout and the hike were both a resounding success, and the kids are still abuzz from the energy of both.

Reflections on Manadnock. I ask John whether he has any reflections on the experience of hiking Manadnock and camping out. His response summarizes how the class coalesced and persevered during a challenging hike that included cold, wet weather, and how their class rules helped to guide them in a demanding situation. As related his
thoughts, he appeared inspired and proud, his smile emblematic of his pride in the children.

The kids chose “never give up” as a class rule. . . . A handful of them were so profoundly determined to not let rain and cold and wind get in their way. I decided we were not going to finish that trip. I decided at the Halfway House clearing that we’d get as far as Bald Rock and then turn around. It was really a class-driven thing, so it was easy to make the “Oh, what the heck” decision and keep going. The trip is the most fun trip of the year, and I do it as sort of a class-building activity.

He explained to me that it remains to be seen how exactly the class will coalesce and gel socially for the year but remarked that the trip was impactful for some students on an individual level. Jacob, who is challenged academically, has struggled to adapt to a small school and is working on his social skills. He also struggled physically during the hike but his perseverance was admirable. Matthew has had difficulty with overnights, and the campout was more successful than anticipated in that regard. John stated that his goal for this trip, which occurred in what he referred to as the “group-building phase,” is to pull the class together.

I’m glad they overcame some obstacles and pressing on and it will be interesting to see how they relate it to the rest of the year. That trip is usually one of—the trip, the overnight, dinner, all that—is a real building the class, parent community.

Community, in the sense of student and parent involvement, is central to the third-grade class. It is also essential to have community between students, to foster their ability to look out for one another and to help each other, and to be kind to one another. During my observations, not once did I hear an unkind word uttered by a third-grade student, despite difficult circumstances; instead, I heard and witnessed a supportive and encouraging learning environment for students. That, in my mind, is a success on its own.
Vignette: Handwork with Greta. Greta makes her entry and hands out craft bags to their respective owners. Students are making crochet squares that will be made into a baby blanket. Jacob asks what happens if the class makes too many squares. Greta states, “It will just be a bigger blanket.” Jacob suggests that extra squares be used to add sleeves to the blanket like a Snuggie™. The squares have to be yellow in the middle and black on the outside, but the other two colors are the choice of the students. Greta puts on a Harry Potter cassette tape. I turn to Hannah and ask her whether she likes handwork. She tells me yes, because “it’s relaxing and calm.” Greta shows me the finished squares. “When they are finished, we’ll put them together and make a blanket. It’ll be a baby blanket, but that’s okay. We’ll donate it to the hospital.” Matt exclaims, “We have 42 squares; almost 43!” The Harry Potter tape gets eaten by the cassette player. Hannah gets up to fix the tape, and she does so successfully. “I fixed the tape!” It plays. Huy shouts, “Yay, Hannah! You are awesome!” Greta circulates and tells students whether their crochet stitches are too tight or too loose. The class works diligently on their crochet projects; learners are so absorbed, it is as though they have lost all sense of time. Before we know it, it is time to wrap up. Materials are gathered and placed in the handwork basket before Greta exits Mr. Hobart’s room. It has been another afternoon of working together in joy.

The Evaluative Dimension

I consider our handwork experience a success and wonder if the classroom teacher feels the same way, and talk to him about how he evaluates his students. I then asked Mr. Hobart how he knows that he has achieved his aims and intentions. He replied
that he evaluates student progress partially by noting the activities and topics that excite
them. He uses objective formal assessment but emphasizes that the qualitative aspects of
classroom life are equally important. Aside from what they produce, it is key to stay
tuned into the feel of the classroom. Regular communication with parents every couple of
days and interactions with them on field trips offer good opportunities for connection and
discussion about their child’s progress. He noted that he looks for a spark that indicates
that learners are progressing and for behavioral issues that signal issues related to their
ability to function in community. He can “tell by whether the kids’ eyes are bright and
they’re smiling versus when their eyes aren’t so bright,” but he keeps in mind that his
own feelings and mindset are a good barometer of how smoothly the classroom is
functioning.

Mr. Hobart is excited, fun, energetic, encouraging, and environmentally and
community-minded. He evaluates students, and himself, not only academically but
behaviorally and socially. Mr. Hobart’s classroom feels cohesive and mutually respectful
between all students and the teacher. The inclusion of class visitors and field trips allow a
variety of venues in which students interact and develop relationships. His interest in and
commitment to the natural world is evident in what and how he teaches, and he
acknowledges the importance of physical activity and pauses to commune with nature
whenever possible. He encourages the students to use their imaginations while playing
outside but to respect the outdoors as well. His role-modeling of environmental
stewardship and his respect for all living things make his classroom feel like a
community that expands beyond the classroom walls.
First Grade with Natalie

The second week of my time at The Spring School was spent in the first-grade room with teacher Natalie Garrett. It is her 7th year at The Spring, and her 15th year teaching. Natalie is a highly qualified teacher with an M.A. in education with an emphasis on emotional disabilities and reading, and a B.A. in K-8 education. She mentioned that one need not be certified to teach at The Spring School. Natalie stated that she has had empathy and customer-relations training, both of which have aided her in her teaching.

The classroom is spacious, as shown in Figure 7. The presence of two fireplaces in the room suggests that at one time the room was two smaller rooms that have been adjoined. The walls are a cool grey-blue with white trim. The dark carpet fills every inch of the floor. A total of nine children sit at tables in groups of three facing the fireplace and teacher’s desk. There are obvious centers in the room: one each for reading, math, and listening and one for games. Natalie’s extensive collection of children’s literature occupies a dedicated space along the side wall. The morning meeting area is defined by a sandwich board on the floor that is used for morning warm-ups and group instruction. Natalie’s mother made the valances on the windows and the colorful fabric bookbags that students cart back and forth between home and school. Two houseplants live on the shelving and mantel respectively.

The three student tables face the first fireplace, a focal point in the room, with a large whiteboard hanging above it. Above the second fireplace hangs a dark blue word chart that holds the poem titled “Spring” in its pockets. Beside that pocket chart is a
smaller one, dark blue as well, that holds the date. Below the mantel are two chairs. One, a brown adult-sized chair, is known as the “better choice chair.” This is where students go to refocus if they need time out. Next to the better choice chair sits a child-sized red wood chair with the words, “Author’s Chair” painted on it. This is where students sit when they are sharing their final written products with the class.

Figure 8. The first-grade classroom.

For The Love of Reading: The Intentional Dimension

I asked Natalie about her intentions for her students. She told me that she wants nothing more than for them to love school and learning. Her aims for her students include
the development of independence and a love of reading. She is careful to model what loving reading looks like in practice and provides a wide variety of reading materials to learners.

Natalie stated that it also is important to get the students acclimated to school and tries to help children get comfortable in their environment. Emphasis is placed on not only how the school functions in an operational sense but also on the importance of students feeling loved, supported, and cared for. She said, “First grade is all an introduction to school. I would aim to have those foundations built so they can be solidified in second grade.” Those foundations include learning to share, to take turns, and to work together as a group. The cohesion that occurs in first grade between the students will likely remain until they decide to leave The Spring School. Not only are they learning about time, math facts, and money, but they are learning how to function within the context of The Spring School in a wholistic sense.

I asked whether she makes her aims and intentions clear to her students. She responded that she discusses with all of the students their improvement in writing from the beginning to the end of the year. She was explicit about sharing goals for each student with their parents during conferences so that progress will be monitored at home. She makes intentions clear in terms of behavioral expectations, especially when it comes to kindness, cooperation, and respect. Kindness and helpfulness are values that Natalie models for her students, and if she notices children having a difficult time being kind, she encourages discussion. She stated that the year prior, she spent a significant amount of
time on kindness, cooperation, and respect and involved the class in role-playing various scenarios to teach students how to be inclusive and kind.

**A Caring Curriculum: The Structural Dimension**

This section examines the structures put into place so that students love learning and school and learn to take turns, to share, and to work together as a group and to feel cared for.

The classroom environment has been reorganized to optimize student attention. Natalie is very intentional about setting up the physical space in the classroom and has moved the morning meeting area from near the windows to a more central location in the classroom. She also moved the reading area far from the seatwork area to maximize quiet. She has the books organized so learners can figure out what they need to read first; the games are all accessible. She told me that she likes to keep the classroom door open to create a welcoming impression, which also inspired the color of the walls. She wants her classroom to be comfortable for herself and for the students, and she has incorporated handmade curtains and plants into the room’s design. Simplicity is a good thing in Natalie’s view and prevents overstimulation of the students. She has centers set up for listening and reading, and a large pillow area where children can sit and read quietly.

She noted what she attends to the most in her classroom relative to the physical environment:

I put a lot of thought into how I organize the room. Next year I might have 13 or 14 children, where I’ve only had nine every year. So I might have to restructure. I rather have them sit on the floor during a lesson, and I prefer that it be more intimate than them being at the table.
The power of the surroundings and the climate of the classroom cannot be underestimated, which Natalie understands and embraces. She is intentional and thoughtful about the setting of the room but also considers how her pedagogical choices impact relationships in the classroom. This is evidenced by her telling me that children seated at the floor during a lesson is more intimate than the distance created by sitting at a table. She noted that on the floor, she is able to monitor each child’s progress and can call on every student equally while correcting if needed. It makes to her from both a managerial perspective and from a social perspective to have children seated together on the floor.

Materials also are well thought out and organized in the room. Books are grouped by theme or author study, and children have access to a box of books from which they can select depending on their reading level. Language arts games and teaching materials occupy various spaces in the classroom and are rotated depending on when children are ready for new material. Work is displayed in the hallway for the community to see and enjoy.

**The Pedagogical and Curricular Dimensions**

The morning begins with a rush of 6- and 7-year-old children hanging up backpacks and coats in the hallway. Today the plan is to go to the kindergarten room to sing songs with Toni Garland in preparation for a visit to the Springbrooke retirement home where the children will play recorders for the residents. Once everyone has arrived, we walk over to the lower building in the crisp morning air. The sun is out but it is a brisk morning. Dew accumulates on my shoes as I walk through the grass.
We enter the kindergarten room, which is very large and light with windows. The room is warm in ambiance and in temperature. The kindergarten and 1st-grade children form a circle in the center of the room. Toni, in running gear, is seated on a chair with her guitar. She is 70 years old but has the energy of a 20-year-old. We start by singing “Sweetly Sings the Donkey.” After 10 or so songs, the first grade and a few kindergarten students gather in the foyer between the dining hall and kindergarten room to practice recorders before the field trip to Springbrooke. We start with “Hot Cross Buns” and continue with “Mary had a Little Lamb.” Some songs we will sing without recorders, including “Scotland’s Burning” and “Buenos Dias.” Students volunteer to introduce songs at the Springbrooke home. Some kindergarten and some first-grader students are excited to introduce the group but others shyly hang back.

**Vignette: The Springbrooke Home.** We caravan to the Springbrooke Home. I ride with Natalie and three students; other parents drive vans with the other 10 children in tow. The students are excited and a few are a little nervous to perform in front of an audience. They have had plenty of practice with their recorders recently and did very well during rehearsal. Upon entering the retirement home, students are reminded of behavioral expectations. Everyone stands together in a group as we wait to be led to the performance space.

Natalie plays recorders along with the students. The group of adults is seated around the living room area, and students are situated in a circle on the floor in front of them. It is very apparent that the community enjoys the presence of the children. All of the adults in the room have smiles on their faces and light in their eyes. At the end of the
performance, we sing “Happy Birthday” to an elderly gentleman in the group. We wave good-bye and make our way outside and back to campus.

As in John’s classroom, social support is embedded in the classroom culture. It is again evident in the behavior of the students on the field trip. Behavioral and academic expectations of the students are high as always, and students are expected to challenge themselves by performing publicly. Each child demonstrates mutual respect and participation during the performance, so lower achieving students are expected to participate equally in playing recorders. There is broad student participation, pride in the performance, and smiles on everyone’s faces.

Singing with Toni. This morning, the first grade gets to sing with Toni. Toni comes in to sing with the first grade twice a week. Once a week, she sings with the first and third grades together, and today is one of those days. The third grade marches in and greets me. Songbooks are distributed and children sit in a circle. One of the campus dogs, Angel, has decided to join us this morning, and students pet her as she lies down. Promptly, Toni begins a resounding round of “What Shall We Do With A Drunken Sailor?” and the students join in. The energy in the room is palpable. A song called “Waltzing Walter” begins and a group of three third-grade boys stands up and begins to waltz, as do a number of groups of girls. The third graders stomp, dance, and sing. They are very excitable. Toni tells the classes that now they will sing like the Shakers, very quietly but full of energy with “sweet voices” and no stomping of the feet. Natalie has the class join hands. “The third time around, do what the words say. Go around in a circle,
bow, turn around. The Shakers did a lot of dancing.” The classes follow directions and do what Toni suggests.

At the end of the song, the third grade leaves to head back to its classroom. Meanwhile, the first grade partners up for a ritual known as one-minute massage. I am Toni’s partner. She places her hands on my shoulders and takes a deep breath. The class follows along. She models using the thumbs to caress the sides of the spine and ends with another deep breath with her hands on my shoulders. She then instructs the class to create a bubble of golden light around their partner. We switch partners and follow the same routine. It is obvious that Toni attends to the larger sense of community in the classroom. Her compassionate temperament and concern for student and teacher well-being is obvious not only in what she teaches but in how she teaches it. Singing is one way to build community between and within grades. Dancing together allows students to express themselves while simultaneously trusting one another because it is perfectly acceptable for them to take risks as they express themselves. Toni attends to the spiritual life of the child very intentionally by providing aesthetic experiences into which students may tap. Creativity and the provision of opportunities for aesthetic experiences are entry points for students to tap into the ineffable or spiritual components of learning.

Zeus and Pandora. We then get ready to rehearse the play, Pandora’s Box. Natalie tells everyone that they will each need their scripts. Natalie asks the class to “really read with expression” and adds, “If anyone wants to follow without looking?” “No way!” some kids respond. Zoe, on the other hand, says she would like to try to recite her lines from memory. She stands and begins without her script. Soon it is Zeus’s turn,
played by Sam. He shouts his lines without looking. Natalie stops to check for understanding to ensure that learners get what is happening in the story.

The play will be performed on May 14. So far the students have only been practicing for one week. This class does not like to be on stage, but it is the furthest Natalie has had a class read the first time through. They made it through the entire script, only needing help with the names of gods and goddesses. The roles were cast by asking kids whether they wanted a large or small part. Some got the exact roles for which they asked. However, in some instances (e.g., Aidan), that was not the case. Natalie gave him a big part because she knows he can handle it. She also used the students’ knowledge of poetry and how quickly they learned it to evaluate which roles were suitable for each student. The learners who went home and wrote long poems received larger roles.

The students read with inflection and emotion. I am impressed. Pandora opens the box. Disease, cruelty, pain, old age, disappointment, hate, jealousy, war, and death come pouring out. “These miseries will go out among man and make them miserable,” Stephen reads. At the beginning of the year, most of the class could not read the play at all. Peyton, who plays Pandora, tells me her favorite line is, “I wonder what’s inside the box?”

Natalie redirects learners when necessary, which is infrequent. She always does so in a loving, patient way by saying “No, thank you,” and addressing the behavior that needs to be modified. Students are receptive and respectful of her redirection.
The Evaluative Dimension

Considering all of the activity in the classroom (i.e., singing, rehearsals, field trips), I ask Natalie how she knows whether or not she has achieved her aims and intentions. She stated that she knows from experience, informal observation, and formal assessment whether or not she has met the goals set for her students. She said that reading goals are easy to assess because they are so concrete; however, social growth is another story.

For some children, it might take many years to reach that social foundation. In first grade, you see lots of growth unless there’s been some trauma in their life, and they’re really closed in. But we don’t have that many kids like that here.

Her attention to the social development and growth of the children in her room highlight the importance of social education as highly as academic learning. The abilities of the older students that I take for granted, including their ability to communicate with one another, to share materials and ideas, and to know how they are feeling at the moment are fostered in the very young and continues through the rest of life. Natalie is charged with a significant responsibility; namely that of helping her students become aware of themselves and of social and school norms to which they have had limited exposure because of their youth. Her temperament is well suited for this age group, and she is well aware of the tasks at hand.

Natalie is calm, patient, caring, maternal, articulate, helpful, and open. Her demeanor permits a classroom environment of composure and thoughtful dialogue. She focuses on the development of the whole child, including helping with transitions into full days of school. Her thoughtful and loving nature is a fantastic match for this age
group as they adapt to their being out of the home for significant stretches of time and learn to interact in a specific classroom and school context.

**Fourth Grade: A Unique Constellation of Children**

Ms. Mary Todd Andrews began her journey as a teacher at the Montclair Waldorf School. Parents from Montclair approached the administration at The Spring School and recommended Mary to teach there. After four years at Montclair, she moved to The Spring School. She is now in her 12th year of teaching. She is conservative in her dress and is notorious for being strict.

I asked her to expound upon her experience teaching. She said,

I was teaching at Montclair Waldorf School. I adored the kids and parents but had philosophical differences with the school. Some parents took their kids to The Spring School, and I was recommended to Advani by Montclair parents.

I was at Montclair for four years; I was an assistant in the first grade for a year, then I took a class through from first through third grades. When I started at The Spring, when Advani got in touch, it was the first year he had taken over the school from his parents. It was a turbulent year; some staff wasn’t sure if they wanted to stay during the transition. About two-thirds of the staff switched positions or grade levels or left the school. As a staff, we spent almost two years working on what curriculum would be and on defining the school’s philosophy.

I never thought I’d be a teacher. On the spectrum of careers that intrigued me, it was way at the other end. I got my degree in psychology and wanted my M.A. I read an article in *The Utne Reader* about Waldorf and said that’s the school I wish I went to as a kid. I enrolled at Antioch in New Hampshire, which is how I ended up here and staying here. I realized I had a knack for teaching and that I really loved it. I wanted to be a counselor. It would’ve been social work probably or getting a degree in private practice. I had never planned to be a teacher; I had few teachers in school I admired or felt inspired by. School was a chore for me. When I ran into the article in Utne, I wished I’d gone to that school, and I said, “Why can’t I teach at a school like that?” I could be the teacher I never had.

**A clutter-free classroom.** Mary’s classroom is organized and austere yet warm and welcoming. A sign on the front of the door requests that people enter quietly and
close the door behind them. The room is very orderly. Five half-moon tables seat 2 or 3 students each.

Light filters in through the windows, each shaded with an ombre valance that fades from red to orange to yellow and back, each one meticulously placed so that each side is precisely even.

Ms. Andrews is known for running a tight ship and it shows in her organizational style. I am seated at the front and side of the room at a table with the crank pencil sharpener attached to my desk. It receives a lot of attention. The dark blue carpet is a stark contrast to the butter-colored walls. Two towering floor lamps and a wall sconce light the room. The front walls are lined with images of each of the presidents in order with the exception of the current President, Barack Obama. Continuing under the ceiling is a banner of cursive script where Mary has added the Spanish letters ch, ll, ñ, and rr in the appropriate places. On the back wall also hang the flag of New Hampshire, a small world map, and a map of the United States. There is a blackboard on which the classroom rules are written in yellow chalk: “1. Always raise your hand to speak; 2. Enter the room quietly and be ready to work; 3. Treat everyone with respect.”

A bookshelf adjacent to the blackboard of rules contains well-organized, worn paperback books by Madeline L’Engle and Kenneth Grahame. Wicker baskets stacked on top of the bookcase are a variety of shapes and shades of brown. On the other side of the classroom door stands another orderly, white-painted, wooden bookshelf that contains paperbacks with a wrought-iron table lamp sitting on top. The lower two shelves of this bookcase are filled with young adult literature; creased spines of red, white, purple, and
blue face out. The top shelf has five books resting on wire stands, their covers facing up on display. There is another bookshelf, above which hangs a painted white corkboard with the title, “Fourth Grade Hall of Fame.” Student names are listed on evenly spaced, individual cards around the heading. The bookcase below contains very well-organized spiral student notebooks in black bins, math textbooks, dictionaries, and games. On the other side of the neighboring window is the meticulous teacher’s desk, where Mary sits and checks student work.

A small, white, antique table is next to me. On it are stacked composition books used as student journals and three bottles of hand sanitizer. My desk is a standard office table with adjustable legs. The table is positioned beside an old wood school desk on top of which sits a receptacle for finished bell work and tissue boxes. Next to that, a phone table plays host to a colorful globe, a black telephone, and a ceramic mug of colored pencils.

**Vignette: Recitation.** The day is gray and rainy with drizzle. The pale yellow classroom normally houses 14 students, but today there are 12 because Sam is sick and Hailey is late. Students enter the room silently and begin their seatwork.

One by one, Mary calls students to stand. She faces the front of the room behind a black music stand that she uses as a podium. She calls on the class to begin singing. They sing three songs and recite the Gettysburg Address before they recite “O Captain, My Captain,” which they do mostly by heart. The first 15 minutes of class are spent in recitation. These songs and writings are part of a unit in U.S. History, and students change songs every season.
Mary is dressed conservatively in a black turtleneck; long, plaid wool skirt, and a maroon velvet blazer with her hair pulled back. She bobs to the music as she leads the songs. Student voices coalesce as though this is part of the daily routine.

I am introduced to the class. The students say “Yay!” when they are told I will be in class with them this week. One student asks me how I chose The Spring School as the site for my research. I explain it is because of the founder’s book on authentic education.

Mary hands out math facts papers to students face down. She says, “On your mark, get set, go!” With one minute to finish, students turn over the papers and begin to scribble. If they do not finish, or if they get one of the math facts wrong, they repeat the same sheet until they get it right. Mary corrects the math facts as students keep working on math. Learners retrieve their Saxon 54 textbooks and math spirals. Each opens to their respective pages and begins to work. Students who talk are shushed. The drizzle outside becomes more constant and it rains harder.

**The Intentional Dimension**

I delve into the intentional aspects of Mary’s classroom practice to discuss her aims and intentions for her students. I wonder what she would like to achieve with recitation, math facts, posted rules, and the way she has elected to organize the space. She related to me that her intention for students at this age is to build on what they already know to provide enrichment. She stated that all children are unique in their schema and experience, and so is every constellation of children that compose a class. Differentiation and ongoing evaluation of student progress inform her decisions regarding whether or not to slow down, move at a faster clip, or repeat content. Mary contended that stagnation is
the enemy of learning and noted that too much review is boring for the children and for her. She summarized, “I like at the end of the year that the children are able to reflect on how much they’ve accomplished throughout the year. Often times learning is so incremental they don’t realize they’ve learned a lot.”

Students in her class have the chance to reflect on the growth that they have experienced at different points in the year. This permits all of the children to notice and acknowledge how much they have learned over the course of their time in Mary’s classroom. She stated that this is the foundation of her main goal, which is that every child love school and learning. Mary noted that perhaps one of the greatest challenges in the accomplishment of her goal is that some students become frustrated with the notion that learning takes effort. She can provide an environment that fosters the culture of loving learning and can model it for her students, but their wrestling with inherent challenges in learning is up to them. She is encouraging and tells them to believe in themselves and that they will be able to accomplish more than they think by the end of the year. She emphasized the importance that students see value in what they are learning instead of viewing school as an obligation.

The Structural Dimension

I asked Mary what structures she uses to ensure that she meets her aims of moving the class forward. She explained that she feels the process of meeting her aims is an “organic process.” She reiterated that every child and every group of children is different and that “what works with one constellation of children doesn’t work at all with another. It’s a matter of being flexible.” She is responsive to the needs and interests of the
children and strives to keep them fully engaged in the learning process by being flexible and showing them just how far they have come.

I asked Mary to tell me about the classroom environment (see Figure 8). She stated that she does not like clutter and that having less in the room is better because it is less distracting. She also said that she prefers to have desks oriented toward the board for instruction. Those two things, according to Mary, “really guide the physical space.” Regarding the culture of her classroom, she stated that an observer might consider her room to be very tight and controlled until Christmas time. The beginning of the year is spent reviewing routines, expectations, and how to act respectfully and responsibly. By the springtime, the class is an organized group of well-behaved children who are eager to learn and excited to be challenged.
Mary acknowledged that she exhibits dichotomies in her teaching; namely, demanding and understanding, strict and fun. However, she is intentional in her behavior with the children because she believes that a “100% fun” classroom does the students a disservice. To prepare learners to function in an environment that is not always fun and that requires work ethic builds their skill levels so that they can endure and work through challenges in school, personally, and later, professionally.

**Vignette: Curriculum, concentration, competition.** There is frost on the ground and the wind is blustery. By later in the afternoon, it is warmer and sunny outside. This
morning’s seatwork consists of the preposition review. Students enter in an organized and quiet manner and get straight to work. After the preposition review, which is the last time for review before their test this afternoon, they take out their recorders. Mary has them warm up by playing scales, then they play a song. After recorder practice, students are to complete their math lessons. This time is spent with children working silently and independently, only approaching Mary with questions they cannot answer on their own. Students are absorbed in the quiet. The class hums along, and it is apparent by the way the time flows that each child knows precisely what comes next and when. Studious and invested in what they are doing, all of the children are concentrating, and I am impressed with their focus.

Before Mary begins the literature lesson, she hands back the preposition tests, and says, “Congratulations to Tory who had a perfect score.” Kids are excited to compare their test scores with those of the other students. Some are dismayed at their grades, despite that the lowest that I could see was a 71%, followed by one 85%, and the rest of the grades in the 90% range. One student says, “Look what I did, waaah, I am so awful,” and points to his error on the exam. Tory reassures others that a 98% is so close to being perfect; it’s just one error away from a perfect score, which some find little consolation. The tests are passed back to Mary to record in the grade book. This incident provides me with some insight into how invested children are in their grades and how some of them strive to get perfect scores. The group is highly intelligent, as is the rest of the student body, and their competitive edge shows.
The culture of the classroom. Mary is the only teacher in the lower school who grades and requires students to memorize facts, including the presidents of the United States. Today’s bell work is to finish first drafts and then read quietly, followed by singing, minute math, and notebooks. She is very consistent in her days; her schedule does not seem to change the way other teachers’ schedules do.

I asked Mary how she decides what to teach her class. I noticed that she is faithful to the *Well Trained Mind* (Bauer & Wise, 2009) in that she uses the history textbook that is recommended in the manner the authors suggest. She interpreted the curriculum as follows:

We have a fairly detailed curriculum for each grade. We’ve modified a huge amount of *Well Trained Mind*. The significant spine is the four-year rotation of history and science. We’ve chosen a Saxon math curriculum. In other subjects, we have content to cover but not any curriculum so to speak. Each teacher is free to use the curriculum they are comfortable with in the style that they are comfortable with.

My observations suggest that of the teachers I have studied thus far, Mary followed the *Well Trained Mind* most judiciously.

Vignette: Firmness and an orientation to detail. Today is the rehearsal of *A Comedy of Errors* with props and my first day back with the fourth grade following my initial visit six months before. I returned to the site specifically to see this special event in the fourth grade. I follow students to the theater first thing in the morning. As I walk to the theater, one student, Sydney, approaches me and asks me whether I’m done with my paper. “No,” I tell her, “not yet.” She asks whether I have all of the information I need. I tell her that I returned to gather more information. I also told her that I did not get the chance to see any special activities of the fourth grade as I did with the other grades and
that I really wanted to see the school play. We enter the theater and I take a seat in the audience. No re-introduction is given, and the class largely ignores me. The kids are obviously very excited. Mary, however, is not so excited about their behavior.

“This sort of behavior will not fly for Frida [the upper school drama teacher and eighth-grade teacher]. You’ll be asked to leave the show. This will not fly next year. I’m going to ask that when I need your attention, I get your attention. That means conversation must stop.”

The class becomes silent.

“Today we are going to iron out the troublesome spots. We will make sure the lights coordinate. We’ll make sure you make an entrance when you are supposed to.” A student asks whether they can stay backstage during the performance to await their cues. Mary says, “I can’t believe, based on what you’ve shown me, that you can stay absolutely quiet. Okay, let us begin.” The students in the scene take their places on the stage. The rest are seated in the audience.

Today, again I am strictly an observer, which is a stark contrast to my previous involvement in the third-grade classroom, when I helped students with spelling while they wrote their reports. Today I have limited interactions with students, if any. Seated in the audience, I am isolated and very much feel like an outsider. This is a reflection of the general culture of this classroom; fourth grade feels nurturing in a different way than the younger classes I have visited. This structure involves less maternal and feels more constructed, quite possibly because the students are older. It is apparent that in her classroom, Mary sets specific expectations for each student, and relationship with and between learners is considered valuable and important. Every teacher at The Spring School truly has the ability to practice pedagogy in the way that makes sense to and feels
comfortable for them on an individually philosophical level. Initially, I was taken aback at the apparent restrictiveness of the curriculum guide, *The Well Trained Mind* ((Bauer & Wise, 2009), but after some consideration came to realize that the way it is implemented and the flexibility and professional credibility attributed to teachers when teaching makes for more adaptability than I noticed at first glance.

At the rehearsal, everyone is situated in their respective places. The play begins. Mary stops the action and tells the actors that they need to be “twice as loud” and that they are “very flat.” “I’m not getting any sense of emotion from you at all. Let’s try that again.” The lights go down and the scene begins again. Mary fills the role of director quite well, and it is evident that she has experience in the dramatic arts. Students not on stage are seated quietly in the audience. Yesterday was the dress rehearsal, and today the class is practicing with props only. Noah sits next to me. He says that the performance is Thursday at 6:30 p.m. and Friday around 1 p.m. He asks why I am back and I tell him I need more data. He says, “I gotta get up in a second or two. See ya!” The kids are curious about my notes. Two come over and look at my notebook. Despite that I am on the periphery and have little involvement with the class at this point, the inquisitive nature of the students regarding my presence endures.

Mary keeps directing. “You need to stand here. Nathaniel, you need to stand here. We have to have some depth. From the audience’s perspective, it doesn’t make sense.” The students realize that Noah missed a line. “This scene needs more energy!” Mary speaks part of the script with vigor. At the end of the scene, Mary calls everyone up on stage. “Much improved today. There’s a lot more happening, which is great. I’m seeing
bits today that I didn’t before. It’s really great. Give yourselves a little pat on the
shoulder.” She looks over her notes and gives direction to each student based on what she
wrote down during their rehearsal.

“Tristan, I couldn’t hear you in that scene. I liked the interaction with Dromeo; I
saw more interaction up there. . . . Noah, your final speech . . . again, it’s just
words coming out. I want you to think about what it is you’re saying to him. . . .
Claire, honey, I now this isn’t what you want to hear, but the end rests on you.”

A student chimes in, “Yeah, people know that you’re acting, Claire.” Mary tells
the class that this time around there were moments that actually had her laughing.
Everyone gathers together and we head back to the classroom.

When I ask, Mary tells me some information about the play. This year, the play
was chosen in December, which is very early in the year. Students were cast after
listening to a recording of *A Comedy of Errors*. All of the children wrote their first
through third role choices on a piece of paper for Mary to review. Fortunately, most
students ended up with their first and second choices.

**The Evaluative Dimension**

I asked Mary how she knows she has achieved her aims. What constitutes a
successful school year in her mind? She stated that her reflections on the growth of each
learner over the course of the year gives her a robust sense of student development. She
considers what issues and considerations each student has encountered, new experiences
they have had, and how their abilities have changed over time. She also acknowledges
that the fourth graders are the oldest students in the lower school and that they will soon
be the youngest of their peers when they move to fifth grade.
Mary is meticulous, organized, expectant, firm, consistent, and very attentive to detail. Her teaching style and philosophical beliefs about teaching appear to be congruent with one another. Mary, along with other educators at The Spring School, has been deliberate and organized in considering what aspects of *The Well Trained Mind* (Bauer & Wise, 2009) she elected to adopt, and, from my observations, adheres to the curriculum guide more than most teachers at the school. It is perhaps this opportunity to use professional judgment and personal ideals when teaching that is most resounding and aligns with the school’s founding notion of authenticity.

**Summary**

The descriptions above were intended to give the reader insight into my experiences at The Spring School. The vignettes and descriptions were divided into sections based on Eisner’s dimensions of schooling. The first sections provide the reader with a contextual and descriptive introduction of the school and the third-, first-, and fourth-grade classrooms. I then used Eisner’s intentional dimension of schooling to investigate the aims and intentions of each educator. This section described the goals of each classroom to investigate common threads between them (see chapter 5) and to prepare the reader for the rationale behind the next dimension, the structural dimension, which involves how structures are implemented to ensure that aims are met. The final sections include the pedagogical, curricular, and evaluative dimensions of schooling. Examples of curriculum, pedagogy, and student evaluation at each grade level are intended to round out the vignettes and descriptions.
Chapter 5 provides the reader with pertinent themes that emerged from my research at The Spring School. The chapter also provides answers to the four research questions and presents educational implications and suggestions for further research.
Chapter Five

Thematics, Evaluation, and Implications

Overview of Study

The purpose of this study is to describe and analyze authentic teaching and learning practices in which “accomplishments are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful” (Newmann & Associates, 1996, p. 23). During the course of this study, many questions regarding definition of terms and their subjective meaning arose, including the issue that what is considered meaningful, worthwhile, or successful by one person may hold very different meaning for another. Because of the potential for the study to become unclear or a forum for the debate of definitions of terms including authenticity, I elected to study a school that considers itself authentic as evidenced by publications that elucidate the philosophy of the school. One of the intentions of this investigation is to offer an alternative to the current educational climate that relies heavily on standardized testing and prescriptive curricula.

This study seeks to develop an understanding of authentic teaching and learning and what it looks like in the classroom. It is one thing to think about what authentic educating looks like from a theoretical standpoint and quite another to consider how it is implemented. I am not interested in quantifying the outcomes of education but rather how education can become more meaningful and personal for students and teachers.
As mentioned in Chapter 3, I chose the qualitative method of educational connoisseurship and criticism for my study so as to describe, interpret, and analyze themes that emerge from the research. The descriptive nature of the method provided me with material and details necessary to pull themes from my observations and to make suggestions for future research. These implications are explained at the end of this chapter to fulfill the aim of Eisner’s (1998) method, which is apply critical investigation to the improvement of educational practice.

Educational connoisseurship and criticism consists of two components: connoisseurship, or the ability to perceive and appreciate qualities inherent in educational context and criticism, and the disclosure and discussion of findings. The opportunity to observe carefully and take in the educational context coupled with the disclosure of emergent themes gives voice to components of pedagogy that may otherwise go unnoticed or, at least, would be less likely to be examined.

Based on the publications of the founders about their philosophy of education and the importance of authenticity, I selected one school to study and spent a total of four weeks observing and conducting interviews with teachers, administrators, and the school founders. The table in chapter 3 outlines the schedule of interview and observational data collection for this study.

The data collected in this study include observations, semistructured and informal interviews, and artifact analysis. Observations encompassed the physical layout of classrooms and the campus as well as the practices of teachers, relationships between adults and children, and relationships between students. Semistructured interviews took
place with teachers in their classrooms and were loosely based on an interview protocol. Interviews became conversational and deviated from the protocol at times so as to capture accurately the richness of the teachers’ histories and experiences. I also interviewed the founders of the school, often for two hours or more at a time, about their histories, experience, and philosophies of education. We discussed a breadth of subjects, usually in their home, on multiple occasions. When the opportunity arose for me to speak to administrators, staff, or teachers other than those I observed or interviewed, I seized it, as this process helped round out my understanding of the school. Artifacts that were collected and analyzed include marketing materials, curricular materials, newsletters, class lists, student work, and photographs of the campus. Again, the materials and data gathered during fieldwork represent only one phase of the school’s lifetime, and so the data gathered today may look different than what is presented here.

**Themes and Responses to Research Questions**

Eisner’s (1998) ecology of schooling framework was applied in chapter four, where I asked the question of how authenticity manifests in the intentional, structural, curricular, and pedagogical aspects of the school. The data analysis process involved color-coding portions of interview transcripts that address research questions. The evaluative component from educational criticism was explored using the authentic education framework (AEF), which combines the ideas of Fred Newmann (1996) and Parker Palmer (1993, 1998, 2004). The intent of the evaluation section is to determine whether or not there is value in the observed experience. I remained open to modification of the frameworks of the ecology of schooling or the AEF if at any time I felt they were
too limiting and therefore causing me to overlook potentially significant data during field observations.

After I reviewed the literature, I created four research questions:

(1) What does authenticity mean to school teachers and school founders?

*Authenticity* does not solely refer to Newmann’s (1996) tenets of academic achievement but also includes the category of the ineffable, or the qualities of teaching and learning that are recognizable but immeasurable. As stated earlier, the definition I wish to use for this study is that *authenticity*, in the context of education, pertains to meaningful, personally relevant learning in a way that advances personal development.

Despite initial hesitation about defining the term *authenticity* for themselves, all of the teachers were eventually able to articulate their own understandings of the concept and how it manifests in pedagogy. The school founders offered their conceptualization of authentic pedagogy as defined by their own experiences as learners, teachers, and individuals who are well-versed in philosophy and religion. I anticipated their ability to delve into philosophical and theoretical ideas after I read what they had written on the subject of authentic pedagogy. Interview data were reviewed and recurrent themes noted to answer the question of what authenticity meant to each participant.

(2) What do teachers and founders do to ensure authenticity in the classroom?

After spending time with both teachers and the school founders, I realized that perhaps this question would be more thoroughly answered by the founders, as they were intentional in seeing authenticity manifest in the classrooms of the school. Interview questions that asked teachers and founders to consider the role of authenticity within their
specific context helped to answer this question, as did observations that revealed unintentional demonstrations of authentic pedagogy as indicated by the AEF in each classroom.

(3) What does authenticity look like in practice?

This question addresses the identification of authentic pedagogy when it is happening. The component of the ineffable from the AEF permitted me to remain open to classroom practices and facts of campus culture that resonate with teachers’ attending to the whole child. This question also allowed me to search for themes that emerged from the research, including ideas about relationship, community, and aesthetic-transformative experiences, which are explained in greater detail below.

(4) What are the significance or implications of authenticity for teaching and learning?

Significance and implications of authenticity emerged on two levels: (1) how schools can operationalize authentic pedagogy in very concrete ways, and (2) the importance of school culture and community cohesion in the intent to implement authentic pedagogy. Although I argue that the implications for this research could be applied to any age student, it was my intent to see the dialogue of authenticity gain traction and continue at the elementary school level. As it stands, the notion of authenticity in the younger grades is not common discourse, and my wish is to see that change.
Research Question 1: What Does Authenticity Mean to School Teachers and School Founders?

In order to gather teachers’ ideas together, I pulled several themes from interview transcripts that relate to the question of what authenticity means to them. The teachers, Mr. Hobart, Ms. Garrett, and Ms. Andrews all used language that included the words real, honest, and sincere when asked for their thoughts on the meaning of authenticity. Mr. Hobart suggested that teaching from one’s heart or spirit is a way to be authentic, and Ms. Garrett suggested that relevance of content is important to authentic pedagogy. She told me that it is necessary to consider the whole child when designing curriculum and teaching to students’ needs. Students who are not yet ready to sit at a desk and work but can read are still not prepared to function in first grade. It is important to meet these children at their own levels to help them learn what they need to progress to the next grade. However, not every child is going to enjoy learning all content at all times. For that reason, Ms. Garrett stated that it is important not to allow learning to become stagnant. Consideration of each child’s individual needs will produce a varied curriculum that can reach every student. Field trips and the application of classroom knowledge to the outside world with play and working together supplement the curriculum and aid in the creation of authentic learning. That said, it is not possible to keep all children interested all of the time in what they are learning. This underscores the importance of the prevention of curricular stagnation.

Newmann and Wehlage (1993) discuss the scale that was developed to measure “the extent to which the class has value and meaning beyond the instructional context”
The sentiment that education ought to be connected to larger social issues instead of only existing to maintain norms of the process of schooling was echoed by everyone I spoke to at The Spring School, and is delineated in the AEF. The opportunity for students to connect to contemporary issues, or to use schema or personal experience to connect to issues outside of the school walls (for instance, environmental advocacy) is pivotal in growing student investment and engagement in learning. In order for learning to be fruitful it must carry some level of personal relevance, which permits students and teachers alike to feel a sense of buy-in to what they are doing in the classroom.

Ms. Andrews echoed Ms. Garrett’s feelings that teachers need to be honest on multiple levels students’ developmental progress. Ms. Andrews told me that it is important for her to be able to meet children at their own levels. This situation may result at time in students doing things in which they are not interested but also opens the possibility for learners to discover what they enjoy and how to pursue it.

During one of my conversations with the founders, we discussed the roles of individual power, freedom of thought, support and honesty in authenticity: when individuals own their power, they are able to make confident decisions that may be contradictory to the opinions of others. For people to make their own decisions, they must be able to think critically and they must be self-aware. One must be the authority in their lives and embrace their individual power to push back on what others may take for granted as expert opinion. The questioning of the status quo and the acknowledgement that society is tumultuous is a first step to beginning to reclaim individual thought, confidence and power.
Authenticity can make room for students and teachers to take a hard look at their experiences; when this inward view is coupled with self-awareness, the realization may take hold that people are each responsible for their own lives and that they have the ability to exert some control over them. Self-awareness and the ability to liberate oneself from patterns of thought is the beginning of what Krishnamurti refers to as the “right kind” of education (1953, p. 98).

The spirit, soul, body and mind all need recognizing and nourishing. We are here to evolve. If our purpose is evolution and a greater consciousness, education is about personalities who should be molded so that people can get a job and be good citizens. The aim is to create good citizens. (J. Garland)

This freedom of thought permits human beings to be attuned to perspectives and ideas other than one’s own. Because the founders believe that to find freedom is one of the larger aims of living, it is important to allow students to learn in ways that are not intellectual, as the intellectual can become confining. Larger ideas, including truth, beauty and the ability to have a more comprehensive understanding of the world beyond the self are empowering, necessary concepts for learners and teachers to explore.

The educational process provides people with the opportunity to be helpful and supportive to one another during the learning process. For instance, Natalie Garrett’s intention with the performance of Zeus and Pandora (See Zeus and Pandora in Chapter 4) is to assess student ability and support children in stretching their abilities. She gives Aidan a large role in the play because she believes he is capable, and her belief in him exemplifies support in the process of learning. Natalie is also supportive in that she considers the personal experiences of her students and how they may play out in the classroom. In Natalie Garrett’s section The Evaluative Dimension in Chapter 4, she
addresses the possibility of trauma being present in her students’ lives. Not only is she capable of supporting students academically, she recognizes the importance of emotional support as well.

The act of supporting and aiding a classmate who is struggling with some aspect of learning is quite different from watching them flounder and benefiting from their failure. In being supportive, students and teachers first have to be aware of those around them and ask themselves what their classmates need. At the forefront of the teacher’s mind ought to be the question of how learning can be structured so that student needs are met. This echoes Newmann and Wehlage’s (1993) emphasis on the importance of social support for student achievement. Social support incorporates ideas of respect, inclusion and encouragement as pivotal to the learning process. Support can be considered low if the overall classroom climate does not attend to factors such as inclusion and high expectations for all students. The ability to feel safe enough to take risks is an indicator of the level of social support present in a specific educational context (Newmann & Wehlage 1993, p. 11).

During the course of our conversation, I became increasingly curious about how Mr. Garland grew interested in the idea of authenticity, as he had apparently put a significant amount of time, energy, and thought into the notion. I asked him what sparked his interest, and he related to me that both he and Mrs. Garland were interested in exploring and writing about what they had learned over their 35-year tenure in education. For the Garlands, authenticity encompasses the ideas of freedom, acceptance, truth, beauty, helpfulness, confidence, and self-awareness. Although this is a very altruistic
conceptualization, it is fair to wonder what this might consist of and look like in the classroom.

Honesty in relationships also emerged as a key factor in authentic education (See Chapter 4, *Honest, caring kids: The intentional dimension*). Not only is honesty an aim for Mr. Hobart and his class, but it also guided the class meetings that the Garlands implemented in order to build community. Prior to the establishment of a board of directors, students were given the opportunity to be “amazingly honest and perceptive” during meetings. The class meeting is explored in depth below, under the heading “Works toward a greater good.” Of course, in order to be honest in relationships and in forums including class meeting, one must be attuned to their talents and shadows, which is why The Spring School intentionally addresses self-examination as an aim of education in the manuscript *The Challenge of Authentic Education Book 2: Consciousness as the Key to Learning*. The development of consciousness through inclusion and responsibility encourages self-knowledge as the chance to “discover our attributes and talents as well as our dark, shadow nature” (Garland and Garland, n.d., p. 11).

Individual power, freedom of thought, support and honesty in authenticity were all emergent as important themes when addressing what authenticity means to teachers and founders at the school both in the theoretical and practical aspects of operations at The Spring School. Support and honesty in particular were overlapping themes between teachers and founders and were exemplified and demonstrated in the observational data, while individual power and freedom of thought remain largely theoretical. The emergent ideas of curricular relevance, meeting children where they are in both academic and
social regards, individual power, freedom of thought, support and honesty in authenticity are on their own large concepts that form only a snapshot of experience at The Spring School. It would be worthwhile to investigate further how these factors are realized in the classroom in depth, as concepts such as individual power and freedom of thought remain largely unexplored in terms of systematic study in the classroom.

The next question addresses what happens in the classroom to ensure that authentic teaching and learning are taking place in the relatively concrete terms of the AEF. The third question considers the outcomes of those structures and investigates the appearance of operationalized authenticity and its outcomes.

**Research Question 2: How Is Authenticity Cultivated in the Classroom?**

This question is answered in relation to the components of the AEF and how they become encouraged in the classroom. During my time at The Spring, I witnessed connectedness to the world in Mr. Hobart’s room, social support in Ms. Garrett’s class, and depth of knowledge with Ms. Andrews. Also, students were given multiple opportunities to engage in aesthetic-transformative experiences, or works toward a greater good, both markers of the presence of the ineffable. The structure of the school, including how much time and opportunity is given for students to experience magical moments of learning and connection to one another and to the larger community, aids in the possibility for students to have ineffable experiences.

Mr. Hobart’s classroom provided a vignette (Chapter 4, Curricular and Pedagogical Dimensions, Glenwood Sanctuary) that relates the story of visit from Marta
of Glenwood Sanctuary. This instance provides examples of the facets of high order thinking, connectedness to the world, substantive conversation, and depth of knowledge in terms of the AEF. Authenticity is being cultivated in the classroom in this instance because students are encouraged to make a connection with the real world in terms of how empathetic students are in reaction to the larger issue of wildlife preservation. The class is also given the chance to advocate for solutions for injured wildlife after Marta departs, by considering fundraising for Glenwood Sanctuary. Value beyond school, according to Newmann, Secada & Wehlage (1995), provides value other than some sort of documentation of competence. Activities and learning experiences that impact others have “special value, which is missing in tasks contrived only for the purpose of assessing knowledge” (1995, p.11).

The role of social support in student learning is apparent in Ms. Garrett’s interview comment to me about how she and other students work to support struggling children. It is apparent from what she tells me that she works from an asset model for discipline and to help children change their behavior. For instance, she said that if she notices a student with very low self-confidence, she and the students would find out what that student is good at and build on those talents until something positive emerges. Although it is permissible to make mistakes in her classroom, she intentionally carves out room for learners to reflect on what they have done and encourages them to make better choices next time. She is supportive in approach and suggested that it is more effective to present replacement behavior to students instead of just pointing out what they ought not do. For instance, she said, “Don’t run” would become “Can you please walk?” and
“Don’t yell” becomes “Please talk in a quiet voice.” This positive approach to behavior adjustment is part of a management philosophy that Natalie follows called positive teacher language that aims to promote a sense of community and self-discipline in students (Responsive Classroom, 2013). The use of social-emotional learning programs that focus on inclusion and social development of students not only aids in the development of closeness between student and teacher, but also contributes to the children’s academic growth (Rimm-Kaufman, S. and Chiu, I., 2007). The bonds of trust and ability to take risks (such as those mentioned in the section of Chapter 4 entitled Singing with Toni) are reinforced in Natalie’s room because her asset model of management preserves the integrity of each child and the integrity of the community.

Authenticity also is cultivated in the classroom in terms of how the mission of the school is put into practice. I probed further and asked Natalie about the school mission and how it comes to life in her classroom. She explained that her aim is first and foremost to create a safe environment where children can be individuals while she maintains the school-supported qualities of kindness, respect, and cooperative community participation. She wants students to feel trust and love while they develop a love of learning. She noted that the mission of the school encourages . . .

Love of outdoors, exploring and learning, growing, with academics and social, physical pieces; challenging the mind and body to be the best you can be without that entitlement. Just the best you can be in a noncompetitive way. (Natalie)

Ms. Andrews and I also spoke about how the AEF manifests in her classroom, specifically about high order thinking, depth of knowledge, substantive conversation, and the ineffable. Her intentionality in encouraging high order thinking is demonstrated when
she has students draw connections not only within but also across subjects. For example, she may ask learners to draw upon their schema, and in literature she pushes them to identify deeper symbolic meanings in stories and how they relate to what they have experienced personally or to other books they have read. Her desire to make these connections arose from her wanting content to interact in a way that prevents its existing in isolation. She is also intentional in asking students to consider how much they have learned over the course of the year, which many students are pleasantly surprised at, and is evidenced in Chapter 4 under Ms. Andrew’s section, *The Evaluative Dimension.*

Our conversation about depth of knowledge evolved into what is appropriate developmentally for different children at different stages. She expounded,

Sometimes breadth is more important than the depth. Sometimes the depth we get into is totally student driven. There are times when I make the decision to cover something briefly and their interest and passion makes us go back and go into depth. That’s one thing that’s so great about this school, we have the luxury of letting students dig in to something where they are really interested. (Mary)

Substantive conversation is key to learning in Ms. Andrews’ class. The information presented to the class constitutes a jumping-off point for discussion and making distinctions, raising questions, and applying ideas to content. Dialogue builds on each student’s response, and although small group work would be the ideal context in which to witness substantive conversation, my observations only encompassed the class working as a whole.

The teaching and learning that I observed in Ms. Andrews’ class could easily be reduced to solely represent the qualities of good teaching. However, upon further examination, it becomes evident that there is more occurring than meets the eye. In
particular, I inquired about what role ineffable moments play in learning during one of our October 2009 interviews. Ms. Andrews tells me that she acknowledges that ineffable moments happen in learning, but that she is not entirely sure that a teacher can guide students toward having them. Regardless, she refers to those moments as “magical” when they do happen, and expresses some frustration at the difficulty of assessment when students have ineffable experiences.

During my time in Ms. Andrews’ classroom, I witnessed potential moments for the ineffable to manifest. For instance, her students were particularly excited at the prospect of being outside and playing together on the grassy field in the sun; their enthusiasm and obvious enjoyment of spending time outdoors inspired Ms. Andrews to give them additional time outside that day, which was greatly appreciated by the students. Being outside as a group, playing with one another and with children from other classes, provides an opportunity for community building among students. Children worked together to gather materials from the neighboring woods to build a fort and pushed each other on the swings.

In terms of social support in her classroom, Ms. Andrews offered the following comments during one of our interviews:

I think that learning to work collaboratively and with your peers is a very important skill. Learning to problem solve with a group socially is a very important skill. Oftentimes children who don’t feel good in social contexts suffer as students because their self-concept plummets. In that regard I think it has a huge amount to do with education …I think the school took up a lot of what was in the realm of the family, in the home. And because you have a limited number of hours in the day in school you end up giving up academic time to give social instruction. Not that it’s not valuable, but when I say it has nothing to do with education, in my feeling some of it belongs in the home and it’s a tragedy we’ve lost that as a society. (Researcher’s field notes)
Ms. Andrews continued, telling me that she balances high expectations with being an understanding teacher. She also related that she has a significant amount of faith in her students. I had the opportunity to witness this balance first-hand, when one of the students began to cry in class. The teacher stepped into the hall with the girl in an attempt to help her calm down, while the students and I were left in the room. The entire class continued to work, while simultaneously expressing their concern for their classmate, who was visibly upset.

**Research Question 3: What Does Authenticity Look Like in Practice?**

There are myriad ways to answer this question, and so the scope has been narrowed to include two components: (1) the procedural ways in which the school actualizes authenticity as explicated by the founders, and (2) the outcomes of the facet of the AEF referred to as the ineffable in terms of students’ experiences. The ineffable, because of its transcendent qualities, is difficult to evaluate in terms of any sort of checklist or predetermined notion but instead emerged from what I experienced as field researcher at The Spring School.

Regarding procedure, the Garlands spoke to me about how they encouraged authentic pedagogy by learning about others. Speaking from experience, Mr. Garland told me that “different cultures are important to study so one becomes aware of cultural relevance, and studying other cultures promotes consciousness.” Original sources give students an understanding of reality that differs from what they would glean by having
read fiction, for instance, and the connection with another individual’s experience allows them to develop an understanding of someone other than themselves.

Parables are used in a similar fashion in that students make text-to-self connections by looking for the parables in their own lives, which Ms. Garland noted is extremely engaging for students.

To strengthen the connection between student and curriculum, teachers are advised to revise curriculum based on students’ personal needs and the passions of students and teachers. Mr. Garland said, “If the teacher or students find themselves lacking inspiration and nourishment from the curriculum then authentic education ceases to take place.”

For teachers to inspire, they too must feel inspired.

Although our school was spiritually based, we taught no religious dogma, nor were we affiliated with any religious institution. Instead, we provided the flexibility for all who wished to follow their own inner authority. Classes within the school often read portions of sacred texts from cultures around the world that highlighted common truths. And throughout the school, we informally taught simple spiritual principles: inclusion, kindness, honesty, and honoring self, among others. (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 16)

The Spring School’s unique influence is difficult to articulate. The school environment gives rise to an energy of responsibility, respect, and profound meaning that permeates teaching and learning. In fact, this power is so palpable that it is almost indescribable, and is therefore what I refer to as *ineffable*. The ineffable is a spiritual component of pedagogy that provides meaning, in its deepest sense, to teaching and learning experiences. The opportunity to engage in an ineffable experience provides the potential for students to uncover and grapple with deep existential questions. The
ineffable provides authentic learning opportunities that are, as Newmann and Associates (1996) described them, significant and meaningful as opposed to trivial and useless.

What does the ineffable look like in practice at The Spring School? Two larger themes emerged from the experiences at The Spring School that can be considered ineffable: (1) Works toward a greater good and (2) aesthetic-transformative experiences.

Works toward a greater good. James Croft (2008) stated,

Anything which promotes a sense of selflessness, humility and a desire to “give back” achieves many of the goals expressly laid out in curricula designed to develop citizenship or social responsibility. In a world increasingly challenged by a fragmentation of societies, philosophies and viewpoints it may serve us well to encourage moments of selflessness and awe. (p. 6)

The Spring School does precisely that. It provides moments of selflessness and awe by constantly striving to better the school community and the community at large. The curriculum most definitely promotes citizenship and social responsibility. The school began as a very small, intimate community of learners from the surrounding area. Many of the teachers were parents who had a certain passion for a subject matter or content area, which they taught to the children of The Spring School. From the very beginning, the school promoted inclusivity and sharing. Parents gave back by teaching at the school. Students gave back by maintaining the campus, a tradition that continued to the time of this research. For instance, there are three Saturday school days in a year, when students are required to come to school. On campus cleanup day, parents perform physical plant work to complete campus tasks, which is necessary as the school employs no maintenance staff. Students and teachers work together to improve the campus by collecting wood, planting bulbs, or performing any other necessary tasks. In the past,
during founders Jay and Toni Garland’s tenure of over 40 years, the community was work-based and everyone in the surrounding community would lend a hand. For example, during campus days, the extended community helped The Spring School prepare for winter by bringing chainsaws to campus to harvest firewood. The students chopped down trees and stacked wood. Everyone worked very hard. (Although some of these activities continue as of the time of this research, students were no longer responsible for harvesting wood.)

Another way in which I observed students giving back to the school was by cleaning. At the end of the school day, students in grades 3-8 complete their assigned duties to help clean the school. Students’ contributions include taking out trash or vacuuming, cleaning the bathrooms, and maintaining the staff kitchen and classrooms. These activities occur on a daily basis and create a sense of community among students and teachers. These student tasks constitute community service and students experience the “desire to ‘give back,’” as Croft called it, every day.

The Garlands referred to this activity as

[Working together in joy] . . . is an energy that binds groups together and at the same time develops a healthy pride is that which underlies active, joyful, community projects. When individuals accept responsibility to make group projects successful, they invest in a positive and purposeful energy that makes work satisfying and easy. Once a group repeats this experience many times, and gains the satisfaction of transforming difficult work into pleasant sharing, it can re-enter that energy field at will, and simply enjoy getting the job done well. (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 10)

Working together in joy is a way to work toward a greater good. The greater good can be defined as that which reaches beyond the immediate needs of the individual and is something larger than the individual self. The energy of collaborative, communal work
and a subsequent sense of responsibility develop from that work and creates the ineffable. Profound meaning can be created from the culture of a school community that strives for the greater good.

All students are required to participate in projects on campus and in project-based learning initiatives, which contribute to the sense of inclusivity that permeates school culture. The Spring School School’s main guiding principle is one of inclusion, which is intended to create a community of children and adults who are devoted to the creation and expansion of consciousness in each individual, as “authentic education is powered principally by the elevation of consciousness” (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 6). Only when consciousness is developed and furthered can students develop to their full potential, which is the main reason for authentic education. Conscious children are precocious, responsible, self-motivated, and capable of expressing their own opinions and ideas (p. 9). The vehicles for development of this consciousness from activities that engender inclusion and responsibility embody the following characteristics:

(1) Inclusion. To be part of the greater whole. When all children are prized they experience trust and comfort. In such an environment, where peers function as brothers and sisters, human growth, personal expression, and academic progress flourish together.

(2) Responsibility. When students are given extensive responsibility and held accountable for their actions, they develop a sense of ownership of the school community. As a result they usually participate fully in discussions, and demand an understanding of ideas. (Garland & Garland, 2004, pp. 10-11)

Inclusion and responsibility are evident in the school’s operations, both currently and in prior years. In the past, when the Garlands ran The Spring School, they held class meetings, which created a strong sense community among and between teachers and students across grade levels. Everyone had class meetings, regardless of grade level. If
there were any issues at hand, they were discussed until they were resolved. These meetings became the center of the school because they empowered students to express their feelings and to talk about those feelings with teachers. The kids were amazingly honest and perceptive during meetings. In upper-class meetings, a teacher or a student could elect to stand in the center of the meeting room and would listen to what others had to say about them. In a recent interview, Jay Garland stated that during class meetings, “it was like watching a miracle” because it was so powerful to witness such vulnerability and honesty. The meetings never tore down anyone, but problematic issues including personality conflicts arose from time to time. The person in the center of the room made themselves vulnerable to the negative and the positive. This led to give and take and to deep exploration of human relationships and emotions. The person in the middle, whether teacher or student, would have to listen as others approached them, held their hand, and talked to them. Jay’s definition of love involves honesty, acceptance of the good with the bad, and then getting over it. These meetings helped resolve negative issues, and the overarching feeling was one of trust.

Although class meetings like those described above no longer take place, there are other ways in which students currently create and give back to the community in an inclusive and responsible way. For example, during my visit to handwork class, the third grade was learning to crochet squares that would eventually become a blanket to be donated to the local hospital (see the vignette “Handwork with Greta” in chapter 4).
These works toward a greater good allow students to feel selfless, humble, and socially responsible. From these experiences, students become engaged in their learning and committed to the maximization of their educational experiences.

**Aesthetic transformative experiences.** Another way to engage students in learning is aesthetic experience. The second theme related to the manifestation of the ineffable The Spring School is temporal aesthetic experiences that are not always integrated into the larger curriculum; that is, experiences for the sake of experience.

Aesthetic experiences are, according to Uhrmacher, Conrad, and Lindquist (2010):

> From John Dewey’s point of view, in his text *Art as Experience* (1934), aesthetic experience is resultant from the interaction between an individual and the environment. When an aesthetic experience is brought to fruition, the individual is a heightened state of sensory awareness. The opportunity for these aesthetic experiences occurs regularly within educational programs however, they often go unacknowledged, partially because there is no model of curriculum implementation that recognizes their existence. (p.184).

The Spring School regularly participates in what is known as the aesthetic-transformative approach to curriculum implementation. This model assigns value to temporal events that may or may not be connected to the larger curriculum. These events include activities such as field trips, guest speakers, visiting artists, student performances and so on. Conditions at The Spring School are ripe for learners to have the opportunity to engage in aesthetic experiences.

This fluid process of connection, which encourages contact between the “distinct and discrete,” exemplifies the process of the Aesthetic-Transformative approach to implementation. Temporal events allow for the crossing of otherwise separate contexts and content areas that may create ‘surprising compatibilities and novel synthesis’ in that students who experience the Aesthetic-Transformative curriculum could become aesthetically awakened. It is through short exposures to aesthetic experiences that learners may find their passions ignited, albeit
unexpectedly, resultant from the combination of new ideas and experiences provided by the temporal. (Uhrmacher et al., 2010, p. 196)

What is the benefit of aesthetic experiences for students? When discussing peak experiences and drama, Croft (2008) asserted,

It was partly such experiences that led me to wish to continue acting and thus made me to want to come to school. The peak experiences I gained through performing were so powerful that they made going to school seem a worthwhile investment, and disposed me better towards other subjects I may otherwise not have engaged with. This is one of many potential educational benefits of peak experience. (p. 5)

What then are the kinds of activities that may be labeled aesthetic-transformative?

It is important to note that it is not just arts-based activities that can be considered aesthetic-transformative. Uhrmacher et al. (2010) stated,

We have in mind the following actual events that we have seen: the modern dance troupe that wants to give a local workshop; the local professional athlete who gives a motivational speech; the local professional actors who want to involve students in theatre; the symphony that welcomes students to their Concert Hall on selected student days. Note that some of these activities are not in the realm of the arts per se. Our conceptualization of the importance of these activities extend from the arts but take place in all areas of life—sports, science, history, culture, etc. (p. 193)

In a school setting, aesthetic-transformative activity may be summoned by anyone almost anywhere. The activity and event may be thrust upon the school from above, by a principal or another administrator, or it may arise from activities conducted in classrooms or outside of the school. The origins stem from varied sources including principals, teachers, past teachers, parents, and the students themselves.

Much impetus behind various activities at The Spring School comes from teachers and the administration, all of whom are very supportive of the integration of the arts into the curriculum. Visual art is an integral part of the curriculum at The Spring
School. The school participates in the larger community by being part of the Children’s Arts festival and in creative activity on school grounds. The Spring School offers a multitude of opportunities for students to have aesthetic experiences as such activities as an afternoon with Kathryn Leighton, singing with Toni, special events including a visit from a brass quintet, and dramatic productions, all of which are described below.

Artist Kathryn Leighton (pseudonym) visited the kindergarten class at The Spring School in mid-April. She is a scientific illustrator and botanical artist known for many publications including children’s books. During the first day of the visit, students learned about and created monarch butterflies using one of her published texts. The day that I joined the class was the second of a two-day visit, during which learners participated in a nature walk where they collected various artifacts to include in their handmade nature journals, as explained in the following vignette:

We gather the children outside and Kathryn explains the task at hand. Their job is to collect pieces of nature that can be glued into their journals. It is a beautiful day and the sun is warm against my skin. As we walk along the dirt road, the excitement of finding acorns and pinecones is almost overwhelming. When we return to the classroom, learners become instantly engaged in gluing their treasures to their journal paper. One particularly resourceful student uses string to tie a pinecone to his cover, as the glue didn’t adhere it to the paper. “Look at what I found!” exclaims a learner seated at a round table. He is particularly excited about the acorn he found, which is red in color and beginning to sprout. He eagerly creates a pool of glue on a journal page to which he will attempt to affix the acorn. The room is abuzz with frenetic energy from our time outside. Kathryn’s visit is yet another example of the aesthetic-transformative model of curriculum implementation.

The next day is an all-school visit from the Foothills Brass Quintet from Canada. Their program includes discussions of melody, harmony, rhythm, and the like. The program is light-hearted and humorous and keeps all students engaged, especially when it comes time for the students to volunteer to play instruments. The students are engrossed in the concert and are very respectful of the performers with the exception of a couple of preschoolers who are understandably squirming. It is apparent that students take responsibility for their behavior.
evidenced by the level of respect they give the quintet. Before we know it, the concert is over. It is apparent that the overall school culture gives rise to an energy that permeates teaching and learning; it is an energy of responsibility, respect and profound meaning. The arts provide the opportunity for growth and spiritual connection for and between teachers and learners. The visit by the quintet is another example of the aesthetic-transformative model of curriculum implementation. The aesthetic-transformative not only allows learners to experience powerful temporal events, but it also provides students with the opportunity to become lost in the subject matter and to lose track of time. 

(Researcher’s field notes)

Student performances, including poetry recitals, coffee houses, and theater, are substantial parts of The Spring School’s curriculum. Tabitha, the art teacher and Spring School alum, said that performances helped her later in life with public speaking, public performance, and performance under stress. To her it was “one of the most useful things” she learned at The Spring School.

When the founders ran the school, the theatrical performances numbered three full-length and double cast (so everyone could participate) plays a year. During rehearsal, students would do homework until it was their turn on stage. According to the Garlands, the children were able to focus and learned to manage their time. Regular participation in the dramatic arts connects to two intentions of the school as mentioned in chapter 4: sustained creative activity and attention to beauty.

(1) Sustained Creative Activity. Authentic creativity requires the regular practice of disciplined focus and purpose. Creative work deepens when self-consciousness is suspended in favor of simple, but fully sustained attention to an object, an idea, or an activity. Daily practice in full attention interrupts the flow of distracting thoughts and allows one to completely focus on what is at hand. After focus becomes a habit, one can re-enter the zone of concentration at will and surrender to its dynamic energy.

(2) Attention to Beauty. Beauty is also a portrayal of creative power. Contemplating whatever we find beautiful also balances and grounds us (giving thanks creates the same effects.) In contemplation, we pay attention to a wondrous scene and let our impressions simply be. We flow with the
beautiful energy that is present, rather than react with personal judgments about it. (Garland & Garland, 2004, p. 11)

Sustained creative activity and attention to beauty are evident in the dramatic productions performed by the students. I had the opportunity to see the fourth-grade rendition of *A Comedy of Errors* (see chapter 4 vignette on firmness and orientation to detail). “This one is 45 minutes in length and is exemplary of sustained creative activity. The students are satisfied with their performances today, and feel edified by their accomplishments” (Mary).

The rehearsal is exemplary of what Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Jeanne Nakamura (2002) referred to as *flow*. “Viewed through the experiential lens of flow, a good life is one that is characterized by complete absorption in what one does” (p. 89, emphasis in original). A flow state involves challenges that are difficult but not out of reach, constant responsiveness to feedback, and changes to one’s actions based on that feedback. The experience becomes the venue for a flow state, which according to Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, embodies the following characteristics:

- Sustained focus on the task at hand;
- A feeling that one has control over one’s actions and can handle the situation because of confidence about how to react to upcoming situations;
- A sense that time has progressed quickly; and
- Intrinsic reward from the process of the activity, so that the purpose is just rationale for the process.
Flow is a fragile balance between challenge and skill, so that skill does not exceed challenge, nor does challenge exceed skill. This match between challenge and skill results in optimal experience.

The class is apparently challenged within reason, based on the feedback Mary Todd gives the class and her expectation that they will be able to accommodate her requests. The students are obviously intensely focused on the task at hand. Mary Todd provided feedback to the actors and they were able to respond to her feedback and modify their actions based on her ideas. Students commented on how quickly time flew at the end of the rehearsal, evidencing what Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura (2002) refer to as a “distortion of temporal experience” (p. 90). The final production is only one component of the experience of the production of the play; the rehearsals and the process of memorizing lines gave the learners the opportunity to experience intrinsically rewarding activities such that the “end goal is just an excuse for the process” (Csikszentmihalyi & Nakamura, 2002, p. 90). Dress rehearsals are one way in which students have the opportunity to experience flow.
Research Question 4: What Is the Significance or Implication of Authenticity for Teaching and Learning?

Engagement, empowerment, joy and trust are considerable themes that aid in the creation of an authentic pedagogical environment. Croft (2008) noted the implications of such experiences, of authenticity in a general sense, and the reason that they matter in education:

For students in school to encounter such experiences would seem a self-evident good. It could encourage them to attend school, simply so that they might achieve more such optimal states. The feeling of total, passionate engagement with a task requiring absolute concentration, and giving rise to inordinate joy, is precisely what young people should have the opportunity to encounter during their education. These are also distinctly empowering experiences, in which the individual feels in total control—an antidote, perhaps, to the disillusionment and powerless experienced by many students, especially in communities challenged by poverty or social breakdown. (p. 8)

Engagement, and empowerment as mentioned by Croft (2008) above, as well as the importance of joy in learning mentioned by Croft (2008), Palmer (1998), Kessler (2000) and Garland & Garland (n.d.) are pivotal ideas that could serve to bring students more fully into the learning process, and therefore away from the sense of disillusionment that can be so pervasive in some schools. Garland & Garland, as mentioned in previous chapters, directly address the role of joy in learning as it is one of the guiding principles in their philosophy of The Spring School.

Working Together in Joy. An energy that binds groups together and at the same time develops a healthy pride is that which underlies active, joyful, community projects. When individuals accept responsibility to make group projects successful, they invest in a positive and purposeful energy that makes work satisfying and easy. Once a group repeats this experience many times, and gains the satisfaction of transforming difficult
work into pleasant sharing, it can re-enter that energy field at will, and simply enjoy getting the job done well. (Garland & Garland, n.d., pp. 9-10)

Works toward a greater good (Croft, 2008) provide opportunities for the school community to work together on otherwise relatively mundane tasks including the aforementioned Campus Care Day and daily cleaning of the school building by the students themselves. Historically, Spring School students used to chop wood for the fireplace as well as took pride in performing other maintenance tasks on campus. Joy is also evident in group experiences such as the Children’s Art Festival (See Chapter 4, Children’s Art Festival), which gives learners the opportunity for collaboration and development of a sense of pride and ownership in their work.

Engagement and empowerment are exemplified in Chapter 4’s description of Mary Todd’s classroom (See The Structural Dimension), particularly when she states to me that all children have different interests and abilities, and that “what works with one constellation of children doesn’t work at all with another. It’s a matter of being flexible.” From our conversation, it was obvious that she responds to each student based on their strengths and areas for improvement, and that she is aware of the importance of their engagement in the learning process. In being conscientious and intentional around demonstrating to each student how much they have grown over the course of the school year, she provides fodder for students to become proud of their accomplishments yet empowered to strive for something more.

Trust is yet another significant theme that emerged from the fieldwork and has become somewhat present in the literature. However, in a larger sense, trust is not
common or regular topic of conversation in schools themselves unless they are part of a study like those conducted by Bryk and Schneider. Although I witnessed many examples of trust at The Spring School, the school’s overall culture is built on relational trust.

According to Anthony S. Bryk and Barbara Schneider (2002), relational trust is key in the creation and maintenance of healthy schools. Using the Chicago School Reform Act of 1988 as the backdrop of their study, Bryk and Schneider discussed the impact on student achievement and school policy of trust in school relationships. Although their study specifically targeted schools in the process of reform, the results of their study are generalizable to any institution. Bryk and Schneider investigated reform at 12 urban elementary schools over three years in the early 1990s in Chicago. The researchers found that social relationships are key in the functioning of a school and that the quality of those relationships greatly impacts how they work (or do not work). After they analyzed their data, Bryk and Schneider noticed that relational trust was characteristic of schools that were successful in reform efforts versus schools that were not successful in school improvement efforts.

According to Bryk and Schneider (2002), relational trust consists of trusting relationships based on interpersonal exchanges that happen in a school. These relationships occur between principal and teacher, principal and parent, teacher and teacher, teacher and student, and teacher and parent.

Drawing on both the extant scholarship on trust relations and our own school observations, we posit a dynamic interplay among four considerations: respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity. Individual school community members simultaneously analyze the behavior of others through all four lenses. A serious deficiency in any one criterion can be sufficient to
undermine a discernment of trust for the overall relationship. (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 23)

Bryk and Schneider’s (2002) grounded theory was based on developments in the theory of social capital and civic engagement. From their unpublished manuscript, it is apparent that the Garlands’ values align with the desire to develop social capital and civic engagement among their students and staff.

In part, a self-identification process is at work. Individuals come to define themselves as connected to that person or organization (for example, “these are my friends, my school, my community organization”) and undertake subsequent actions because this identification is meaningful to them. (p. 15; emphasis in original)

Ownership, identity, and caring are all important factors to consider to engage teachers and learners alike in education.

In terms of Newmann’s ideas and framework, I noticed in myself a fundamental shift away from being convinced that his delineation and categorization of authentic practices were as comprehensive a list as I initially thought. As I refined my thoughts about authenticity, I came to realize that in reality I am interested in measuring the immeasurable, and my development of the AEF is my attempt at merging more concrete ideas around the manifestation of authenticity (see Newmann & Associates, 1996) with the intangible aspects of learning that are at the very least equally important but not easily evaluated (see Palmer, 1993). While Newmann’s ideas provided a good starting point for me to think about what authentic pedagogy may or may not look like, Palmer served to round out and counterbalance what may become dangerously close to an attempt to measure or rationalize larger philosophical ideas when only using Newmann’s
framework. Therefore, I aimed to bridge both approaches to authenticity in looking for evidence of the AEF in my data.

**Implications for Education**

The primary aim of this research was to promote dialogue about authenticity in education and how it may relate to a variety of educational contexts. The school site as described in this study may provide some insights into a method of education that is not regularly adopted in mainstream schooling. The Spring School and its philosophical underpinnings provide a model of a unique way of thinking may have value if considered more readily relative to improvement of the educational climate. This study provides a stark contrast to many current practices in education that rely heavily on teacher-proof curriculum and standardization of content to the extent that teachers have little autonomy. Reconceptualization of pedagogy in a philosophical sense may change the direction of reform or at least inform decisions about educational practice in a way that remains largely ignored.

Instead of being able to ensure that ineffable moments happen during the teaching and learning process, it is only possible to create the environmental conditions that enhance the likelihood of these moments manifesting. For instance, providing opportunities for students to work on a project that benefits their community, or setting the stage for an aesthetic transformative moment may be the best that educators can hope to provide.

The importance of physical and socio-emotional aspects of school climate cannot be underestimated. Environment and social cohesion provide safety and therefore greater
risk-taking for students, which may yield opportunities for new learning and personal
discoveries. Impactful teaching does more than teach students procedure or any other
strictly technical process. As noted by Bryk and Schneider (2002),

Good teaching “touches the soul” of those who practice it. While most
discussions in education policy today focus on the technical dimensions of
teaching and its enhancement, that teachers’ humanness is very much a part of
their practice is important to remember, and teachers need expressions of personal
regard and support as much as anyone else does. (p. 27)

Perhaps it is time to reconsider the current social definition of so-called good
teaching, which at the moment largely relies on technical aspects. In this redefinition, it
would be fitting to consider the potential roles of trust, aesthetic-transformative
experiences, and works toward a common good in education. This, in turn, may change
professional development programs in many instances, with the focus remaining on
teaching as a means by which to “touch the soul.”

It would also be worthwhile to consider how this framework and research could
impact professional development programs and education across all levels of learning.
Community partnerships and strategies regarding how to engage parents as a powerful
resource to the school community could be pertinent conversations for school leaders to
conduct based on the model set forth by The Spring School.

Suggestions for Further Research

The development of the AEF and the study of what informs the model are in their
fledgling stages, which permits further examination and testing of the theoretical model.
It would be fascinating to conduct a comparative study between schools or school
systems that practice authentic pedagogy. Likewise, it would be interesting to conduct an
international comparative study that investigates the presence of components of authentic education between systems, or to investigate the ideas of individual power and freedom of thought in the younger grades.

Future study also could incorporate a more diverse and inclusive sample of students in terms of linguistics, culture, and academics. Also, it may be fruitful to investigate how the AEF manifests in informal education settings, in professional development programs, and in the workplace beyond the classroom.

**Closing Comments**

As the moral obligation to educate children well (Bryk & Schneider, “Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for School Reform”, 2003) undergirds the educational landscape, it becomes imperative to consider how each individual’s choices and behavior impact relationships with everyone around them, including themselves. It would serve schools well to revisit the conversation about personal integrity and how it manifests in schools among children and adults and how integrity promotes a larger sense of community, caring and investment within the field of education.

It would be remiss to suggest that living, and teaching, in alignment with one’s integrity is solely a matter of following one’s heart. It is no easy task to be self-aware, however nor is it productive to remain in a situation that is antithetical to a person’s belief system. Living in congruence and inspiring students to do the same, both in their own lives and through the means with which they learn offers opportunities for teachers and learners to create new possibilities that may or may not conform to the current educational system. Parker Palmer states the trade off of living out of congruence when
he tells us that “no punishment anyone lays on you could possibly be worse than the punishment you lay on yourself by conspiring in your own diminishment” (Palmer, p. 171, 1998 italics in original).
References


Appendix A

Interview Guide

Teacher as self-Palmer; soul and role, identity
1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Was teaching a calling for you? What does teaching mean to you?
3. How do you define authenticity?
4. What does authenticity have to do with schooling?

Classroom as authentic: Newmann’s framework
5. What role does High Order Thinking have in the classroom?
6. What role does Depth of Knowledge have in the classroom?
7. What role does Connectedness to the world play in learning?
8. What role does Substantive Conversation play in learning?

School as authentic-culture and environment; Palmer and Newmann
9. In your own words, what is the mission of The Well School?
10. What role do Spiritual/Ineffable moments play in learning?
11. What role does Social Support play in learning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Corresponding Interview Question</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What does authenticity mean to school teachers and school founders?</td>
<td>3, 4, 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do teachers and founders do to try to ensure authenticity in the classroom?</td>
<td>4, 5, 6, 7, 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does authenticity look like in practice?</td>
<td>5, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the significance or implications of authenticity for teaching and learning?</td>
<td>4</td>
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Appendix B

Interview Protocol Two

(1) What are your aims/intentions for your students?
   a. How do you know you’ve achieved them?
(2) Do you make your aims/intentions clear to your students? If so, why? If not, why not?
(3) What kinds of structures do you utilize to help you meet your aims or intentions
    (e.g. group work might ensure socialization)
(4) Tell me about the classroom environment.
    a. What do you attend to most in the physical environment?
    b. How do you decide what to teach?
(5) What skills do you want students to develop?
(6) If you were to use a metaphor to describe your teaching practice, what would it be?
(7) How do you handle discipline in your classroom? Ask about responsive classroom and problem solving.
(8) How do you assess student achievement?
(9) Do you have anything else you’d like to add?
(10) How do KCR manifest in classroom? What does it mean to you? How intentional are you about KCR in your classroom? Is it an intention? Or is it subconsciously intentional?
(11) Give me five classroom behaviors and activities that you would say indicate authentic achievement.
Appendix C

Authenticity Study Consent Form

You have been invited to participate in a research study that will look at the role of authenticity in the lives of teachers and its impact on teaching and learning. Caitlin Lindquist is conducting the study in partial fulfillment for the requirements for her dissertation. Results will be used in her dissertation, supervised by Dr. Bruce Uhrmacher at the Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208.

Participation in this entirely voluntary study may take anywhere from 30 or more minutes of your time. Participation will involve responding to the following questions about the topic:

- What you think it means to be an authentic teacher?
- How you define authenticity?
- What does authenticity look like in the classroom?
- What do kids gain from authentic/genuine teachers?
- I am also wondering if you think authenticity in education even matters, and if so, why.

Despite the minimal risks associated with participation, please be assured that you may discontinue the interview at any time. I respect your right to choose to not answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from the study will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by pseudonym and will be separate from any information that could identify you in order to protect your confidentiality. Only the principal investigator will have access to your individual data. Should any information contained in the study be the subject of a court order or subpoena, the University of Denver might be required to comply with the order of the subpoena. Although this study does not address the topic, the University is required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide or child abuse and neglect, we are required by law that this be reported to proper authorities.

If you have concerns or complaints about the interview process and your treatment, please contact Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to her at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd, Denver, CO 80208.
Please feel free to keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please direct any questions to Caitlin Lindquist.

I have read and understood the aforementioned descriptions of the Authenticity Study. I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature ______________________    Date_______________

_____ I agree to be audiotaped

_____ I do not agree to be audiotaped

Signature ______________________    Date_______________

If you are interested a summary of the study results, please provide your contact information (name, mailing address and email address) below:
Appendix D

Confidentiality Memo

November 29, 2012

Dear Spring School:

Thank you all for your assistance regarding the confidentiality level of my dissertation on authenticity in K-12 education. Please review and sign this memo if you find it agreeable. I will then submit it to the University of Denver’s Office of Research and Sponsored Programs for approval, as record that we are all on the same page.

The dissertation will now become a record of the school’s history, rather than an explanation of current operations of the school, based off of my recent telephone conversation with The Spring’s Director [Redacted]. I will mention that the school has changed since data collection, but that in no way does that compromise the integrity of the study in that I am purely demonstrating what is possible and what has been done regarding the integration of authenticity in education.

I would like to retain permission to use photographs of landscapes and campus buildings in the dissertation, as they are very helpful in description of the educational context. No identifying information will be revealed, and no individuals will be included in any of the photos. [The school’s administration] has seen the specific photographs I am referencing, and I am happy to share them with any other interested party.

I agree to not reference the name of the school, or the school’s URL, [Redacted], in the dissertation. All participants, including the site, will be given pseudonyms. I will include the mission statement in my dissertation, but will remove any references to [Redacted] prior to doing so.

I would like to retain permission to use [the founders’] actual names when referencing their publications and discussions we had regarding authenticity in education and philosophy in general. Please keep in mind, that if a reader were interested and motivated to do so, it may be possible for them to discover the name of [Redacted] by researching and reading their work.

All participants should be aware that they are invited to read and respond in writing to relevant portions of the dissertation. This is known as “member checking.” Participating teachers have been invited to respond to descriptions of their classrooms, and this invitation is extended to administration and founders also. Your written response to my research will be published in the final dissertation. [School administration], you are
invited to discuss the current operations of The Spring if you wish in your response, to underline the fact that the school has changed substantially. As mentioned, while I plan to make this point myself, I will be unable to provide specific examples of how the school is different. Therefore, if that is something that you wish to include, you may absolutely do so.

If you find these arrangements amenable, please sign the following page and return it to me as soon as possible. I am available to discuss any modifications to the agreement if necessary. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Lindquist

I agree to the agreement above that delineates how The Spring School and participants will be referenced in the dissertation of Caitlin Lindquist, and any other confidentiality issues referenced above.

______________________________  ________________________
Director, The Spring School                  Date

______________________________  ________________________
Founder, The Spring School                  Date

______________________________  ________________________
Founder, The Spring School                  Date
Appendix E

Member Checking Letter from Natalie Garrett

January 18, 2013

Hi Caitlin,
It was fun to "relive" my first grade classroom 3 years ago. However, after reading this portion of your dissertation, I can not support you publishing it in this form.

The portions of the paper that describe my classroom and our days are fairly accurate. (I would not describe my classroom as spacious, though.) The paragraphs that you quote me are not accurate, mostly because I believe statements are taken out of context and/or not explained correctly. I believe you need to revisit these paragraphs, expand on them and/or edit them.

For example, the paragraph titled For the Love of Reading is about 3 different topics. It jumps from talking about reading to attrition in the school to math. Perhaps, you could talk about one of those areas educationally and relate my quote into the topic area. You need to add more educational background to support my quotes and your observations.

Honestly, there are many areas that the paper does not flow and it jumps from one topic to another. Also, there are many sentences that do not make sense such as "But some are, some are." Also, if I did say "like" while speaking, I would request you take that out. It does not make either of us sound professional.

There are several times you use the children's real names such as [redacted] that need to be changed.

Another concern, is the first paragraph. It needs to be broken down to two paragraphs and rearranged. Also in that paragraph, the state of NH did not require Kindergarten at the time and that is why families who desired for their children to attend Kindergarten needed to pay for private Kindergarten. This is what created the foundation of the "haves and the have nots". Readiness was a program created to support children who were not ready to attend first grade but were of age. The program was geared towards summer birthdays and developmentally young children but often turned into a classroom full of children with special needs.

For now, I do not want my classroom represented or my quotes used until changes and clarifications are made. I am happy to re-read this portion of your paper once you have rewritten it and it is "publishable" form.

Sincerely, [Natalie Garrett]
Appendix F

Response to Natalie Garrett

January 21, 2013

Natalie:

Thank you for your feedback. Member checking is used to catch things like missing pseudonyms and inaccuracies. Thank you for your clarifications. Below I have outlined what I will do to be responsive to your concerns, as I understand them:

Your feedback is bulleted, and my responses are below the bullet points:

• The paragraphs that you quote me are not accurate, mostly because I believe statements are taken out of context and/or not explained correctly.

I am not quite clear on what this means. If you feel that I have mis-quoted you please let me know by Thursday, January 24, 2013. If, however, you mean that you would have interpreted the data differently, I can appreciate that. Educational criticism is built on the premise that people have different interpretations. So, you may indeed disagree with my interpretation. If you would like to respond to my interpretation, I will place that in my work.

• It jumps from talking about reading to attrition in the school to math. Perhaps, you could talk about one of those areas educationally and relate my quote into the topic area.

In this data chapter, which is specific to the methodology and the author, there is not incorporated theory. The intention of this qualitative dissertation is to provide vignettes, or snapshots of the daily life of the classroom. And because these are in the data section, few references to outside resources will be made; it is intended to describe what I saw when I was there.

• You need to add more educational background to support my quotes and your observations.

Again, this chapter incorporates little theory because it is intended to present the observational data and data from our interviews. Often, educational criticism dissertations are structured so that the data section contains few, if any, references to outside sources.
• Many sentences do not make sense in the first paragraph. It needs to be broken down to two paragraphs and rearranged. The paper does not flow

This is in draft format and future editing will occur. I will attend to the points you mention and I will remove the “But some are” phrases.

• Also, if I did say "like" while speaking, I would request you take that out.

I will remove the “like.”

• Children's real names

These will absolutely be changed. Thank you for catching these; again, this is one of the benefits of asking subjects to check data.

• The state of NH did not require Kindergarten at the time and that is why families who desired for their children to attend Kindergarten needed to pay for private Kindergarten. This is what created the foundation of the "haves and the have nots". Readiness was a program created to support children who were not ready to attend first grade but were of age. The program was geared towards summer birthdays and developmentally young children but often turned into a classroom full of children with special needs.

I intend to remove this section from the chapter.

Thank you for taking the time to review this information in accordance with your provided consent. I do appreciate it.

I will append your email in the final dissertation. Or, if you would like me to include another written response from you, please send it to me by Thursday, January 24, 2013 and I will include that response as well. Please keep in mind that your real name will not be used anywhere in the dissertation.

Again, my sincere thanks,
Caitlin