

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: AMIDST THE TEST: THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING “UNDER” NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

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In this hermeneutic phenomenological inquiry I explore the lived experience of public school teachers teaching amidst the federal law entitled No Child Left Behind.

My research question wonders, “**What is the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)?** My exploration relies heavily upon the work of Ted Aoki, Edward Casey, David Jardine, William Pinar, Hans George Gadamer, and Martin Heidegger. Van Manen’s (2003) hermeneutic phenomenological research activities provides the framework for my methodology.

Eleven public school teachers were engaged in individual and group conversations to bring forward the lived dimension of teaching amidst NCLB. The rendering of the audio taped conversations suggests a place in teaching akin to illness. These themes yield insight into teaching amidst a testing culture focused on data. Participants reveal how the myopic focus on test results creates a looming feeling within schools as they wait for results from the state assessments. As a consequence, students

are color-coded in a non-human way as the colors of red, blue and green. This encourages teaching prescribed scripts within a narrow margin.

Reflecting on this dis-ease in teaching, as suggested by these themes, calls for a refocusing and re-linguaging of teaching and learning in American public schools. I propose a refocusing of education in three divergent directions. The first is a focus “down” into the classrooms, i.e., more intensely with where students, teachers and communities thrive. The second is a focus on the whole of teaching in relation to the parts. Finally, I call for a focus on the unique which will enable playing outside boxes, a curriculum of discovery and a suspension in the current belief system entrenched in test-focused technical language.

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“UNDER” NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

By

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Dedication

To all teachers who open the abundance of learning.

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CHAPTER ONE: STRUGGLING FOR ABUNDANCE IN THE MIDST OF SCARCITY THINKING

The direction in which education starts a man [sic] will determine his future life.
(Plato, 1871/2004, p. 122)

A Hallway Walk

I hear sounds of energized children in a classroom at the end of the hallway. I cannot see what is going on inside, which is why my trip to the principal's office will have to wait. I will not pass up the opportunity to visit Ann's classroom. I find that a trip to Ann's classroom brings me back to understanding why outstanding teachers become teachers. Ann is like a maestro conducting a complicated symphony. She turns the ordinary into extraordinary as she teaches a classroom full of twelve and thirteen-year-old children. Students not only love Ann, they love the subject she teaches. However, if you ask Ann what she teaches, she does not name the subject of the class but the subjects of her learning. She always responds, "I teach adolescents." I've often thought about that, and believe that students would love *anything* that she taught; she just happens to teach middle-school science.

As I step into the classroom, I see groups of two and three students sitting at tables throughout the room. Ann speaks to the class, and all students' eyes are on her:

We have been talking about cells being a unit of organization in biology. Let's look at the cell membrane and see how that membrane keeps all of the pieces inside. When you think about a membrane, imagine it is like a big plastic bag with some tiny holes. That bag holds all of the cell pieces and fluids inside the cell and keeps any nasty things outside the cell. The holes are there to let some things move in and out of the cell. I'd like each group to draw a cell on your desk, make it *BEAUTIFUL*, darlings! (Ann)

There, with fluorescent markers customarily used to decorate windows, students draw cells onto the tops of the desks, no paper, just markers and the desktop.

“Here is the membrane,” explains one student. “Where are the lysosomes?”

Writing on desktops, instead of on worksheets, is a departure from the “be-good”

directive (Clifford & Friesen, 2008a) that makes Ann’s room a joy to visit. Too often in today’s classrooms children have to “be good” in order to succeed:

School robs far too many of them of the ability to feel, touch and embrace the world with energy, imagination, and ferocious appetite. Instead, school reduces children’s experience to a round of activities, exercise and programs that exist nowhere except in school. Being good in school means being quiet, obedient, orderly and passive. It means staying ‘on task’ no matter how dull, meaningless, or demeaning the task may be. . . it may well be that getting ‘good at school’ . . . is potentially toxic. (pp. 164-165)

Far from being toxic, Ann’s classroom is energetic—a word that derives via Latin from the Greek *energia*, meaning “alive and working” (*OED Online*, 2011). The activity and energy are abundant within her classroom. I walk around the room to soak in the energy. I feel alive amongst the students and the learning. I have within me an urge to be amongst their learning. At the first table-group I visit, the student with the marker draws a cell membrane that resembles something that holds a sandwich from home more than it does a cell. Somehow allowing children to write on the desktops engages the students in a way that is not the same as when they fill in a worksheet on paper. The students converse with one another:

Oh yeah, the membrane is made up of proteins and phospholipids. How do you spell *phospholipids*?

I don’t know, Mrs. D . . . U . . . N . . . N, how do you spell *phospholipids*?

“Well, I could tell you, but you also have some places in this room to look; why don’t you try that first?” Ann replies nonchalantly, reinforcing that her students know very well that she will not give them the answer. One student excitedly responds to her tablemates:

Get out the textbook; it's in there!

The group of boys in the back giggles at their attempt to draw a “Zip-Lock” bag cell membrane on their desk, while a second group next to them insists on a “One-Zip” membrane. My heart is warm, and I smile as I look around the room and reflect on Greene’s (1995) words: “To be thoughtful about what we are doing is to be conscious of ourselves struggling to make meanings” (p. 380). Although smiling and having fun, the students in fact are struggling to make meaning. They are willing to move forward in their learning, even when they get stuck.

“Put the mitochondria here,” stresses one student as she points onto the tabletop. The giggles, smiles, energy and learning are contagious. Ann’s teaching makes meaning of the abstract concept of cells for these middle school students. The learning, although not quantifiable, is evident. To keep the boys focused, Ann explains, “Boys, don’t get off-track here; this is science and I am not as interested in the name brand as I am in you learning about cells.”

I glance around the room again before heading out to my meeting. The learning in Ann’s classroom is, as always, abundant. Jardine et al. (2006) discuss the concept of “curriculum as abundance” and illustrate its pedagogical applications through examples of classroom practices. Abundance, meaning “an overflowing quantity or amount; a large quantity” (*OED Online*, 2011) is a thoughtful yet unconventional lens with which to view education, when scarcity—the lack of teachers, computers, supplies or time—is often the focus on shortfalls in today’s educational environment. Inverting this commonly held notion of scarcity dominating classrooms, Jardine et al. (2006) ask the reader to consider the classroom as an arena of abundance. They suggest that if available resources are

embraced in education, classrooms are opened to powerful, abundant learning. Seeing the engagement and feeling the energy of Ann's students provides a powerful example of learning in abundance. A quick wave to Ann and I am off. However, not unlike a middle-school student with a hall-pass to the lavatory. . . I take the long way to my meeting with the principal. As I leave Ann's room I wonder, what is significant about Ann's teaching that draws me into her room? Likewise, what is it like for Ann to teach in a classroom guided by abundance? What enables her to create a classroom such as hers?

"I am a serf!" I hear coming from Pete's room. I stand in the doorway to see him crawling on the ground, pretending to harvest vegetables from the linoleum tiles. Up he jumps *onto* his desk, "I am the king! My rule is supreme. God himself has anointed me king!" Clifford and Friesen (2008b) maintain that "Far too little of what most students do in school engages their imagination, fuels their passion to learn, connects them deeply with the world, or wins their hearts and minds" (p. 93). Pete, however, engages his students in learning. Although the students fill in an 8 ½ by 11 inch piece of paper as he crawls around the room and jumps onto desks, their world of learning does not shrink to the size of that page. Pete has captured both his students' hearts and minds. I wonder, what would the learning sound like, look like and feel like if it were to be relegated to the size of a piece of paper? How would the learning reveal itself to me if the students contained their learning to a worksheet?

As I leave Pete's classroom, I am drawn to the display case outside the art classroom filled with student work. The culminating product from the unit on Alexander Calder provides an apt visual as I exit Pete's room. Sartre (1965/1993) notes, "Calder captures movement rather than suggests it" (p. 419). Likewise, the student work captures

learning rather than suggesting it. The nurturing that went into helping students experience Calder is evident in the wire hangers, paper animals and colorful geometric patterns. I glance at the varying student pieces and think of Palmer's (1998) notion of nurturing as a cornerstone to teaching: "By teaching this way, we do not abandon the ethic that drives us to cover the field—we honor it more deeply. Teaching in this way requires nurturing" (p. 123). Could the students have created these mobiles without nurturing? Behind the student mobiles, stabiles and animobiles, is the following quote from Sartre:

There is more of the unpredictable about them than in any other human creation. . . A general destiny of movement is sketched for them, and then they are left to work it out for themselves. (*Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery Online*)

Although Sartre was speaking about Calder's work, the correlation to the middle school adolescent is uncanny. Anyone who has worked in a middle school understands that "There is more of the unpredictable about them than in any other human creation." I wonder what teaching could be like if it were allowed to focus more on the unpredictable rather than the predictable?

I begin this chapter with examples inside a school to demonstrate the abundance of learning throughout the building. Since the passage of NCLB, a framework of abundance in learning, however, is not the focus of education in many of today's classrooms. The focus is that which can be measured on standardized exams, the narrow curriculum to be covered in the school year or tested on state exams. Although I am confident in the learning taking place throughout the building, the stack of data in my hand for my meeting with the principal proclaims another story. These data explain that the school is failing under the parameters set forward by the No Child Left Behind Act

(NCLB, 107-110) of 2001. This leads me to wonder, do the test-score data in my hand reveal the essential structure of the teaching and learning in this school? Jardine et al. (2006) ask, “What would happen if we imagined children, not as consumers and producers of constructed products of our own making, but as inhabitants in a world that is more abundant than I make of it?” (p. 147). I wonder what would happen if my school was measured not by the state test scores alone, but by the abundance of questions, the abundance of wondering, the abundance of possibilities being opened for the children? I am interested in seeking out the meaning of public school teachers teaching in today’s classrooms, amidst NCLB. As I explore my own experiences as an alternative, middle and high school teacher as well as administrator, I reflect on times when my own education was allowed to develop outside the parameters of testing and accountability as defined in today’s schools. I reflect on the phenomenon of teaching in today’s public schools and ask: **What is the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)?**

This chapter traces my turning to the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. It begins with my personal experience as a staff development teacher advising a principal on instructional decisions that help the school meet the state’s benchmarks more than they help the children gain access to a diverse and exciting curriculum. Additionally, I reflect on the influence the state exams have on pedagogical practices. It is this influence that is contradicted when I reflect back on my own experiences as a student, administrator, and graduate student. In a preliminary exploration of my phenomenon, I had conversations with three public middle school teachers about their lived experience teaching under No Child Left Behind. Their experiences help to bring the phenomenon

forward as the pressures they name open up what teaching is like in this “measurement” environment. Finally, this chapter provides the rationale of hermeneutic phenomenology as my research methodology.

What Questions Are We Asking?

In a kingdom long ago there was a man who traveled from the farthest city to the nearest town. And as he went he traded things—a pair of shoes for a piece of gold, a parrot for a bolt of silver cloth—until he was more rich than he had ever dreamed possible. The people thought a man who had so many things must be wise, and no matter where he went they followed him asking questions.

“Our baby cries,” said one. “What shall we do?”

“My father went to war. How will we live?” said another.

But though the traveling man could fetch goods from his sack and add up sums, he could not answer their questions.

One day he met an old woman who carried a wooden box. “Inside this box,” she said, “are answers to all things.”

The traveling man whistled. “I have seen many things,” he said, “but I would give all I have to open that box.”

“Done,” said the old woman.

When the traveling man lifted the lid, he saw to his surprise that the box was filled with coins. Each one was stamped with a curious sentence. “Open the door,” said one. “Give him your life,” said another. “One hundred and five,” said a third.

The traveling man was overjoyed. “I am rich beyond measure, he said.

“I have answers to all things.” The old woman smiled. “But what good is an answer,” she said, “without the right questions?” (Gregory, 1992, n.p)

What good is the answer, “The school did not meet AYP” if the question isn’t right? Questions that we ask determine what we are looking for, and embedded in our questions are inherent assumptions about what we value. The notion about answers and questions is an appropriate jumping off point for looking at the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. I remain concerned that the questions being asked in public schools around the nation are those which ask, “What do we have to do to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)?” “Can we close our program for Special Education Students so

those students don't factor so heavily into our scores?" "Can we pull students from art and music and give them test-preparation in order to raise our scores?" These questions, which I have heard countless times in meetings over the years, lead me to wonder, what is the journey we are on inside today's classrooms? What becomes of the journey of teaching and learning if the primary focus is to aim primarily for the quantitative targets in reading and mathematics, as dictated by the federal policy? What does it mean for teachers when they have students score proficient on the state exam in reading but possibly not be able to read a grade-level text independently? The statement, "The school did not meet AYP," is an answer that narrowly focuses on data from the state test; the unasked questions are those outside the scope of the exam. "Are children able to think creatively and critically about their world as a consequence of being in our schoolhouse?" or "Are children learning skills they will need when they leave this building?" The unanswered questions lead me to wonder further about teaching in light of testing: Who do teachers become as a consequence of being in the world of NCLB? Jardine et al. (2006) remind us that "Schools have been transformed into huge zero-sum games, monolithic delivery systems in which every gain for one turns into a loss or burden for another, while true satisfaction is denied to both" (p. 4). Who do teachers become amidst monolithic delivery systems? What is the reality of teaching when students' test-scores on standardized exams obliterate the emotion of teaching?

The data in my hand, ready for the meeting with the principal, reinforce the notion that schools serving a large number of special education students, English as a Second Language (ESOL) students, or minority students must overcome more obstacles than a more homogeneous school under the parameters of the law. Although the school I walked

through was ripe with energetic teaching and abundant student learning, it has been labeled as failing under the parameters set forth by the federal NCLB law. The school failed to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on last year's state assessment. It is worth noting, however, that this occurred because of the school's program for special education students.

Under NCLB, failing to succeed in just one category can spell failure for an entire school. Therefore, a school may be labeled as failing not due to overall achievement, but because a school's diversity triggers many more hurdles than schools serving more homogeneous students (Novak & Fuller, 2003). The law requires the largest gains from lower-performing schools, ignoring the fact that these schools serve needier students and are generally less well funded than those serving wealthier and higher-scoring students (Darling-Hammond, 2004). What space is there in teaching and learning for nurturing and creativity when the objective is to reach the measurable outcome on a once-a-year exam? I cannot help but feel impacted by the notion that many of the teaching practices observed during my walk-through will be modified in the months to come so that the school will be able to meet AYP next year. My particular research interest is in how this reveals itself in teaching.

No Child Left Behind

NCLB is a bi-partisan effort aimed to "close the achievement gap with accountability, flexibility, and choice, so that no child is left behind" (NCLB, 107-110). Consequently known as the "No Child Left Behind Act of 2001" and "NCLB," it reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The law strives to address the nation's racial inequities in education by shining a light on the "soft

bigotry of low expectations” and ensuring that every child can learn. Under the law, each state is required to implement high stakes tests every year between third grade and eighth grade and once between tenth and eleventh grades (Taubman, 2009).

As a requirement of receiving federal NCLB funds, states must agree to establish learning standards. Learning standards are statements of what children in that state should know and be able to do in reading and math in grades 3-8 and once in high schools; set a level or cut-off score at which students are considered proficient in tested areas; and report to the public on what percentage of students are proficient, with the information broken down by race, income, disability, language proficiency, and gender subgroups (NCLB, 107-110). The goal of NCLB is that all students will score at the "proficient" level in reading and math by 2014. As a result, states set annual targets for the percentage of students scoring proficient with the final goal of 100% proficiency by 2014. Each year, students in every subgroup must reach the target (<http://www.fairtest.org/>). Valli et al. (2008) note:

For those who believe that the failure of American schools rests with an absence of will, mostly on the part of principals, teachers and their students, NCLB is a welcome departure from prior legislation that did little to hold schools accountable for student performance or taxpayer dollars. (p. 2)

One determining factor for greater federal involvement is the belief that local government failed students, necessitating federal intervention to remedy issues like teachers teaching outside their areas of expertise, and complacency in the face of continually failing schools. Additionally, supporters of NCLB claim the legislation encourages accountability in public schools, offers parents greater educational options for their children, and helps close the achievement gap between minority and white students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Likewise, NCLB increases information to parents

by providing them a detailed report card on schools and districts, explaining the school's AYP performance as well as informing parents when their child is being taught by a teacher or para-professional who does not meet "highly qualified" requirements (NCLB).

NCLB seeks to narrow class and racial gaps in school performance by creating common expectations for all. Additionally, it requires schools and districts to focus their attention on the academic achievement of traditionally under-served groups of children, such as low-income students, students with disabilities, and students of "major racial and ethnic subgroups" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). Many previous state-created systems of accountability only measured average school performance, allowing schools to be highly rated even if they had large achievement gaps between affluent and disadvantaged students.

To explain the success of the law, the U.S. Department of Education points to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) results, released in July 2005, showing improved student achievement in reading and math (2006). Specifically, the study states that "More progress was made by nine-year-olds in reading in the last five years than in the previous 28 years combined" (para.1). Additionally both the reading and math scores for black and Hispanic nine-year-old students reached an all-time high, and the achievement gaps in reading and math between white and black nine-year-olds and between white and Hispanic nine-year-olds are at an all-time low.

With a new administration in the White House and reauthorization of NCLB underway, Secretary of Education Duncan spoke about the law in an interview with Phi Delta Kappan editor in chief, Joan Richardson (2009). He credits the previous Bush administration for the focus on disaggregating data and explains the importance of both

transparency around and disaggregating of the data. “As a country, we used to sweep that conversation under the rug and not talk about the tremendous disparities in outcomes between white children and African-American and Latino Children. Forevermore, we will keep that front and center” (Duncan, as cited in Richardson, p. 25). He does, however, begin to put forward the current administration’s divergent educational plan. To set the stage for this he speaks of the current standards under NCLB. “There are 50 different goal posts, 50 different measures at the state level” (p. 25). Likewise, Duncan acknowledges that those differing goals often present misleading results to parents.

In some states, including my state of Illinois, we’re actually lying to children. When you tell the parent that their child is meeting the ‘state standard,’ the logical assumption is that they’re on track to be successful. (p. 25)

Duncan reveals a truth of standards-based education in NCLB:

I would argue that, in many places, the standard has been dummed down so much that those children who are just meeting the standard are barely able to graduate from high school and absolutely inadequately prepared to go on to a competitive four-year university, much less graduate. (p. 25)

Pinpointing a commonly believed weakness of NCLB opens the space for the current administration’s possibility for divergent thinking around the federal government’s role in education:

To become tight on the goals but to allow people to become much more entrepreneurial, much more creative, innovative to get there. We want common, career-ready, college-ready standards that would be internationally benchmarked. We would let people be creative and innovative about how they get to those standards, but we’d hold them accountable for results. Have people at the local level figure out the best way to get there. (Duncan, as cited in Richardson, p. 25)

It is here, in the space between the laudable goals of the law and the lived experience of the classroom that I enter the principal’s office.

In the Principal's Office

In the principal's office I present the data I've been carrying around the school. The data tell a story vastly different than the reality I see in the classrooms. The data proclaim the school is failing because a portion of the students are not passing the mandated state assessment. What does it mean for the teachers in a building to live amidst the language of failure? In order to move the school out of failure, a plan is created for achieving a passing score in the following year's state assessment. Like gamblers wagering bets on a high-stakes game of craps, we gamble with the educational future of a specific subgroup of students. Some will be removed from arts classes to receive extra math and reading support, while all children will receive special instruction on test-taking strategies. All students are placed into test-groups early in the year to practice test questions. What becomes of teaching when social studies is parceled out of reading, and the arts removed completely, in an attempt to achieve a passing score on standardized exams? Neill (2003) explains, "As a result [of NCLB], many successful schools will be declared 'failing' and may be forced to drop practices that work well" (p. 226). Mike Huckabee, as then Governor of Arkansas, states in a *New York Times* editorial:

In the name of No child Left Behind, we are going to leave some of our brightest students totally behind by never touching their talents to sing, paint, act, dance or play an instrument. . . Many school districts see the arts as expendable, extraneous or extracurricular. They are essential. (New York Times, April 2, 2006, p. 11)

What space does NCLB leave for the qualitative aspects of learning? Greene (1979) notes, "Drained of the qualitative, art and morals would be reduced to mere abstractions. . . Without grounding in the qualitative—in the 'living' or perceived realities—children would be unlikely to be interested in learning language or learning to

read” (p. 126). Drained of the qualitative, in what ways are teachers able to provide occasions for significant encounters amidst NCLB? Barbara Kingsolver (1998), in response to the state of Arizona’s decision to drop poetry from the state curriculum, writes:

The Governor interdicted: poetry is evicted
from our curricula,
for metaphor and rhyme take time
from science. Our children’s self-reliance rests
upon the things we count on. The laws
of engineering. Poeteering squanders time, and time
is money. He said: let the chips fall where they may. (p. 3)

In the environment of high-stakes tests, poetry, art and singing fall into the category of optional learning—those things that may be released and let go. Where is the possibility of abundance in teaching in a one-dimensional mode of being inside classrooms? Van Manen (2007) explains, “It is much easier for us to teach concepts and informational knowledge than it is to bring about pathic understandings” (p. 21). Although “easier” as van Manen states, it is not altogether effective to teach merely concepts.

March Mad-ness

While there is a March Madness in basketball, public schools carry out their own “March Madness.” The time that leads up to, contains and follows a week long administration of the Maryland State Assessments (MSA), is one that hardly resembles the schooling days of my youth. Educators often disdain this time of year. Students understand that they will sit for hours answering questions that likely may not stimulate the notions of abundance. There is less time for engagement, and the abundance possible in learning during March Madness comes to a halt so that the annual ritual of testing may

begin! I call this time of year “March Mad-Ness;” however, it is more commonly referred to as the “Testing Window.”

The Testing-Window

The testing-window brings a vivid picture of the origin of the word *window*. It is related to the Old Norse *vindauga*, a compound made up of *vindr*, "wind," and *auga*, "eye," reflecting the fact that at one time windows contained no glass (*OED Online*, 2011). I remember living in Scandinavia—little time was spent indoors, unless the weather demanded it. Therefore, “wind-eye” brings forward a vibrant memory of looking out windows during harsh Scandinavian storms, longing for a time to go outside again. The long gaze teachers have as they dutifully proctor the exam is in fact a wind-eye. It is difficult to *not* think that “testing-window” is referring to the fact that during this time, the patience of all staff members and students will be tested and tried. Is it possible that the testing-window serves as a blinder to the realities of testing on the lives of teachers? What is blown away by the wind—poetry, drawing and dancing? What does the testing-window obscure when the wind of the test is too strong? Is it even possible to look beyond the test with the testing-window in place?

The MSA is administered to evaluate students’ knowledge of mathematics and reading. But who do these exams serve? What is learned from the assessments? As a result of the assessment scores, what happens to teaching? Although this testing only takes up ten instructional days, it has in and of itself become a guest in the entire schoolhouse from August to June. What has March Madness done to the essence of teaching? What becomes of teachers when, as a result of test-scores, successful schools are declared “failing” and art, music and poetry are eliminated from the school day in

order to achieve a passing score? Where is the abundance in learning amidst the predictable and measurable?

This leads me to wonder, what is evaluated under NCLB? What becomes of teachers amidst this evaluation? Aoki (2005a) explains that much can be learned about teaching through the lens of evaluation.

It has been said that educators' understanding of their task as educators is most clearly demonstrated by their favoured mode of evaluation. Conversely, evaluators' understanding of what evaluation is discloses their understanding of what it means to be an educator and what it means to be educated. At stake is what our children and adolescents experience in the name of education. (p. 183)

The gap between the favored mode of evaluation by teachers and that put forward under NCLB is growing. The understanding of what it means to be an educator through the evaluation lens of NCLB is one focused on standardized responses in reading and mathematics. As a result, teachers are to prepare students for standardized tests and how to raise scores. As a consequence, the teachers become locked in a situation where their work is defined by others, not themselves. "The danger afflicting both teachers and students because of such emphases is, in part, the danger of feeling locked into existing circumstances defined by others" (Greene, 1995, p. 379). Who do teachers become as a consequence of living in a world defined by others?

Michelle, a special education teacher, explains how this reveals itself in her classroom:

The state mandates and standardized curriculum rob me of the opportunity to be flexible. My kids are three to six years below grade level, and they do not need to be the pawns of some political agenda. They need to simply learn how to read and write. They need to learn how to survive, not to be a statistic to assure federal and county leaders that the teachers are doing their jobs. I am doing my job!
(Michelle)

With the gaze on the testing-window, Linda, the head of a middle school English department, feels there is a troubling shift in education. For example, she feels that decisions are made with a narrow gaze on the state assessment system without looking beyond the testing window, and with a disregard for the impact these decisions have on teachers. As Linda's school creates the teaching schedule for the following year, the notion of the testing window obscuring a broader vision is exposed.

Decisions are made by school administrations that are driven solely by performance on the Maryland State Assessment. For example, my principal heard me when I told her that the MSA data revealed we needed to do something to help children with their reading scores. What I did not expect was for her solution to be that the English teachers were going to teach reading classes and the social studies and science teachers would teach English classes! (Linda)

What does this mean for teaching, when teachers regardless of training, experience or interest, are to teach subjects for which they have no training or enthusiasm? What can these teachers teach to their students if they themselves have no background in the subjects? Additionally, Linda explains:

New teachers feel they have fewer opportunities to influence student learning positively. They're scared that student scores are their only measure of success, and when they have lower-level kids, they get frustrated knowing that kids' scores won't likely reflect their hard work. More importantly, lower test scores may negatively impact their job placement the following year. (Linda)

Will the law that attempts to "leave no children behind" succeed if teachers do not want to teach the most vulnerable students due to fear of low test scores? The testing-window during March Madness is open for ten instructional days during the year, but its essence is felt throughout the year. Like a stiff breeze penetrating into a room, this essence swirls into nooks and spaces unnoticed prior to its arrival.

Assessing the Mad-Ness

Frieda works on the reading assessments with several students. The quarterly reading assessments are required by the county to track student performance—she is required to evaluate how well the goals are being achieved. Although not directly connected to NCLB, these assessments are an offshoot of the law’s focus on standardized assessments in both reading and mathematics, to track student learning. This is one example of the tendency to quantify learning to meet the needs of a postindustrial society.

There are, of course, two contradictory tendencies in education today: one has to do with shaping malleable young people to serve the needs of technology in a postindustrial society; the other has to do with the education of young people to grow and become different, to find their individual voices, and to participate in a community in the making. (Greene, 1995, p. 382)

As Frieda administers the assessment, she reflects on the contradictory tendencies in education today. As she clutches the high-tech device required to assess her students’ reading ability, the echo of the individual differences of her students, not measured by the device, cannot go unheard inside her being. To complicate matters, the high-tech, sleek device is not one Frieda believes helps her determine her students’ reading ability. It is what Eisner (2002) warns against:

We want a testing program that will display the results of our efforts, often in rank-order league standings. We want an assessment program that allows little space for personal judgment, at least when it comes to personal evaluation. . . We want to boil down teaching and evaluation practices to a scientifically grounded technology. (p. 577)

Frieda’s understanding comes from a sense of knowing. This sense of knowing her students is not merely held; it is made after seventeen years of teaching second grade students. However, the device is yet another way to standardize and institutionalize

education. Eventually, when she concludes her assessments, her students' scores and the scores of other teachers are uploaded to a computer program.

As Frieda administers the assessment, the students score as she suspects they will. However, the scores open up a troubling place for Frieda. Cassi breezes through her assessment, as do Peter and Dana. The next few students show progress as well. The next student is Megan. Frieda hopes that Megan does poorly on the test, a strange hope, she realizes. However, in the face of the standardization of education, the knowing of her students becomes marginalized by the computer. If the computer determines that Megan is a proficient reader, she will not qualify for additional support, although Frieda observes that Megan struggles with both fluency and decoding. Frieda has asked for additional supports for Megan, but in the absence of a computerized score declaring such need, Megan will not qualify for additional reading support. In the presence of the technology, what space is there for Frieda to address the uniqueness of Megan's reading issues? "Each child we teach is wonderfully unique, and each requires us to use in our work that most exquisite of human capacities, the ability to make judgments in the absence of rules" (Eisner, 2002, p. 577). Megan scores on the low end of normal. Unfortunately, Frieda knows this is not low enough for her to qualify for additional support. Although it is obvious to Frieda that Megan requires additional reading support, must she ignore the emotion of her consciousness?

Because of our over reliance on numerical indicators, we can miss or greatly undervalue the importance and great power of teaching and learning precursors or facilitating conditions. (Comer, 2004, p. 6)

Frieda struggles, feeling that she is alone in believing that the results from the reading assessment are “untrue.” What is Frieda to understand about her place in the classroom when the technology overrides her sense of knowing? Aoki (2005b) makes the case:

Knowledge is objective, carrying with it the false dignity of value-free neutrality, deducing out as humanly as possible contamination by the subjectivity of the knower. Evaluators who subscribe to the ends-means view are technologically oriented, primarily interested in seeing how well the system is able to control components within the system as it struggles to achieve its goals. (p. 141)

In an attempt to control components of teaching and learning, jurisdictions spend energy, time and resources trying to achieve the goals of NCLB, through continuous assessment of the madness. Where is the dignity in stating that a child who cannot read is within the “normal” range of literacy? When Frieda attempts to discuss Megan’s scores with the reading specialist and principal, they remind her that Megan scored within the “normal” range on the assessment. Frieda’s years as a professional matter little in the dialogue. As a teacher, Frieda cannot do what she professionally believes is in the best interest for the student because the empirical data do not support her sense of knowing. What false dignity must Frieda embrace to see Megan only as a data point? How is it that the language of assessment, the language of NCLB, has taken over her being as a teacher? Rumi (as cited in Intrator, 2003) calls this “two kinds of knowledge:”

There are two kinds of intelligence, one acquired,
as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts
from books and from what the teacher says,
collecting information from the traditional sciences
as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world.
You get ranked ahead or behind others
in regard to your competence in retaining
information. You stroll with this intelligence
in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more
marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one
already completed and preserved inside you.
A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness
in the center of the chest. This other intelligence
does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid,
and it doesn't move from outside to inside
through the conduits of plumbing-learning.

The second knowing is a fountainhead
from within you, moving out. (p. 127)

In the midst of assessing the mad-ness, in what way can Frieda open the freshness in the center of the chest of her students? The interrogation of March Mad-ness into Frieda's teaching makes it difficult to "expose the fluidity of intelligence" in part because of the presence of "plumbing-learning." My interest lies in developing an understanding of the affected consciousness of teachers working amidst scarcity thinking and the plumbing-learning as a result of March Mad-ness.

Leaving the Mad-Ness

"And next year I would like you to teach kindergarten," Frieda's principal announces. She cannot believe her ears. For the last seventeen years, Frieda has taught second grade. She is a successful second-grade teacher and is considered, by peers, parents and administrators alike, to be one of the best. Hers is an abundant classroom. Her principal tells her that she will be switched to kindergarten. "You'll be great at it," he assures her. That is not the point, she thinks. Would a hospital ask a well-respected cardiologist to become an orthopedist, simply because there was a need for another orthopedist? Frieda is a vocal critic of the institutionalized tracking of students as quantitative data points. She wonders if this criticism is a determinant in being asked to vacate the space she has inhabited for the last seventeen years. Moving from one room to

another, from eight-year-olds to five-year-olds is more than a physical move. How she will “be” together with the children and who they become together is paramount in her thinking. Casey (1993) reminds us:

The power a place such as a mere room possesses determines not only *where* I am in the limited sense of cartographic location but *how* I am together with others (i.e., how I commingle and communicate with them) and even *who* we shall become together. (p. 23)

Although the news troubles Frieda, she leaves the meeting to complete her day with her second grade students. In her classroom, she feels energized and creative by how she *is* with her students. Abundance of learning abounds. In her classroom, she works with her twenty-six second graders. The students spend the afternoon in “Greenville,” the city co-created by students and Frieda to teach economics, democracy, literacy and mathematics. It is in this type of classroom that Frieda creates learning where “The students—no longer docile listeners—are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher” (Freire, 1970/2007, p. 81). The nagging thought that this would be the last year of this two-month project if she moved to kindergarten, does not vacate Frieda’s consciousness.

After several requests not to be moved, her words go unheard. At the end of the year, Frieda announces that she will be leaving public school to teach second grade at a private school. There, she will be able to practice her craft, her passion without the straight-jacket of the federal regulation of NCLB. She looks beyond the window, past March Mad-ness and realizes that in order to return to the essence of her teaching and abundant learning, she needs to leave public schooling. I wonder what reality Frieda must face about herself as she decides to leave her passion, her being? As she moves through the remainder of the year, how will her students’ questions be felt by Frieda, within her

bodily sense of being? In order to remain true to herself in the face of March Mad-ness, what becomes of Frieda in her decision to leave public schools?

The Abundance Within

To begin questioning my phenomenon, I look at my own journey into and through education. Gadamer (1960/2006) asks researchers to explore their own ideas about that which they would study before attempting to move beyond these prior understandings:

The most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one's own fore-understanding, which comes from being concerned with the same subject. . . Hermeneutics must start from the position that a person seeking to understand something has a bond to the subject matter that comes into language through the traditionary text and has, or acquires a connection with the tradition from which the text speaks. (pp. 294-295)

In an attempt to make meaning of teaching under NCLB, I first reflect on my own journey as a student, a teacher, an administrator, and a researcher. These experiences provide the scaffolding for my understanding of education as well as who I am as an educator. A phenomenological study is “a matter of describing, not of explaining or analyzing” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, p. ix). The descriptions around this phenomenon are rich. To set the stage for my interest in this topic, I begin with a shoebox.

Learning Through the Shoebox

In the face of all I see in today's classrooms, I cannot help but remember Mr. Hofman, my fifth grade teacher. Mr. Hofman's classroom, under today's standards, may not qualify as a classroom at all. It would be interesting to know if he would qualify as a “Highly Qualified” teacher under today's standards. The “Highly Qualified” teacher provision has proven to be an area having significant implications in classrooms. To be “Highly Qualified,” according to NCLB (Section 9191), a teacher must meet three criteria: He or she must (a) have a bachelor's degree; (b) be fully certified or licensed,

including certification obtained through “alternative routes” but excluding licensure that has been “waived on emergency, temporary, or provisional basis;” and (c) have demonstrated content knowledge in the subject he or she teaches. On the surface, these requirements appear to be solid; however, with the primary focus on content specific training, many teachers may be deemed highly qualified with minimal understanding of pedagogy.

Mr. Hofman loved science and math and found ways to make it applicable and fun to a class of fifth grade students. To help us learn our math facts, every Friday afternoon we tucked our schoolbooks away and played cribbage. Palmer (1998) explains:

Students who learn are the finest fruit of teachers who teach. . . teachers possess the power to create conditions that can help students learn a great deal—or keep them from learning much at all. Teaching is the intentional act of creating those conditions, and good teaching requires that we understand the inner sources of both the intent and the act. (p. 6)

It would be difficult not to think of Mr. Hofman’s classroom as not being an abundant harvest of fruit. Mr. Hofman created an environment where we all learned a great deal. His intentional act of teaching created some of the most memorable experiences of my education. The most memorable experience was not actually in his room but *from* his room. He used a take-home curriculum called “Shoebox Science” that allowed us to take home over one hundred and fifty science experiments. These were not graded assignments, and they were not required; however, each of us participated in this endeavor.

I vividly remember checking out the shoeboxes, complete with a science experiment, and taking them home. I recall how it made me feel to walk the one-mile journey home from Monroe Elementary School carrying a shoebox full of *real* science

equipment including beakers, litmus paper, magnets or cells. My step was a little more cautious because I did not want to spill the shoebox, and my pace was a little faster because I wanted to get started with the experiment as soon as I arrived home. Walking home with Sarah and Sally, my two elementary school friends, I engaged in meaningful talk about science with them as we exchanged details of the experiments we were carrying. Once through the front door of my house, the possibilities inside the shoebox were abundant as I tested the acidity and alkalinity of household products, learned about the earth's magnetic pull as I worked with magnets or researched photosynthesis. While in Mr. Hofman's classroom, I identified myself as a young scientist, a researcher and an explorer throughout that fifth grade year. Casey (1993) explains that "We tend to identify ourselves by—and with—the places in which we reside. How we are, our bodily beings, reflects how we reside in built places" (p. 120). I resided for that year, in a classroom environment that enabled me to become a scientist. I do not remember a day worrying about standardized tests or my ability to do well on them in Mr. Hofman's class. Nor do I remember Mr. Hofman rushing us through any content to get to a test. In fact, I do not remember any exams, although I am sure he was assessing our learning throughout the year. I do remember that Mr. Hofman connected with us, his students.

Palmer (1998) stresses self in the teaching process:

In every class I teach, my ability to connect with my students, and to connect them with the subject, depends less on the methods I use than on the degree to which I know and trust my selfhood — and I am willing to make it available and vulnerable in the service of learning. (p. 10)

Mr. Hofman connected with his students through his own understanding that cribbage on Friday and shoe-box science would connect us more with him and our learning than worksheets and rote memorization. What connections can teachers make today when

curriculum is prescribed and deadlines are enforced? Palmer (1998) explains, “The way we diagnosed our students’ condition will determine the kind of remedy we offer” (p. 41). Mr. Hofman diagnosed his students as individuals rich with inquiry and creativity, and the instruction he offered was a clear connection to that diagnosis. Inside the shoeboxes of my youth I was exposed to an abundance of learning. Inside the shoeboxes I was exposed to a world beyond the textbooks and worksheets. I wonder what remedies are offered today under NCLB, when the condition is narrowly defined under the parameters under the law? My research brings me to questioning the shoeboxes inside today’s classrooms.

The Year of No Tests

What would learning look like in the absence of written exams? Abundance of learning came to me the year I did not take a single test requiring pen or pencil. I spent my junior year of high school in Finland. I went to school every day, even though I initially did not know the language. I dutifully sat in class and made friends with both the students and the teachers. I completed as much of any assignment as I could; however, I was never asked, nor did I volunteer, to take any tests. My learning was abundant in the absence of tests.

I lived in Finland during the height of the Cold War, and amidst political discussions early on in my stay, I realized I was woefully unprepared in terms of my own civic education. The Finns, nestled between East and West, had international politics on their minds all of the time. From the cornfields and car factory of my hometown the world of politics soon became something necessary to know. However, as an American, I

was embarrassed that I knew less about my country than the Finns did. How could I know so little about the Cold War and its implications in the world arena?

To bring myself up to speed, I made my way to the town's public library where I checked out anything I thought would help me learn about the United States and Finland. I read books about the Cold War, the Founding Fathers, the Federalist Papers, Stalin and Sibelius. I checked out children's books to learn the Finnish language. For the first time in my life, history became relevant, and I began reading history texts, in order to engage in thoughtful conversation in my host country. Was it through the pouring over these texts that my future as a social studies teacher was born? Why was it that *not* knowing moved me closer to learning than knowing ever had? What does this say about the curriculum of the American school system that had educated me up until this point?

Gadamer (1960/2006) explains, "A person who is called experienced has become so not only *through* experiences but is also open *to* new experiences" (p. 350). The openness toward new experiences brought me to a deeper understanding of history, politics and myself. I wonder what experiences are open to teachers in today's public schools under NCLB?

The Finns have a tradition of calling teachers by their first name, and of all the new customs I was learning, referring to teachers by their first name made me most uncomfortable. Heidegger (1993a) reminds us that, "Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells" (p. 217). The dwelling in my Finnish classrooms was different through the use of language in the simple, yet powerful language of a name. The first time I raised my hand and called my teacher by her first name—"Maria, I would like some help on this problem"—I felt uncomfortable. In fact, it seemed disrespectful. Then,

as I became more comfortable with the custom, I grew to view my teachers as partners in my education. Palmer (1998) explains that, “Unlike many professions, teaching is always done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life” (p. 17). The Finnish custom of both student and teacher using first names to converse brought the intersection of personal and public even closer. I wonder, is there *any* connection to this intimacy and the high literacy rates in Finland? What would the American system look like if we worked on bringing the intersection of personal and private closer rather than farther apart?

Although I did not take any written exams throughout the year, neither my teachers nor classmates complained that this was not equitable. In the era before the internet and YouTube, teachers relied on cassette tape recordings for students to hear oral language. It was a flat one-dimensional interaction between the student and the audio tape. I was often asked to read the oral passages to my English class. Since all of the language tapes were in British English, but popular culture was in American English, everyone (the teacher included) was excited to practice their American English. It was a process whereby we each learned from the other. Palmer (1998) writes:

Good education is always more process than product . . . Good education teaches students to become both producers of knowledge and discerning consumers of what other people claim to know. (p. 94)

In what ways are teachers able to open up their teaching to enable students to be both producers of knowledge and discerning consumers of what other people know, as Palmer suggests is necessary? In the absence of such process, who do teachers become?

Teacher as Self

I am a teacher. I am one of three million public school teachers in the United States. Collectively, we teach some forty-eight million children (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). My first teaching experiences as a student in Finland were not only inside my own classrooms, but inside elementary and preschool classrooms where I sang songs and danced to teach English to children. The teaching continued inside the homes of my host families. Some spoke English; one did not. There inside these homes we journeyed together to learn language and culture.

Throughout college I volunteered at an alternative school for students expelled from public school. My friends worried about my safety; I, however, never felt unsafe. The children, many with criminal records or parents themselves gave respect when treated with respect. Often wise beyond years in the skills of survival, many could not read on-level texts nor compute basic math facts. These students taught me the essence of tenacity and trust amidst a world neither trustworthy nor easy.

Teaching allows me to dance the song of my heart. I thrive on the feeling in my ears when students ask questions in my classroom: questions to me, questions to each other, and questions to themselves. The being of myself amidst this discourse opens the possibility of learning and calls me to the classroom. In my classroom of questions and learning, I listen to the song of my heart. This song calls me to work with the struggling students, the students who have more confidence that they “won’t get it” or that they “don’t get it” than in their own ability to “get it.” What does it mean to “get it?” What is it, exactly, that teachers do? What does it mean to teach?

To teach originates from the Old English *techen* meaning “to show or point out.” If so, then what exactly, do teachers point out to our students? Perhaps we are instructors, closely related to the Latin word *informe*, meaning, “to train in some specific subject” (*OED Online*, 2011). Or, do we serve as a mentor, which is linked to the Greek word meaning “wise advisors” (*OED Online*, 2011)? Maybe we serve as a coach to our students. To *coach*, derives from Oxford University slang circa 1830 for a tutor who “carried” a student through an exam, and is directly linked to the word’s original definition: “a large kind of carriage.” Are teachers as a result of NCLB, becoming coaches of NCLB rather than a wise advisor to the individuals they teach (*OED Online*, 2011)? If they are merely carrying them through the tests—what is the significance to their teacher being?

A colleague, Lori, explains to me that what she sees happening to her teaching as a result of NCLB. “I don’t think teaching today allows you to take a topic and dive into it in depth . . . You don’t get to choose what you, as a teacher, want to teach. You can’t design a great project that kids really dive into.”

The etymological foundation of “to dive” is the Old English *dufan*, “to dip or submerge” (*OED Online*, 2011). Further reading of the dictionary notes that to dive means, “to plunge into water” or “to fall, or descend through the air, into the earth” (*OED Online*, 2011). This brings back gleeful memories of my childhood in the upper Midwest. In an area ripe with glacial lakes, the outdoor municipal swimming pool in Edgerton was unique. Unlike the lakes that surrounded the pool, it hosted or perhaps boasted of a high dive. Climbing the high dive allowed me to descend headfirst, feet first, flip or cartwheel into the water below.

At the start of the season, the first climb up the stairs was difficult. Over the winter months the skills I acquired the previous summer remained dormant, or worse yet, ascending the stairs, I worried they had disappeared altogether. My legs did not belong to me. I moved them forward but did not feel them. My arrival at the board was noticed first by my feet. I saw nothing other than my own thoughts, willing myself to overcome my fear. I heard nothing other than my own voice in my head. My feet told my body I had arrived at the top of the stairs. The surface of the board was rough. As my toes touched the sandpaper-like surface, I sprung to the present moment watching the diver ahead of me. I wondered how I ever grew to like this sensation.

Was it really me last summer who cartwheeled off the board? Making my way to the edge I wondered how the water got so far away. Looking over at my big sister, Marty bathing in the sunshine, I hoped she would call across the pool with a reason for me to “Come right back down those stairs!” Did she not know I was near impending death? I was on the edge of the earth and needed to get down, but not in the direction of the water. Behind me in line I wondered why my brother did not stop chiding me to “Jump in!” What was I to do with the line of kids waiting behind me? They remembered my “excellent moves” the summer before, and I could not show my fear. I glanced at the lifeguard, wishing there was someone in need of rescuing, and the board would suddenly close. Glancing out across the water, I realized no one was in need of a rescue. I was out of luck and my pride overcame my fear. Off I went descending feet first into the water below. Submerged in the cool water my body woke from its paralysis of fear. The adrenaline brought a wealth of sensations. Submerged, I saw the hazy figures of other swimmers as my eyes adjusted to the water in the pool. My ears heard the muffled

giggles and screams above the water. I was certain they were all talking about me. I was enveloped in bliss; I had survived! Coming to the surface and swimming to the edge of the pool, I realized survival was not enough; I would thrive. This concrete structure opened the opportunity of possibility. I was excited and wanted to learn new things. New moves I had not imagined sprang forward. The moves from last summer yet to be perfected rushed back to my mind—they awoke from hibernation. My imagination was abundant with thoughts of the moves to be conquered. The space of concrete, water and a plank opened my imagination to the possible. Wrinkled from the water and tanned by the sun the horizon of my abilities expanded.

At the end of the season, after the pool closed I would ask an older sibling or a parent to drive me to the pool to look at it. It was a fascinating sight to see the pool with the water removed. Standing on the edge of the pool it looked like an ugly carcass void of any life. Gazing across the empty basin my imagination was flat. It did not look, feel or sound like the same place. It did not seem possible that this concrete formation was the foundation of my summer imagination. Thinking of Lori, I wonder where the space is to submerge into the curriculum if, like the pool, it is empty? Where are the places to descend into her teaching when she “Can’t design a great project that kids really dive into?” What happens to her as her students rest on the edge? Where is the space to submerge into the im-possible? Lori expresses, “I don’t think teaching today allows you to take a topic and dive into it in depth.” Lori exposes an emptiness in her ability to teach freely and reveal learning at deep levels.

I have been a staff-development teacher. In that role, “What we do typically to improve teaching is to send teachers somewhere to be ‘inserviced’—every 6,000 miles”

(Eisner, 2002, p. 577). What does it mean to teachers to feel they need to be in-serviced? Valli et al. (2008) found through their case study that in the face of new initiatives, “Teacher learning needs sometimes became overwhelming and professional development reduced to mere training” (p. 100). Being a teacher of teachers, “I must struggle to keep my audience engaged. If I don’t meaningfully connect, I not only fail to be helpful but also exacerbate their despair” (Powell, as cited in Intrator, 2003, p. 164). Being a staff development teacher assumes that teachers have time for and *want* the continued professional development prescribed by others, but do they? What becomes of teachers who have one of their own sitting on the sideline “coaching” them on the job they do *every day*? Worse yet, this coaching may not have been perceived as meaningful.

I am a *former* administrator, “former” meaning earlier in time, not “first” or “foremost.” First and foremost, I am a teacher. However, in the job as a school administrator, I worked with a principal who saw her job as one of “lead teacher.”

The word *principal* was at one time understood as principal-teacher—first or leading teacher. Principal was at one time an adjective. How did it become a noun? What happened when the adjective principal was separated from teacher? (Aoki, 2005c, p. 435)

Serving as a supervisor to her teachers, Elly is a mentor, a wise advisor, to her staff. It was through watching her work as a lead teacher, serving as a mentor that my *compassion* for teaching as a whole, not just my involvement in it, began to emerge. And yes, it is a compassion, from the Latin, sympathy, “to share the feelings of another,” that the pieces of the puzzle began to fit together. *Com* means “with,” and *passion* derives from the Latin *passio*, meaning “suffering or enduring” (*OED Online*, 2011). As an educator outside of the classroom, I began to “endure feelings with” other teachers. I shared in the frustration of the math teacher who was required to move on in the

curriculum due to deadlines, rather than ensure that the students understood the material. I also empathized with the social studies teacher who was to teach the American Civil War in one week, as well as the English teacher who could no longer teach her favorite book because it was moved out of the curriculum. When asked why it was her favorite book, she said, “The kids like it. Which means they actually *read* the book. Too many of the books today are done to the kids. They do not identify with them.”

Before moving out of the classroom setting, I had little sympathy for the concerns of my fellow educators. We would lament on specific students (“Oh yes, Rene did not do her homework for me either”); however, I failed to recognize that my role in the profession was linked to the larger endeavor of Teaching. What happened in my classroom was what impacted me, and I was able to “tune out” the concerns of the schoolhouse and the system as a whole. Are the teachers who survive, much less thrive in the profession, adept at tuning out the “bureaucratic” chatter, that is, the chatter from the desks of individuals who do not understand the essence of teaching? Where amidst the pressures of exams and tests can teachers open the abundance of learning?

Teacher as Student

I am also a student. I am a student who is studying teaching, specifically the philosophy of teaching. This topic, the lived experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind, came to me more than me seeking it out. I have worked as an educator for nineteen years, and what I have seen since the passage of NCLB is a move away from teachers serving as mentors to students, to teachers serving as functionaries who drill students on material they will need to know to score proficient on the state assessment. I

feel this transformation. Moran (2000) explains that Merleau-Ponty relates the relationship of the body to the world:

Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism; it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system. (p. 403)

My body began to feel the transformation of my colleagues as they shared stories of frustration of not being able to cover the content they *wished*, as well as the hopelessness they felt if their students did not achieve the expected results on the state assessments. The body's lived experience for teachers transformed. Linda, a thirty-year veteran teacher, addresses the issue of creative writing in her English class. The focus of writing today is for them to be able cite text and write what the state of Maryland calls a "Brief Constructed Response" or BCR:

Students today think that writing is a BCR, pitiful. When I'm assigning BCRs, I'm not assigning creative writing projects that spark kids' interest and make learning fun. There is not much fun, and certainly no creativity, in finding textual evidence and spitting it back on a few lines of paper. (Linda)

What does it mean for teachers if they are not able to spark passion in learning? Who do teachers become as guardians of the spittle on the paper? Perhaps it is not more intense than creative writing, but it is something else altogether.

This is a double-edged sword, as Cushman (2006) points out:

Many educators worry about whether their students will do well on standardized city and state tests if coursework focuses on things that interest them. But kids point out that the risk can work the other way around—that they will tune out completely if the material does not connect to their lives. (p. 36)

I feel called to investigate this experience not only as a teacher myself, but as one who has gained empathy for what my peers must undertake. Sadness and hopelessness fill my body as I see teachers teach students how to take "the test" rather than ignite the fire

within their students. Creative writing cannot be reduced to a BCR. Creative writing has a specific meaning and signifies something for both students and teacher. It does not mean that it simply represents itself differently; BCRs and creative writing organize themselves differently within the relationship of teaching and learning.

The roles of being both a student and a teacher produce a certain tension. Van Manen (2005) suggests that the endeavor of being a researcher is best served when the voice of the pedagogue is not lost:

Is educational research *educational* when it fails to present itself in both form and content as an educational form of life? Where in all this research can we still hear the adult speak with a pedagogic voice? Where in the text is the connection with the everyday lifeworld which for this educator, used to be invested with a pedagogic interest? (p. 138)

In the hermeneutic tradition, I write my way to understanding the phenomenon of teaching under No Child Left Behind. Perhaps I would not push so hard for the stories of those teaching in today's public school to be told had I not been so personally touched by meaningful learning. I shared my journey as a student, administrator, and staff-development teacher so that I can begin to share a pedagogic story of everyday teaching under No Child Left Behind.

Finally, there has been an overwhelming interest among my fellow teachers to engage with me on this topic. I found people wanting to share their experiences on this subject with me. Several people unloaded their stories, and then quickly ended with, "Please keep this confidential; I don't want to sound negative." Or, "I don't want to be known as someone who is bucking the system. I am cooperating with it even though in my heart I do not agree with it, ethically." "Thank you for asking, at least someone is!" The voices from teachers, however, are often silent. Barth (2001) explains, "I can think of

no other profession in which the voices of its own members are mute in discussions about its reform” (p. 62). In this study I explore teaching in today’s public schools. The asking of, “What is it like to teach” resonates within me. I look to reveal what this phenomenon exposes about teaching. It is what calls me to my question: **What is the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)?**

Phenomenology’s Potential Abundance

Phenomenology as a methodology is deeply rooted in the reflection on words and thoughts. What is sought in the implementation of phenomenological research is

An accurate description of a given phenomenon as it presents itself in one’s own experience, not an explanation of its genesis through reference to antecedent causal factors. The phenomenologist’s basic attitude is: no matter how something came to be in the first place, what is of crucial concern is the detailed description of the phenomenon *as it now appears*. (Casey, 2000, p. 9)

Phenomenology reflects on words and thoughts to shed light on human experiences. Van Manen (2003) explains that phenomenology “attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it. . . it offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world” (p. 9). He identifies six “research activities” to advance/characterize a phenomenological study:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and the whole. (pp. 30-31)

In this chapter I have articulated my pre-understandings of this phenomenon as they have revealed themselves to me. In the hermeneutic tradition, I am writing my way

to understanding the phenomenon of teaching under No Child Left Behind. I shared my journey being educated and as an educator; I shone light on the myriad folds of this phenomenon. In Chapter Two, I continue to unfold the fabric of the phenomenon, looking more closely at the writing about teaching and the federal law itself. In Chapter Three I delve into phenomenological philosophy. Max van Manen (2003) writes:

Hermeneutics and phenomenology are human science approaches which are rooted in philosophy; they are philosophies, reflective disciplines. Therefore, it is important for the human science researcher in education to know something of the philosophic tradition. (p. 7)

As I interpret the writing of various philosophers I determine which ones best help to continue the unfolding of meaning and memory of the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. In Chapter Four, through reflection on conversations with public school teachers, I bring forward the nature of teaching under No Child Left Behind. In chapter Five, I discuss the pedagogical insights from the study as they relate to teachers in public schools.

**CHAPTER TWO:
EXPLORING THE PHENOMENON AMID TENSION AND RELEASE:
THE INTERPLAY OF TEACHING UNDER NCLB**

Paint by Numbers

They told her
Paint by numbers
Color in the lines
March in rhythm
Never out of time
Paint by numbers
Walk in single file
Learn the system
Conform to the style . . .

But that's not how Picasso painted
That's not how Beethoven played
They rearranged tradition
And history was made
That's not how Picasso painted
That's not how Beethoven played
They dared to be different
And did it their own way . . .
(Romanovsky & Phillips, 1984)

What history will be made in today's classrooms? How, with the focus on conformity and standardization, do public school teachers dare to help students create, imagine and explore? Pinar (2004) explains that under a test-driven model for education, teachers struggle between the possibilities in education and the other forces weighing on teachers. He calls teachers to claim their space to teach. "Without reclaiming our academic-intellectual freedom—we cannot teach. Without intellectual freedom, education ends; students are indoctrinated, forced to learn what the test-makers declare to be important" (Pinar, 2004, p. 10). Teachers are instructed to "learn the system" and "conform to the style." The style under NCLB potentially limits possibilities for teachers.

This style of education brings back childhood memories of painting-by-numbers. The pictures on the cover of the kits were fluid and provoking, a horse running through the meadow or kittens playing with balls of yarn. I began these endeavors to replicate the pictures on the covers. Doing so was not original, demanding, nor reflective of my own personal style. However, I found pleasure in them because they were quick, easy and required a narrow skill-set: painting a specified color into a specified spot. In what ways did the numbers lull me into a false sense of belief that what I was completing was actually art? Likewise, what tension is caused for teachers as they are required to prescribe their teaching as if it were a paint-by-number kit, an intervention suitable for all (non-readers as well as readers) or intervention for math numeracy (for those who grasp numeracy as well as those who do not)?

Like the paint-by-numbers activities of my childhood, will using a standards-based approach to learning limit the abundance teachers create for students? How is it possible to open a space to differentiate the learning for children throughout the nation under NCLB? What becomes of teachers when they are forced to teach in a pedagogical manner that does not help students *learn* to create independently? I am called to study the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 from my interest as a former teacher and administrator and now curriculum specialist. In what ways has the passage of NCLB transformed the experience of teaching?

In Chapter One, I set out to examine my own turning to the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB. As such, I provided examples of my own lived experiences as both an educator and student to illuminate aspects of teaching and learning. In this chapter I explore NCLB and its consequences in more depth, as an instrument of

organizing the nation's schools into a seemingly "paint by numbers" approach. In order to open up the experiences of teaching under NCLB, I use my personal experience, as well as that of others, to illuminate this phenomenon as lived, rather than how it is conceptualized. I trace etymological sources, look for idiomatic phrases and draw from the literature on teaching, as well as poetry, song lyrics and philosophy, un-folding what is there inside teaching as it is lived in today's public schools.

Between Teachers as Artists and/or Technicians

Delamont (1995) considers the metaphor of "teachers as artists" and explains that in teaching there is a tension between the technical and creative. To see teachers as artists requires the recognition of intuition, creativity, improvisation and expressiveness (Gage, 1978). What becomes of teaching when the tension between the technical and creative is released and let go? Where are energy and activity focused if the interplay between the technical and creative is overpowered by one or the other? Technique derives from the Greek term *techne* (*OED Online*, 2011). In its earliest usage *techne* could mean the craft or ability to do something, a creative skill, either physical or mental, positive or negative; or it was used in art to mean a set of rules or theories (Heidegger, 1993b). Because of this latter usage, *techne* takes on the meaning of a handbook, a written set of principles, a technique to follow to complete a task (Papillion, 1995). Gadamer (1960/2006) notes that *techne* is "the skill, the knowledge of the craftsman who knows how to make a specific thing" (p. 313). In what ways does teaching to the standards, the technique, result in a specific thing?

Jardine et al. (2006) explain that "Under the assumption of scarcity, curriculum topics must be broken down and doled out in carefully monitored, zero-sum exchanges"

(p. 4). Teachers are asked to re-create an image of success driven by the standardized test scores. In my preliminary conversations with teachers, Linda says, “This is the kind of impact NCLB is having on schools, I’m afraid. There’s a tunnel vision here that isn’t going to benefit kids.” What becomes of the *thing* of teaching when teachers themselves are not permitted to encourage children to create independently? What becomes of the teacher in Linda when she teaches in a manner she believes is “pitiful?” Jardine et al. (2006) bring forward a notion of knowing that is broader than teaching techniques: “Classroom inquiries based on the idea of abundance can be spoken of as something more than simply a ‘teaching technique among others’” (Jardine, 2006, p. 100). Who do teachers become amidst “tunnel vision,” and what creativity is untapped? In the absence of an “abundant” way of being, what fills the space for teachers? Who do teachers become as instructors of techniques? Vacca (2006) discusses students’ reading and writing abilities as a consequence of NCLB:

One of the realities facing teachers across all content areas today is that many students either read at a superficial level to answer homework questions or find ways to circumvent reading altogether. (p. 2)

In undertaking teaching, what do teachers hope to nurture and reveal? How can it be called teaching and learning if teachers are being asked to instruct students to think along narrowly defined parameters or to complete a narrow set of techniques—to “paint by the numbers”?

Who are the transformative individuals in our history? Those who first come to mind were willing to paint outside the lines: Picasso, Rivera, Warhol, Montessori and Freire. “They rearranged tradition and history was made . . . they dared to be different and did it their own way” (Romanovsky & Phillips, 1984). If transformation occurs as a

result of freedom to take a path away from the “be good” (Clifford & Friesen, 2008a), then what does not occur in the quest to quantify learning? Darling-Hammond (2007)

notes:

High-achieving nations focus their curriculums on critical thinking and problem solving, using exams that require students to conduct research and scientific investigations, solve complex real-world problems and defend their ideas orally and in writing. These assessments are not used to rank or punish schools, or to deny promotion or diplomas to students. They are used to evaluate curriculum and guide investments in learning—in short, to help schools improve. (pp. 329-330)

What happens when teachers lose sight of the creative aspects of teaching and focus narrowly on the technical? Linda explains:

The whole issue is how formulaic teaching is becoming, and that is really scary to me as someone who has spent thirty years teaching. The problem is that you can tell people how to do these things, but a lot of teaching is more than skills, it’s just passion.

What *techné* or handbook is established? Although the creative aspects of teaching are difficult to capture, what is taught in classrooms when teachers move toward the technical aspects of the profession without embracing the tension between the technical and the creative, without creating the place for the creative within their classrooms? “The way we treat a thing can sometimes change its nature” (Hyde, as cited in Jardine et al., 2006 p. 9). In what ways does the nature of teaching change as it has been treated under NCLB?

Amidst Deferred Dreams

Dream Deferred
What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
Like a raisin in the sun?

Or fester like a sore—
And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
Like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
Like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?
(Hughes, as cited in Intrator, 2003, p. 19)

Michelle, a special education teacher, invites a different knowing of teaching under NCLB by describing her role as a special education teacher. Her students have an array of disabilities and are three to six years below grade level by the time they enter her classroom in sixth grade. Their program is called “Learning for Independence,” but as she reveals her experience, it exposes how a teacher who is working with students to become independent is completely dependent on a political agenda to frame her teaching. Michelle explains that she is required to submit ten educational objectives for each student to the state by October, only one month into establishing a relationship with her students. The frustration for Michelle is that once she submits the objectives, she is required to teach them, even if she later discovers that the objectives were mis-matched to the student.

In October, I come up with objectives for the students. I try to write objectives based on what I *plan* to teach, but this does not always work out because my students are unpredictable. I have to be flexible enough to work around behaviors, and often just to get the kids engaged, I have to go with something they are interested in. (Michelle)

Why is it that a teacher who is working with students to become independent is dependent on NCLB to drive her teaching? Is she not trusted as a teacher to decide what is best for her students? What becomes of her own independence?

Gadamer (1960/2006) reminds us that “Man [sic] becomes what he is through what he does and how he behaves” (p. 311). Paraphrasing Gadamer, who do teachers become through what they do in classrooms colored by NCLB? Who do teachers become in the classroom when the classrooms are defined as spaces for closing the achievement gap through the narrow lens of test results? Subsequently, who do they *not* become; what dreams are deferred?

NCLB includes federal programs aiming to improve the performance of schools by increasing the standards of accountability for states, school districts and schools (NCLB, 107-110). As such, NCLB enacts the theories of standards-based education reform, which is based on the belief that high expectations and setting of goals will result in educational success (Anyon, 2005; Selwyn, 2007). However, what does it mean for teachers to live amongst “stand-hards” based education? Standard originates from the Old French *estandard*, meaning to stand firm. By the 14th century, “standard” came to mean a “unit of measure” such as the royal standard used in matters like setting weights and measures. Subsequently, standard came to mean the authoritative or recognized exemplar of quality or correctness (*OED Online*, 2011). What stand-hard or exemplar of correctness is set forward under NCLB? Who do teachers become amidst the stand-hards?

In an attempt to meet the “quality of correctness” or standards of NCLB, Michelle loses the ability to be flexible and creative. As she “stands-hard” to meet the requirements of writing educational objectives and subsequently assessing her special education students, she expresses that her individual flexibility is compromised within her classroom.

Since I have to write the objectives early in the year, I rob myself of the opportunity to be flexible. Just this past year my lowest student cannot read. My objective was for him to show me the beginning of the book and the end of the book. I spent countless creative ways to get him to understand this because this was the objective decided at the start of the year. (Michelle)

Standing-hard to an objective written at the start of the year, however, did not meet the student's needs. Although Michelle uses creativity to teach her students, her creativity is no match for a system under NCLB that requires her to teach an objective that was mismatched to this student. Her frustration is evident as she speaks about the assessment.

However, he did not understand this by his assessment, so I had no choice but to give a 50%. I use my creativity to try to get around the state test requirements rather than for nobler pursuits such as old-fashioned teaching! (Michelle)

How does teaching in this way open up the nature of Michelle's life under NCLB? Moran (2000) explains, "Our ordinary life constantly draws us back down into forms of complacency and everydayness" (p. 230). Has Michelle, "In the midst of the world . . . become absorbed and lost in the anonymous public life" (Moran, p. 230)? Does this create what Casey (1993) explains as the vicious circle of isolation and desolation?

The more I feel myself to be isolated (not geographically but also socially, culturally, linguistically, etc.) the more I will tend to find my surrounding desolate; the more I perceive these surroundings to be themselves desolate, the more I will feel isolated in various ways. (p. 197)

When the language and culture of teaching become something significantly different for teachers than it previously was, how can they not feel isolated? What does the selection of the NCLB standards signify about teaching in public schools? How does this color the final piece? Perhaps this is an example of what Aoki (2005d) explores in curriculum implementation that leads teachers to become faceless others:

In the rather disembodied language world of the Curriculum and Implementation landscape, the *others*—teachers and students—are only implied in words like

implementation, instruction and assessment. These *others* become secondary to the curriculum-as-plan being designed. (p. 299)

In the disembodied language world of teaching under NCLB, what place is there for teachers to create and discover with students? Diane, an elementary teacher in a school under restructuring because it did not meet the Adequate Yearly Progress benchmarks, explains:

We [teachers] are focused on raising test scores and getting (and staying) out of restructuring that most of our resources are dedicated to raising test scores. . . Teachers are pressured, to prepare for the tests. We are not respected as professionals. . . The best teachers are those who are creative and make decisions based on the individual needs of their students. Yet, we are discouraged from being creative, from being thoughtful, and from making analytical decisions about our students' needs. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, pp. 61-62)

What is revealed about teaching when creativity and thoughtfulness are relegated to the sidelines as the test-scores dictate the essence of the classroom? Teaching to the test may be “successful teaching” as described by Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005); however, this does not necessarily correlate with “good teaching.” “Good teaching,” Fenstermacher and Richardson write, “is grounded in the task sense of teaching, while successful teaching is grounded in the achievement sense of the term” (p. 189). What becomes of teachers when they are to focus on *successful* rather than *good* teaching under NCLB? Consequently, what meaning do teachers bring to their worlds?

Involving De-liberate Naming

The interplay between teachers as artists and technicians is revealed through the language of NCLB. It is within the language, the words on the page, where the phenomenon obtains roots and springs to life.

These Days
Whatever you have to say, leave

The roots on, let them
Dangle
And the dirt
Just to make clear
Where they come from
(Olson, as cited in Intrator, 2003, p. 117)

The words, the language of NCLB, reveal dangling roots of where the law comes from. In reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and renaming it NCLB, a notable shift in the language is revealed. In an attempt to open up this phenomenon, four words dangle. Two were prevalent in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965: quality and education; two are integral in the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: achievement and gap.

The tension between these four words demonstrates how the language of NCLB shapes meaning for teaching. Aoki (2005e) asserts that language is culturally constituted: “Meanings of words are culturally constituted ... the very words and language we are born into may be shaping us” (p. 284). In what ways does the language of NCLB shape the lives of teachers? How does the changing of the *name* of a thing change the *essence* of it? How is the horizon of teaching altered when the name “Elementary and Secondary Education Act” is changed to the “No Child Left Behind Act?” What meaning resonates with teachers when the name “No Child Left Behind” appeals to the children the schools serve rather than the institutions that house the children in the “Elementary and Secondary Education Act”?

Gadamer (1960/2006) maintains that “A word has a mysterious connection with what it ‘images’; it belongs to its being” (p. 416). What images of education are formed when children are thought to be *left behind*? Does the notion of *leaving no child behind* open up the idea that education is taking children somewhere meaningful? Noting the

importance of language, Heidegger (1993a) reminds us, “Those who think and those who create with words are the guardians of this home” (p. 217). What does it signify for teachers when the policy makers who constructed the law are the guardians of the home inside the schoolhouse, rather than the teachers who reside inside the classrooms? “The sheer fact that something is written down gives it special authority” (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 274). The written word authorizes that all children will meet proficiency by 2014. In what ways does this language modify the essence of teaching? The goal of the original law, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965, was to ensure “disadvantaged students” access to a “quality education;” NCLB modifies this language to “closing the achievement gap” (Allen et al., 2007). This language moves education from quality access to closing the achievement gap and opens the space for tension between teachers as artists and teachers as technicians. As a consequence Smith (as cited in Pinar et al., 2002) worries that

. . . educators’ language has been alienated from lived experience to such a degree that the art of hearing profound messages and calls uttered in the midst of our teaching, has been lost. (p. 422)

The lived experience for teachers does not reside in the language, but from it. “The words are first of all not objects but designations for objects. It is not first of all a matter of knowing whether they correctly indicate a certain thing or a certain notion” (Sartre, 1965/1993, p. 317). Naming is almost always a deliberate process. Aoki (2005a) notes:

Language is not merely a tool of communication in which thoughts are put into words, nor is it merely a bearer of representational knowledge. Language is a way that humans live humanly in this world. (p. 181)

In what ways do teachers live humanly in the world under NCLB? The way teachers act, live and reside in classrooms is altered under NCLB. The goal of NCLB is

to “close the achievement gap,” but what does that mean for the lived experience of teaching? In response to the quantitative model of teaching set forth under NCLB, in what ways do teachers render their worlds meaningful? Donia, an elementary teacher explains:

Human beings cannot be measured as objects. Learning is a complex and individualized process that is based on students’ life experiences and their complicated physiological mechanism, especially so with students who have special needs. NCLB is unfair and unjust in its present form. . . (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 109)

When learning is not complex and individualized, what is the result? What achievement gap is closed?

To achieve comes from the French phrase *à chief* meaning to carry out successfully, to accomplish or to perform (*OED Online*, 2011). The word gap derives from the Old Norse word “chasm” and is closely related to the verb “to gape” (*OED Online*, 2011). This early meaning creates a vivid image of the fjords in Norway where a mile or two in the distance could mean virtual isolation in villages due to large chasms or gaps in the landscape. I myself remember staring, agape, across the fjords of Norway, taken in by their beauty and astonished by their power. Today, even in a modern world, the language of Norway is dictated by these ancient geographical gaps, these chasms. Villagers on one side of a fjord often speak a dramatically different dialect than those only a short distance away because of the geographic isolation created by the gaps.

Much like the villages only a short distance apart separated by fjords, teachers in the United States often teach in dramatically different environments than those only a short distance apart. However, these teachers are charged with a task as powerful as closing the gap between fjords. As such, NCLB envisions closing the achievement gap

through narrowing the curriculum to easily measured material. Combining these words, then, leads to the powerful notion that NCLB seeks to close the *performance chasm*. The framers of NCLB have diagnosed the condition as a performance chasm—remedied in part through a narrow curriculum, a narrow color palette, as it were, and measurement of success in the completion of the prescribed curriculum through testing. In the naming and diagnosing of teaching under NCLB, the roots of the tension between teachers as artists and technicians take hold.

Testing Time

Merleau-Ponty (1945/2006) asserts, “Past and future exist only too unmistakably in the world, they exist in the present” (p. 478). The present of teaching is engulfed in NCLB; therefore, we must ask, what does this signify for teachers? What does the future become if teachers spend time conducting and preparing for tests in math and reading every year for students in Grades 3 through 8, and then once in high school? It leaves one to wonder, what is *not* being done in that time? What future is not being prepared for when teachers are currently administering more than 33 million tests related to the dictates of NCLB and will add more than 11 million more tests in the future (Selwyn, 2007)? Terese, a middle school teacher, explains:

I spend more time testing than I ever have, which means that students spend less time on learning. . . That means my students take tests 17 days out of the school . . . in language arts only, and that doesn't include all the tests in other classes. This is more than three weeks of testing per year. Outrageous! What are we telling 12-year-olds about school? (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 113)

Not only should we question what we are we telling 12-year-olds about school, but we should also question what becomes of teachers when they are asked to partake in practices they define as “outrageous”? Where is the understanding of the fullness of life

when teachers are asked not to teach art, foreign language, social studies and physical education because they are not “tested subjects” under NCLB? John, a thirty-year veteran art teacher, explains:

Visual arts programs throughout the county are seeing cutbacks that are being replaced with instructional time that is increasingly devoted to the core subjects that form the basis of the high-stakes testing. (as cited in National Education Association 2007, p. 210)

Sally remarks:

As a college educator, I have been watching and listening with great concern as I hear K-12 educators talk about the detrimental effects of NCLB. As I hear more and more stories of programs, such as band/orchestra/choir, speech/debate, art, PE, photography and foreign languages being cut to allow more resources and time for teaching to standardized tests, I have been dreading the day, down the road, when those students will enter my classroom at the college level. . . . much to my surprise and horror, that day has come much sooner than I anticipated. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007 p. 62)

As a teacher, what is the lived experience when “dread” is how teachers experience the present? What does it do to teaching when teachers themselves describe the future in terms of “surprise and horror”? What does this future dread do for the present? Sally continues:

A colleague recently shared that this is the first year in over 20 years of teaching that not one student in her large lecture section had taken a foreign language in high school. Where will our country be in 15 years, as the first complete NCLB generation fills all of our college classrooms? (as cited in National Education Association, p. 62)

“The course of time must be primarily not only the passing of present to past, but also that of the future to the present” (Merleau-Ponty, 1945/2006, p. 481). Where is the future in teaching when children are not exposed to foreign languages? How can it not close off the abundance of living when teachers only expose children to the narrow

world of English speakers? Finn (1997) explains the value of opening up inquiry-based learning for children:

And I'm not just referring to the whiz kids in the class, the ones who will go to Harvard. Every child can be taught to think, and our job is to do just that. Even when you're teaching Jack and the Beanstalk to very small children, you can ask them to exercise their minds: Was it right for Jack to steal the goose? Why or why not? And you can ask the same kinds of questions with twelfth graders—only now you're talking about Stephen Crane or Shakespeare. (p. 4)

What insights do teachers gain when they are able to ask children to “exercise their minds”? Anyone who has spent time with an inquisitive two-year-old or amidst the reflections of a ninety-year old understands the abundance of learning and the joy of participating in the exercising of a mind.

Rozalia explains her feelings of frustration about the things that are, as well as the things that will not be, as a result of teaching under NCLB.

The focus on . . . testing has taken the heart of teaching out of the classroom. Students' spirit for learning and sharing has been reduced. . . Creativity is a skill students need to compete in today's society. Don't reduce the power of the teacher and students by having them spend 75 percent of their time and energy on a one-shot testing experience. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 215)

Rozalia speaks to the lived experience of teaching under NCLB where the power of teaching is reduced to a heartless experience focused on the state test. What becomes of a teacher without a heart? It seems the learning we want to make available to students is one where teachers are able to provide opportunities for creativity and heartfelt teaching.

Yes, I love my job. Yes, I love my students. Yes, I do everything I can to give them all opportunities to learn. The only problem is that I still waste time with an undesirable bill called ESEA when I could be doing my job! (Angela, as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 214)

Teachers must reside in a space where they are free to take risks to open themselves to teaching outside of testing time. However, in the presence of testing time, what becomes

of teachers? Perhaps time is not “wasted” as Angela expresses; however, does not identifying oneself as a “waster of time,” penetrate into the being of oneself? Would it not, therefore, transform the lived experience for teachers? When teachers identify themselves as wasters of time, who do they become?

Many teachers speak of a calling to the profession of teaching, much as those who profess a particular faith are called to a religious order. Huebner (1999a) deduces:

To accept the vocation of a teacher is to answer the call of children and young people. Sometimes their call is suppressed by those in charge of schools or by others with power over young. The voices of the powerful frequently dominate the channels of communication noisily covering over the voices of the young. The activities of the powerful cause some of the frustration in the work and life of the teacher. (p. 379)

Barth (2001) notes that for school reform to take place, teachers must not lose passion:

“What is needed is an invitation to practitioners to bring a spirit of creativity and invention into the schoolhouse. What is needed is a sense of heart” (p. 5). How does this initial calling get reduced to a command? In the present, the tension for teachers resides amongst testing-time.

Test Anxiety

My preliminary conversations with teachers open up Heidegger’s notion of angst. Angst comes from the Latin *anxi* meaning, “troubled or uneasy in the mind” (*OED Online*, 2011). Heidegger (1993c) notes that “Anxiety is basically different from fear. We become afraid in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect. . . In anxiety, we say, ‘one feels ill at ease’. Anxiety leaves us hanging because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole” (pp. 100-101). Michelle’s request to remain anonymous after sharing her thoughts on NCLB demonstrates her angst. “Please keep this confidential. I would like to remain as an anonymous source and

not be known as someone who is bucking the system,” she says. What slips away for Michelle amidst the anxiety? As I hear Michelle’s request, I, too, find myself ill at ease. It causes me to reflect on my being as a teacher amongst teachers. Who are we becoming as a consequence of the law? I am called to discover the essence of this phenomenon. There is a tugging at my consciousness to understand “being in teaching” under NCLB.

Identifying the being of teachers under NCLB Molly suggests:

NCLB has given teachers no clear direction, but more importantly, it has given them no respect. . . in a profession in which salaries are diminishing, community respect is dwindling, and expectations are rising, it is truly disheartening to realize that the people in charge of education at the federal level have totally lost touch with the needs of education. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 103)

Linda says, “Teachers are scared that student test scores [are] their measure of success, and when they have lower level kids, they get frustrated knowing that the kids’ scores won’t likely reflect their hard work.” Researching this phenomenon is a quest for a clearer understanding of what it means for teachers to preserve a sense of self as they struggle with the powerful forces pushing into classrooms as a result of the test anxiety. Is it possible for student test scores to extend teachers’ insights in the classroom, rather than cause frustration? What would such assessments look like?

Measuring achievement through a test is not new; however, NCLB declares a relationship between standardized assessment and learning. Subsequently, tests that are designed for one purpose, such as achievement trends, school accountability, school funding and certification of student proficiency levels, are used for different purposes such as to shape curricula and form instructional practices (Shepard, 2000). Teachers, as they move through their daily lives, are faced with the forces reconciling the testing time between intent and reality inside classrooms. Shepard (2000) posits:

The purpose of assessment in classrooms must also be changed fundamentally so it is used to help students learn and improve instruction, not just to rank students or to certify the end products of learning. (p. 1080)

For teachers, ranking students as result of the tests, moves the heart away from improved instruction, as defined by Shepard, to “products of learning.” Subsequently, the possibility arises, then, that teaching becomes something not *from* the heart of teachers but out of duty *by* the teachers.

Is it possible that the test scores will rise, but at a cost that unfortunately will not be factored into the equation. The discussion has gone so far off track that the unquestionably valuable concept of standards has been divorced from all that goes into building the kind of school culture that leads naturally to the attainment of those standards. . . does the attempt to remediate a problem cause a greater problem than the one we were originally trying to solve? (Barth, 2001, p. 92)

What would the lived experience of teaching look like if it were measured by successes of the heart, void of test anxiety? “Anxiety leaves us hanging because it induces the slipping away of beings as a whole” (Heidegger, 1993c, p. 101). The heightened awareness of self as a whole resides in teachers amidst test anxiety. Who do teachers become when they slip away from themselves as teachers?

Test-Drive

“The formulator and writer of curricular language is seldom an artist” (Huebner, 1999b p. 101). In preliminary conversations with teachers they reveal the prevalence of the “practice test.” In practice-test sessions teachers are asked to create situations whereby students are able to hone their test-taking skills. The goal of these sessions is to increase test-scores through, experiencing as closely as possible, the same type of conditions students will experience during the administration of the state exam. Students are assigned to “testing groups” and asked to report to “testing rooms.” Similar to the “test-drive” of a vehicle, teachers are asked to use these sessions to evaluate the

performance of their students and reliability of their results. What is the experience of teaching in a classroom where the test-drive is emphasized over the understanding of content and engagement of wonder?

The etymological foundation of drive is from the Old English *drifan* meaning, “*pushing from behind.*” More recently, “a drive” in golf is a “forcible blow” (*OED Online*, 2011). As golfers drive a ball down the fairway, the focus is on a specified location. The ball is to arrive, as effectively and efficiently as possible at a predetermined spot. Who do teachers become as data drives them to a predetermined spot? Secretary of Education Duncan spoke at the National Black Child Development Institute’s National Conference in Atlanta in October, 2009. In a breakout session around “Data Driven Schools” a superintendent spoke about how data drives educational decisions in his district. At one point an audience member, a parent of a high performing autistic child, told the following story. “At the end of the school year the teacher gave my child a hug, then said, ‘Oh, I’ll miss (the parent thought she was going to say ‘you’ to her child). . . Instead the teacher said ‘I’ll miss your scores.’” An audible gasp was heard in the audience. Who do teachers become when the focus is on the data rather than the students?

In the autumn of 2009, during a conversation with Danish students and educators, one of the students, Christian asked me about the “surveys the students were taking” at the school he was visiting. Christian explained that on his first day visiting an American classroom, his American counterparts were completing a survey. “The students read a passage and filled in a computerized answer sheet. What is this survey?” I explained that this was a “formative assessment” to gauge how well the students understood the concepts being taught in class. The concept of completing an assessment through

computerized responses seemed not only awkward but useless to the Danish student. He explained that he completes one exam at the end of the course and throughout the course engages in conversation with his peers and teachers to help him understand the concepts being taught. What a Danish student named a “survey” American teachers and students name a “test.” The language of data reveals the teachers’ place.

Language as a totality of words and expression constitutes the world wherein man [sic] has his place. It is in the spoken word of the other and the printed word of the page. Man [sic] uses that language in his dealings with the world, i.e., it is part of the totality of equipment which empowers man [sic] to act in the world.
(Huebner, 1999c, p. 146)

In the spoken and written world of language, data drives teachers. They are to test-drive their students while simultaneously deliver them to specified locations in the curriculum. In what ways does language in-vade the course for teachers? What does it mean for the course to be pre-determined by others?

Between School and Family

Children spend much of their waking hours inside school houses living with teachers. Casey (1993) reminds us that built places are, “extensions of our bodies” (p. 120). Teachers find themselves in the built place of the schoolhouse alongside their students. In this space they navigate the juxtaposition of dwelling for children between school and family. What is the experience for teachers as they are called to “create a stable place” for students amidst the pressure to prepare students for tests? In what ways is the tension, the angst, heightened for teachers as they create a stable dwelling-as-residing place for children? What becomes of teachers as a result of living amidst the tension of dwelling-as-residing between school and family?

Christine recounts a moment in her teaching when creating a stable place, a dwelling-as-residing, became a source of tension. The fate of a student caused her to act in a manner she was ashamed of; however, she feels it exemplifies the pressure teachers are under due to NCLB. Her story begins with the arrival of a new student in her fourth grade class a few weeks into the school year, with literally only the shirt on her back. The student moved into the jurisdiction with her sister and mother to escape an abusive situation. The school system worked as a liaison between the family and social services to help the family with food, clothing and housing. Christine quickly saw that the girl struggled with both reading and math skills; however, this provided an opportunity for Christine to develop a closer relationship with a student struggling not only in school, but also in the world outside of the schoolhouse. One-on-one tutoring sessions during and after-school helped create a sense of inhabitation for both the student and Christine. Casey reveals, “We are not merely at our destination but fully in it” (Casey, 1993, p. 121). Then, Christine recounts:

About a month before the state tests, I found out that this little girl was moving to another school district. .. When I found out for a short moment, I was actually excited. My first thought was, “Yes! Her scores won’t count against us!” Then I literally broke down. I had tears streaming down my face and felt so ashamed.

I realized that I had let the stress of NCLB get to me and had forgotten that there was a little girl here, a beautiful little girl who had started to see some hope and was encouraged that someone cared about her. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, pp. 93-94)

The tension, the pull, between success on the state test and helping a struggling student inhabit the classroom reveals itself to Christine. I hold within me a desire to find a clearer understanding of what it means for teachers to maintain a caring being with students, in

the face of social pressures from outside the schoolhouse. Darling-Hammond (2004) writes:

Perhaps the most adverse unintended consequence of NCLB is that it creates incentives for schools to rid themselves of students who are not doing well, producing higher scores at the expense of vulnerable students' educations. (p. 16)

What is the lived experience for teachers as they struggle inside a schoolhouse by forces outside of it? What meaning do teachers create for themselves as they understand their role, as determined under NCLB as one, which ultimately, may be unrealistic?

Imagine a federal law that declared that 100 percent of all citizens must have adequate health care in twelve years or sanctions will be imposed on doctors and hospitals. Or all crime must be eliminated in twelve years or the local police department will face privatization. (Karp, 2004, p. 60)

What is it like for teachers as they seek to embrace the teaching of children in a heartfelt manner, while additionally being pressured to meet the needs of the state assessments?

Who do teachers become as they reside in the space filled with both relief and sadness as the most vulnerable children become expendable? How would it be for teachers to inhabit a space where policy makers focus on redressing poverty and crime, rather than the achievement gap in isolation from other social forces residing within the schoolhouse?

Rothstein (2004) contends that public policies attempting to narrow the social and economic gaps between lower- and middle-class children could have greater impact on student achievement than exclusive focus on school reform. Gerstl-Pepin (2006) suggests that it is important for policymakers to acknowledge and value the challenges faced by teachers and staff who serve children from families lacking proper healthcare, affordable and quality early childhood education, nutrition, literacy, safety and livable wages.

Apple (1996) reminds us that public schooling is one of the nation's largest public undertakings. And Connell (as cited by Apple, 1996) asks, "Who gets most of its

benefits?” (p. 93). Apple responds that “This is a complex issue, but in terms of both access and outcomes, the educational system distributes social assets in ways that are more than a little unequal” (p. 93). Where does it leave teachers when social assets are unevenly distributed? Ken explains:

As a teacher preparing to retire (early, thanks to ESEA/NCLB), I have witnessed the takeover of the passion of dedicated teachers by the test mania mandated by our state. I have been asked to sign an oath swearing to secrecy, to not look at any questions, to not discuss with anyone, and not to share my story with the public. In other words, I have been asked to give up my rights to free speech so that some administrator can tell his or her supervisor that his teachers were willing little sheep. . .

Please let me do what I love, let me do what my education and experience has prepared me for, and let me have access to my rights as guaranteed by our constitution. If not for ESEA/NCLB I would be glad to continue in my profession! (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 205)

Where is the dwelling place for teachers when they feel they must retire rather than stay in a profession they love? For example, an exploration of differences in young children’s achievement scores in literacy and mathematics by race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (SES) as they began kindergarten demonstrates that even before children begin kindergarten, poverty has a detrimental impact on intellectual achievement. Although this research suggests that socioeconomic status is strongly related to cognitive skills, and accounts for more of the variation in cognitive scores than any other factor, issues around poverty are omitted from the ongoing dialogue around school improvement (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Who do teachers become inside schools serving students with high levels of poverty when they are expected to bridge the achievement gap, as measured by the state assessment? NCLB charges schools, and more specifically the teachers in schools resting in low SES areas, with redressing the achievement gap, but what does this do for the lived experience of teaching?

A Sisyphean Challenge

Sisyphus spent eternity rolling a boulder up a hill, only to watch it roll back down. He was given an endless and unavailing task. Teachers under NCLB are charged with an endless and unavailing task as well. Darling-Hammond (2004) points out that the onus of responsibility for achievement is on teachers; however, the state is not held responsible for providing adequate resources to help teachers meet the goal. Darling-Hammond writes:

In the NCLB paradigm, there is no solution to this problem, as two-way accountability does not exist: The child and the school are accountable to the state for test performance, but the state is not held accountable to the child or his school for providing adequate educational resources. (p. 16)

My research draws me to seek understanding of the experience for teachers with the burden for producing higher scores in the hollowness of limited resources.

Casey (1993) explains that in a place of residence, “We are empowered to discover novel features of built structures or to create such features ourselves by rearranging the materials already present in a given residence” (p. 117). The thought of rearranging “materials already present in a given residence” comes to mind during a school visit. As I walk into a second grade classroom, eighteen second-grade children stand in a circle with tennis-balls bouncing between them as they count down from 200 by tens. Eighteen yellow tennis balls bounce in unison, and also in unison the class counts, “200,” bounce, “190,” bounce, “180,” bounce. Eventually, the teacher is silent, and the chorus of children counting is assisted only by the eighteen tennis-balls bouncing (*almost*) in unison, “160,” bounce, “150,” bounce. . . “100,” bounce. The teacher calls out, “Hey let’s stop here a minute.” With big brown captivating eyes and a contagious anticipation she asks, “Anyone know what happens next?” The children, grinning from

ear to ear, shout “90!” “Okay, let’s get going then!” bounce. Bounce, bounce, bounce. The rearranging of tennis balls empowers the children to discover the world within the classroom in a full and tactile manner. I am reminded of Greene’s (2001) assertion that “The way a teacher responds to the development of a classroom situation depends a great deal upon that teacher’s sense of teaching as both project and process” (p. 84). The response to student development is felt in the classroom.

Down the hallway, the first grade students are writing the initial entries in their journals. The journal pages are large sheets of paper with lines for writing on the bottom half, and a space for a picture on the top of the sheet. Victoria’s journal reads, “The queen wers [sic] a krown [sic]. She is pretty.” Natalia is busy coloring a picture of a horse. She has not written anything yet. She explains to me, “My daddy bought me a horse this summer in Salvador. It is beautiful. My daddy is in Salvador.” Jesús busily colors a picture of him kicking a soccer ball. His journal entry reads, “I lik [sic] soccer. I am good at it.” “Jesús,” I ask, “do you have a favorite team?” Looking at me with a furrowed brow he asks, “How do you know my name?” Oh, the innocence of five-year-olds! “Well, have you ever met me?” “No,” he responds with an incredulous grin on his face. “Well then, how do you think I *learned* your name? What could I have done to *learn* your name?” Victoria’s face lights up, “Oh, you read it! You read his name from the nametag on his desk!” I give them a wink, and they giggle, and I am off to the next classroom.

As I continue on through the school, the awareness of the children, their learning and excitement, saturate my body. I say to my colleague, “I want to go to school here!” Coming back to Palmer’s (1998) notion of “The way we diagnose our students’ condition

will determine the kind of remedy we offer” (p. 41), I reflect that these teachers diagnose their students’ condition as one of being ready to learn.

However, it is difficult *not* to be reminded of Rothstein’s (2004) work and the fable of Sisyphus as I drive away from the school. Echoing in my mind I hear, “Good teachers, high expectations, standards, accountability and inspiration are not enough” (p. 5). The children at the school are poor. Most receive free or reduced meals, but a larger number, has received free or reduced meal services at some point since they entered the school system. I wonder how students’ poverty cannot play a role in teachers’ lives.

As I drive through the subsidized housing just off the school grounds, I have feelings of anger toward Rothstein. Why can’t good teaching be enough? Rothstein (2004) contends:

The gap in average achievement can probably not be narrowed substantially as long as the United States maintains such vast differences in socioeconomic conditions. (p. 129)

I am called to the examination of teaching under NCLB as the teachers struggle to create a destination inside the classroom ripe with possibilities for students and teachers alike. Not only at the school I visited, but throughout the county, without exception, the poor children, those classified as FARMS students, on average, score lower on the standardized tests than the children who are not classified as FARMS. Although the framers of NCLB would like to believe that excellent teaching can solve the achievement gap, is it possible? I wonder, what becomes of teachers when constant and pervasive issues such as homelessness, poverty and speaking English as a second language are seen to have *less* impact on student achievement than the instruction in the classroom students receive only five hours a day, one-hundred and eighty days a year?

Berliner (2008) notes the relationship between poverty and school achievement:

The relationship between poverty and school achievement is well known. In fact it has been found to be stronger, by far, than the relationship between cigarette smoking and disease. But although we have taken the latter seriously, passing laws and creating tax policies to reduce smoking, we have done little or nothing about the relationship between poverty and achievement. Expecting achievement to rise while poverty rates stay the same or worse is foolhardy. (p. 252)

Where does the energy of teaching go when teachers are charged with the Sisyphean challenge of closing the achievement gap, a gap defined by standardized tests?

Rogers (2006) claims that NCLB's policies are based on a fundamental "misunderstanding of the problems facing many schools that serve large numbers of low-income students and students of color" (p. 623). Rogers argues that ascribing failure solely to the beliefs and practices of educators fails to acknowledge that inadequate and unequal conditions in schools shape teachers' work and students' learning. Who do teachers become as a result of defining themselves as closers of a gap?

Beyond Borders

Under NCLB each state creates its own state assessment. A 2007 study by the U.S. Department of Education indicates that the observed differences in states' reported scores is largely due to differences in the stringency of state standards, rather than actual differences across states. What becomes of the perceived sense of leaving children behind when children with similar content knowledge, living across states lines, score vastly different on the exam? Students living in one state may be classified as "Advanced," while those living across the state border with similar content knowledge may be classified as "Basic" (National Center for Education Statistics, June 2007). The Center for Education Policy notes that tests and achievement are not the same thing.

Test scores are not the same thing as achievement. Although tests are often viewed as precise and objective, they are imperfect and incomplete measures of how much students have learned. Still, state tests are the primary measure of achievement used in NCLB. (2007, www.cep-dc.org)

What becomes of teachers when the public is lulled into a belief that test scores and achievement are the same? Heidegger (1972) explains: “Teaching is more difficult than learning because what teaching calls for is this; to let learn. The real teacher, in fact, lets nothing else be learned—than learning” (p. 15). What space is created for teachers “to let learn” under NCLB? If teachers are not able to “let learn,” who do they become?

Inside many schoolhouses there is a feeling that is readily apparent, though not easy to describe. Stephanie, a veteran teacher with 19 years of teaching ESL students describes how she taught before NCLB:

My ESL (English as a Second Language Learners) designed the first student created Web site in our school district after they read the novel *Holes*. My students read and wrote meaningful, expressive poetry. They read Shakespeare and performed their own versions of Romeo and Juliet in a contemporary setting. My students acted out the courtroom scene from *To Kill A Mockingbird* with a jury composed of students, and they wrote papers about racism. (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 70)

This type of transformative teaching, explains Jacob, one of Stephanie’s former students changed his life. “I knew I could work in the computer industry when we made that Web site. Today, I am a project manager for Sony PlayStation” (as cited in National Education Association, p. 70). Sadly, the interior view has changed. Stephanie describes her classroom today:

My students don’t do any of these things anymore. We prepare for tests and are tested. . . Last spring, one of my students said to me, “Mrs. Jordan, when my brother had you in class, everyone made a poetry book. When are we going to write poetry?” I answered, “We don’t have time for poetry any more. We have to get ready for the test.” (as cited in National Education Association, 2007, p. 70)

Stephane continues by sharing another request from a student: “Can’t we read a book instead? I heard we were going to read some cool books this year, and we’ve only read two.” As tears welled in her eyes she replies, “We don’t have time to read books in English class. I’m sorry kids, I’m so sorry” (p. 71). What becomes of Stephane, as a teacher of English Language Learners, when she must declare she cannot provide her children time to read books? How does she inhabit the world of her English classroom when she must close off the world of books to prepare children for the state assessment? What inspiration, adventure and understanding do teachers open up amidst NCLB?

There is, there has been, there will always be, a certain group of people whom inspiration visits. It’s made up of all those who’ve consciously chosen their calling and to their job with love and imagination. It may include doctors, teachers, gardeners—I could list a hundred more professions. Their work becomes one continuous adventure as long as they manage to keep discovering new challenges in it. Difficulties and setbacks never quell their curiosity. A swarm of new questions emerge from every problem they solve. Whatever inspiration is, it’s born from a continuous “I don’t know.” (Szyborska, 1996, pp. 27-28)

The abundance in not knowing is a powerful thing. It can open up many paths to knowing and understanding. Where is the space in NCLB classrooms for admitting, “I don’t know”? When knowing is defined narrowly as it is under NCLB, what becomes of the teachers?

Performance over Practice

NCLB asks teachers to implement specific techniques, to reproduce the desired outcome, much like paint-by-numbers. Imagine calling together some of the great artists, like Vermeer, Picasso and Van Gough, supplying them with specific paints and a brush, and then dictating to them the parameters for a final piece of work. Would they be able to create in the same manner as if they were given opportunity to do so independently? In speaking directly to instructional practices in biology, Aronson (2007) notes:

Curricular breadth and pressure to prepare students for tests may inhibit instructional practices that foster students' interest in biology and may even replace creative, instructional lessons with those that focus on test preparation, remediation and reassessment of previously taught material. Because the demands of preparation for the state exam are so overwhelming, many teachers can feel pressure to forego their best instructional activities just to get through the curriculum. Planning periods and department meetings are often dedicated to analyzing student data to predict performance on the high-stakes exam and developing test wiseness. (p. 67)

The approved notion of success, the paint-by-numbers ideology, creates pressure for teachers to narrow instruction to cover tested concepts. As a consequence of knowing what is "tested" material, teachers let go and release the teaching and learning of non-tested material.

Schools are spending more time on reading and math, with 71 percent of districts reporting cutbacks in time devoted to other subjects and 22 percent reporting cuts in time for art and music. (Cavanaugh, 2006, p. 7)

The tension between performance and practice plays out as teachers are asked to use specific brush-strokes—the so-called "best practices" while leaving their own identity off the palette.

Teachers must use *best practices*, meaning content is aligned with national and state standards and teaching methods—now called *interventions*—that are 'scientifically proven' to be effective, cost efficient and 'able to be applied and duplicated, and scaled-up' for wide use. This nicely echoes the idea that ready-made solutions for transmitting knowledge are out there, and that teachers are not much more than technicians who should use them. (Chapman, 2007, p. 26)

As schools come to the attention of the state authorities for having poor test scores, teachers are required to infuse interventions into their teaching. The interventions cause a narrowing both of the curricula and instructional practices. Michelle, a middle school teacher, explains the one-size fits all approach:

The idea that every child learns at the same rate, at the same time is one that no parent should accept as accurate! Experience with children will tell you that this is not true. In our school system, we are working feverishly to develop pacing

guides to regulate what is taught every day. We are setting up our children and our teachers for failure. This law is being used as an excuse not to teach children from where they are. . . This law, with its dependency on standardized tests, doesn't accomplish what politicians tell you it does. (National Education Association, 2007, p. 3)

Although outside of the schoolhouse, the idea that all children learn at the same rate is not an idea that parents would accept. For example, parents do not purchase baby-books with the dates pre-determined for “first word” at six months, or “first step” at twelve months. The notion that all infants take part in these activities at the same date and same rate is quite an inaccurate assessment. However, within schoolhouses, parents allow, perhaps even demand, that teachers provide such rankings and comparisons.

A lesson sequence on statistics for sixth grade students in the state of Maryland's largest school district reads:

The purpose of these lessons is to display, interpret, and analyze numerical frequency tables. Students investigate numerical data and learn how to choose an appropriate scale and interval to display the data on a frequency table. Students also investigate how a change in the scale and interval affect the look and interpretation of the frequency table. (Montgomery County Public Schools Mathematics Instructional Guide, Math A, 2007)

The start date and end date for these lessons is prescribed by the school district, and teachers are required to feverishly regulate what is taught every day. Recent school visits to five mathematics classrooms at four different schools throughout the county on the same day, bring a bodily sense of agitation. In each classroom I see the students staring at the same worksheet, a prepared two-sided document, containing a set of problems.

Causing a greater sense of sadness is the homogeneous, uniform, detached depersonalized teaching also prevalent within each classroom. The teachers meet the objective as stated by others, teach the content prescribed by others, and as a consequence become an homogenized mass of instructors, void of any personal differences. What does

it do to teachers when they know they have not sparked learning for their students, but have taught the content approved by the administration? To capsize homogenization in teaching, Darling-Hammond (2007) asks, “What would we need to do to graduate all of our students with the ability to apply knowledge to complex problems, communicate and collaborate effectively and find and manage information?” (p. 13). Where is the space on the canvas for teachers to teach students to apply knowledge to complex problems, communicate and collaborate effectively, and find and manage information?

In this chapter I bring forward the notion of tension as it relates to my question, **“What is the lived experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind?”** As I conducted my preliminary research of NCLB, I discovered the lived experience of teachers, those who are to carry out the mandates within the classroom, is missing from much of the literature. This phenomenological exploration lends a philosophic voice to teachers teaching under NCLB, in order to penetrate into deeper layers of meaning as their experiences are uncovered. In Chapter Three I explore phenomenology as a research methodology, including the philosophic framework of hermeneutic phenomenology, through which I conduct my research into the experience of teachers teaching under NCLB.

**CHAPTER THREE:
PHENOMENOLOGY AS JOURNEY:
PHILOSOPHICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

“Anyone who has walked through cornfields knows the uncanny experience of being scrutinized and spoken to by whispering stalks” (Abram, 1996, p. 130). This quote brings me back to my childhood in the upper Midwest. If you have never walked through a cornfield, the idea of “whispering stalks” seems unreal. If you have done so, you know the feeling. It is the gentle rustle of a spring breeze, the heavy swaying before a storm, or the hushed evaporation of the nighttime dew in the summertime sunshine. Wrapped in the whispering stalks, the voices of the earth are not so much heard as felt within your body.

With the passage of NCLB, I began to feel a shift in the tone, a change in the sounds within the schools where I worked. Abram (1996) helps me understand the new tone I sense in schools since the passage of NCLB, not only in the *words* from the teachers, but from their *sounds* and the underlying tone of angst. The schools and the teachers in them *speak* to me; they resonate within my being. But what does it mean to resonate? Resonate is derived from the Latin *resonantia* meaning to echo (*OED Online*, 2011). As if holding onto the past for one more moment, an echo keeps the past alive while it fades away into an unrecognizable reverberation of itself. This leads me to wonder, what sounds from the teachers are echoing within my being? There, settling into my body, lies the resonance of teaching today.

As Levin (2003) notes, “We must take our thinking ‘down’ into the body” (p. 61). And as Abram (1996) observes:

The ears. . . tell me less about the outer surface than the interior substance of things. . . Looking and listening bring me into contact, respectively, with the outward surfaces and with the interior voluminosity of things, and hence where

these senses come together. I experience, over there, the complex interplay of inside and outside that is characteristic of my own self-experience. (p. 128)

The “complex interplay of inside and outside” draws me to researching the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. I am drawn in by questions such as: Would I have flourished or failed as a student in today’s system which myopically focuses on standardized assessments? As a teacher, would I have made it through my first years of teaching feeling that I was graded on the achievement of my students on a single state assessment as teachers are today under NCLB? Hermeneutic phenomenology enables me to open up the space between inside and outside, between past and present. What happens when these spaces are exposed?

The individual is thrown into a world, not necessarily of his own making, but an embodiment of the past. What aspects of the past are so valued by those controlling educational environments that they should be used to call forth such responses? (Huebner, 1999d, p. 139)

In what ways is teaching under NCLB an embodiment of the past? How is it put into the body? In understanding teaching under NCLB through a phenomenological lens, how might it be possible to not only understand the past, but also the future in education? Huebner (1999d), in discussing “Curriculum As Concern for Man’s Temporality,” notes that “Time is not a dimension in which we live—a series of ‘nows,’ some past and some in the future. Man does not simply await a future and look back upon a past” (p. 137).

What is reflected in teaching through a look at teaching under NCLB?

My questions guide my choice of research methodology, as van Manen advises:

The questions themselves and the way one understands the questions are the important starting points, not the method as such.... There exists a certain dialectic between question and method ... The method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator. (2003, pp. 1-2)

The harmony in the teachers' voices around this phenomenon draws me to phenomenology as a methodology. Marsalis (2009) explains that musical improvisation requires musicians to ask, "How can I be me, without you losing sight of you" (n.p.). Are teachers able to remain themselves without losing sight of self under NCLB? "Instead of 'curriculum implementation' how about 'curriculum improvisation'" (Aoki, 2005f, p. 369)? In what ways is curriculum improvisation possible under NCLB? What happens to teachers in the absence of curricular improvisation? "Pedagogy is the activity of teaching parenting or generally living with children, that requires constant practical acting in concrete situations and relations" (van Manen, 2003, p. 2). Phenomenology "offers us the possibility of plausible insights that bring us in more direct contact with the world" (van Manen, p. 9). What unique meaning can I bring to understanding teaching under NCLB using phenomenological methodology?

These questions, themselves, are what drew down into my body, drew me to this methodology. In this chapter, I explore the way hermeneutic phenomenology uncovers the lived experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind. I lay out my understanding of phenomenology as it leads me to understand my phenomenon. Additionally, I bring together the philosophic voices that ground this study. Finally, I reveal the research paths that I will follow in order to capture teachers' lived experiences.

The Rhythm of Interpreting the Sounds Within: Hermeneutic Phenomenological Foundations

Within the classroom walls teachers are faced with the challenge of leading and guiding students. To lead a classroom through a journey of discovery requires teachers to interpret the sounds from the students, the sounds from the curriculum, the sounds from the home environment, as well as the sounds from the children's own social world.

Learning to interpret these sounds is essential to connecting with the children in the classroom; it is essential to the lived experience of teaching. The primary concern of this study is not to determine the effectiveness of NCLB, but rather to elucidate the lived experience of teaching in the NCLB classroom. Sartre (1965/1993) reminds us that “The phenomenologist will interrogate emotion about consciousness or about man [sic]. He [sic] will ask not only what it is but what it has to teach us about being” (p. 198). What conscious emotion about teachers will this study reveal? What signification of emotion will be revealed?

The methodology of a study is “only a way of investigating certain kinds of questions” (van Manen, 2005, p. 1). It is within the methodology, then, that one investigates questions. In what ways will the questions of teaching under NCLB be investigated? To investigate means, “to inquire systematically.” It derives from the Latin *invest* meaning to “track” or “trace out” (*OED Online*, 2011). Through a systematic phenomenological process of inquiry, what will be tracked? Hermeneutic phenomenology presents an opening to reveal and trace out teaching under NCLB. As I reflect on the etymology of investigate, to “track” or “trace out,” a vision of a fresh blanket of snow on the forest floor comes to mind. Here the footprints of animals are difficult to ignore as they are easily revealed through unambiguous imprints on the snow covered earth. I track the squirrel from the base of one tree to the base of the other. I follow the path of a deer foraging for sustenance along the bed of the stream. I am reminded of the things that are with me amidst the forest, things that are always there, but that I fail to recognize. Likewise, through a hermeneutic phenomenological study I am reminded of the things that are in teaching. What essences will be traced out? Once traced

out, what understandings will be brought forward to fill the spaces? What re-membrance of teaching will be revealed?

Like many investigations, mine rests on questions—in this case, questions directed to teachers and intended to open up the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. Because of the primary role these questions take in my investigation, phenomenology is a methodology suited to my inquiry into this lived experience. Van Manen (2005) reminds us that “It is not at all surprising that wonder is the central methodological feature of phenomenological inquiry. . . Phenomenology not only finds its starting point in wonder, it must induce wonder” (p. 5). As wonder opens up reflection, the reflection itself draws one into the phenomenon. The arousal of wonder, my curiosity about what teaching *is*, and the presence of the questions draw me toward phenomenology.

Jardine (1987) summarizes the main distinctions between mainstream social science and phenomenology. Phenomenology embraces the world as we live it, but in the process, invites us to change the way we live. Our taken-for granted notions of self-understanding, reflection, and practical competence are all reconceived in phenomenological inquiry. This self-understanding is a result of our own understanding of self in the world. Too often, as Gadamer (1960/2006) notes, we are only vaguely aware of things in the margin or periphery of attention, while we are only implicitly aware of the wider horizon of things in the world around us.

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him. On the other hand ‘to have a horizon’ means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 301)

Phenomenological inquiry opens up the horizon of the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. If the horizon is the range of vision that “includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point,” what lies beyond that vantage point? What is unfastened when the vantage point is opened up and the horizon is expanded?

Abram (1996) describes moments of heightened sensual awareness as,

Moments when visual and auditory foci are virtually indistinguishable. For these senses are functioning here as a single, hyper attentive organ; we feel ourselves listening with our eyes and watching with our ears, ready to respond with our whole body to change in the Other’s behavior. (p. 129)

As if walking through the whispering stalks of corn, the hyper-attentive organ of my teacher-self hears and feels the lived experience of teaching under NCLB as I move into schools and throughout classrooms. The sounds within the schools draw me to phenomenology as my methodology. What does the daily rhythm sound like as teachers strive to keep the tempo of teaching the mandates set forth by NCLB? And, through my bodily sense of being, I respond to the lived experience of teaching under NCLB.

Marsalis (2009) explains:

When you don’t consider the song of yourself, you become lost. And when you’re lost, you do lose things. And if you’re lost long enough, you stop looking to be found. (lecture notes)

The song of myself calls me to investigate this phenomenon and guides me to phenomenology as my methodology. What I see as I move throughout classrooms looks like teaching; however, often, it does not feel like it. Why is it that this teaching causes me to listen to the sounds within? I listen to the daily rhythm. Camus (1955) notes that “Everything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it” (p. 13). How does phenomenology enable a showing of the consciousness of teaching

under NCLB? Revealing the pedagogical practices thriving amidst NCLB is essential to understanding teaching in public schools in the United States as a consequence of it.

Seeking Understanding

The understanding I hope to uncover through a phenomenological study of teaching under NCLB is to address the reader and reveal the pedagogical implications of the law inside classrooms. “Perhaps a phenomenological text is ultimately successful only to the extent that we, its readers, feel addressed by it—in the totality or unity of our being” (van Manen, 2007, p. 26). In the often overlooked work of teaching (not the act of teaching such as teaching students to count, add and subtract), but teaching, the significance of being within the classroom, is what I desire to understand.

To do this, hermeneutics contributes to broadening the horizon. The phenomenon of teaching under NCLB begins with a written text, the law itself, and Gadamer (1960/2006) reminds us, “Let us here recall that the task of hermeneutics was first and foremost the understanding of texts” (p. 393). The written text of NCLB, the written law itself, provides the origin for understanding the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB. The words in the text of the law reveal the foundation for the phenomenon itself. Subsequently, hermeneutics plays an important role in exposing the basis of the phenomenon. “The ‘Hermes process’ is at work when something foreign, strange, separated in time, space, or experience is made familiar, present, comprehensible: something requiring representation, explanation, or translation is somehow ‘brought to understanding’—is interpreted” (Huebner, 1999e, p. 193). The experience of teaching under NCLB requires both explanation and translation. Hermeneutics brings explanation,

representation and translation to lived ideas fundamental in the law such as “adequate yearly progress,” “closing the gap” and “disaggregated data.”

Van Manen (2003) explains, “Hermeneutics is the theory and practice of interpretation” (p. 179). Likewise, Huebner (1999f) quoting Ricoeur explains, “Hermeneutics begins where dialogue ends” (p. 267). The hermeneutic interpretive process will reveal meanings of teaching under NCLB, not merely the situations of the classroom. There is a propensity to dwell in the space of teaching, but not in the spirit of it, perhaps due to “Our desire to ‘fix’ the world into stable and known practices and expressions” (Huebner, 1999f, p. 267). As a consequence of seeking to fix understanding to known practices and expressions, insight regarding teaching under NCLB is brought forward through a discussion of the state and stasis of education, rather than to teaching itself. However, what can be brought forward when the hermeneutic process moves us beyond the space of teaching? Opening the lived experience of teaching under NCLB through the hermeneutical process, I seek to make unfamiliar what is taken for granted, and bring new comprehensibility to the lived experience of it.

The etymological foundation of hermeneutics comes from the Greek *hermeneutikos*, meaning skilled in interpreting or making clear (*OED Online*, 2011). In Greek mythology Hermes is the messenger god who serves as the interpreter between Zeus and mortals. More than simply explaining or interpreting, however, hermeneutics reveals the significance of a thing. It is this notion of bringing forth the message, the significance of teaching that draws me to hermeneutics. The hermeneutic process brings what is beyond human understanding into a form that can be grasped (Huebner, 1999f).

However, Gadamer (1960/2006) advises that this bringing forth is not merely relaying a message. The researcher is to have a personal connection to the phenomenon. “The most basic of all hermeneutic preconditions remains one’s own fore-understanding, which comes from being concerned with the same subject” (p. 294). My concern for the whatness, of teaching, under NCLB, comes from my roots in public education since 1992. “A phenomenology that is sensitive to the lifeworld explores how our everyday involvements with our world are enriched by knowing as in-being” (van Manen, 2007, p. 13). My everyday involvement in teaching draws me to this phenomenon not as an empty slate, but through my knowing as an educator. As a consequence, I desire to extend the horizon of understanding of teaching under NCLB.

In professional fields such as pedagogy, psychology and nursing, the dominance of technological and calculative thought is so strong that it seems well-nigh impossible to offer acceptable alternatives to the technocratic ideologies and the inherently instrumental presuppositional structures of professional practice. The roots of this technologizing of professional knowledge have grown deeply into the metaphysical sensibilities of western cultures. (van Manen, 2007, p. 19)

Through a phenomenological study I hope to elucidate teaching amidst such technological thought. Even as my experience enables me to bring something to this study, the interpretative aspect of hermeneutic phenomenology enables me to take something away as I dig deeper into who I am as an educator and better understand the phenomenon of teaching in today’s public schools. As Aoki (2005a) says:

Hermeneutic conversation is a dialectic of questions and answers that in their interpretive turnings are attempts to move to deeper ontological realms of meanings. Successful hermeneutic conversations lead conversationalist, human beings as they are, toward questions concerning who they are. (pp. 180-181)

Aoki reminds us that phenomenological hermeneutics is “a critical quest for what it means to be human” (p. 183). Likewise, Heidegger explains that the everyday “speaks” to

us, suggesting who and what we are as human beings (as cited in Pinar et al., 2002, p. 421).

The hermeneutic process allows me to become the author of this subject and, “In writing, the author puts in symbolic form what he or she is capable of seeing” (van Manen, 2003, p. 130). It may be helpful to remind ourselves that the word “author,” from the Old French *autor*, meaning “father” commonly came to be understood as “one who sets forth written statements” (*OED Online*, 2011). Van Manen (2003) notes that “Writing, true writing, is authoring, the exercise of authority” (p. 130). As a teacher myself, hermeneutic phenomenology enables the hearing of teaching, not through my ears alone, but within my body.

Seeing New Horizons and Hearing New Possibilities

Phenomenology is not a methodology that seeks to report results and data in the conventional sense. Van Manen (2005) notes, “We explain nature, but human life we must understand” (p. 4). This understanding of human life broadens the horizon, in ways not initially conceptualized. A phenomenological study opens up the horizon of understanding that is not quantifiable.

So here it is
For you
A glossary of
Some of my validities
None of which
Will fit into a wheelbarrow
(O’Connor, 1996, p. 19)

The form of knowledge prized in NCLB, is that which is quantifiable, that which can fit inside a spreadsheet, or could be placed in a wheelbarrow. It is this notion of teaching I hear as I sit in meetings where students are color coded—red, blue or green as a result of

test performance. It is this idea of teaching and learning that is the driving force of moving students out of music class into test-taking classes.

Brute facts. Within this framework, the form of knowledge that is prized is empirical data; the harder they are, the better, and more objective they are, the better. In scientific terms the form of knowledge assumes nomological status, demanding empirical validation and seeking levels of generalizability. (Aoki 2005b, p.141)

However, “Science is built up with facts, as a house is with stones. But a collection of facts is no more a science than a heap of stones is a house” (Poincare, 1952, p. 141).

A phenomenological study opens the horizon of research beyond empirical data. Sartre (1965/1993) notes, “We shall not first lose ourselves in the study of physiological facts precisely because, taken by themselves and in isolation, they signify *almost nothing*” (p. 200). The physiological facts espoused under NCLB may signify almost nothing; however, here amidst the nothingness of facts dwells the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. It is, therefore, necessary to extend beyond the horizon of the physiological facts. Sartre (1965/1993) provides guidance to a path looking beyond quantifiable data: “. . . human reality is not an accumulation of facts” (p. 200). Likewise, teaching is not an accumulation of test scores. It rests in the wider horizon of lived experience.

However, wider horizons are often difficult to capture. To draw on an example from nature, Bob Smith, a geologist at Yellowstone National Park, notes that the caldera at Yellowstone is so large, most people do not see it (Achenbach, 2009). A hermeneutic phenomenological study allows me to uncover what is beyond the horizon. Abram (1996) speaks of the visible horizon as one that is, “a kind of gateway or threshold, joining the

presence of the surrounding terrain to that which exceeds this open presence, to that which is hidden *beyond* the horizon” (p. 210).

As a teacher-researcher, I look beyond the horizon of NCLB to something *other* in the lived experience of teachers. “The horizon carries the promise of something more, something other.” Poignantly, Abram asks, “Is it possible that the realms we are looking for, the place of *the past* and that of *the future*, are precisely beyond the horizon” (p. 210)? In looking beyond the horizon, phenomenology troubles the notion, the possibility that there is something there, in the lived experience of teachers, beyond the horizon. In order to open up this horizon, I took a path less well-known in circles inside today’s public schools through a phenomenological study.

In the visible horizon of teaching, schools and the students in them are described through test scores rather than the abundance of learning; research from an interpretive tradition such as phenomenology is unconventional. Frost (1920) calls to me: “Two roads diverged in a wood, and I, took the one less traveled by” (p. 9). That line brings me back to childhood hikes on the deer paths deep in the forests of Northern Wisconsin. These paths are neither the easiest nor fastest route through the forest; however, on these journeys I experienced the forest in new and unanticipated ways—it opened up the possibility of thinking differently about “my forest.” Since committing to phenomenology as the methodology, I have been asked if this methodology is “valid” or meaningful. I realize that in the quantitative, data-driven world of public schooling, I have made the conscious decision to take the road less traveled.

Likewise, researching the lived experience of teaching under NCLB opens up the possibility of thinking differently about how we frame the role of teachers in education.

This research is not intended to suggest a program to improve standardized test scores, nor a more comprehensive computerized program to monitor and or predict student performance. Through this phenomenological inquiry, I strive to open up questions around pedagogical and curricular practices in public schools. What would it mean to expand the horizon of our thinking in education? What would it mean to create other possibilities around the abundance of learning and the possibilities of different practices? The end of phenomenological research is to make pedagogical recommendations for educational practice, and these will be derived from bringing the phenomenon forward to be seen in different ways.

Teacher Being

For Heidegger (1993a), being-in-the-world represents a fundamental constitution of *da-sein* (being). Hermeneutic phenomenology attends to this way of being and to this unbreakable bond with the lived world. Huebner (1999d) contends, “Human life is never fixed but is always emergent as the past and future become horizons of a present” (p. 137). Where are those horizons for teachers today? What horizon of the present is emerging for teachers? To Smith (1991) the hermeneutical task is not a technical one, solved by logic; rather, it is born in the midst of human struggle and enables us to ask “What makes it possible for us to speak, think and act in the way we do” (p. 189)? Phenomenology is one methodology which opens the space to ask, “What ways do teachers think and act as a consequence of NCLB?” Hermeneutic phenomenology is of particular interest for this study due to the hegemony of NCLB. “The significance of the hermeneutic imagination may be to ‘problematize the hegemony of dominant culture in order to engage it transformatively’” (Smith, 1991 p. 195).

Conversations including “data driven decision making,” “drilling down the data,” and “covering curriculum” have become so prevalent in the teacher’s being, it is almost impossible to imagine a lived experience void of such conversations. Teachers are given little room to ask, “What do you think?” Sartre (1965/1993) asks, “Are we not in the habit of putting the basic question to young people who are thinking of writing, ‘Do you have anything to say?’” (p. 319). And Ellsworth (1997) advises, “Teaching is not normalizable. . . this is what saves it from being a skill or a technology” (p. 193). The notion that teaching is normalizable in the language of NCLB is what draws me to Gadamer. Gadamer (1960/2006) asserts that our language tells us who we are now, and who we were once and who we hope to become. Who do we hope to become as teachers under a system that measures students’ knowledge acquisition narrowly on a standardized exam? In what ways might teachers deny the language of conventional curriculum experts?

When teachers and others accept the language of conventional curriculum experts as definitive truth rather than interpretations, hope is frustrated. The pretense at definitiveness characteristic of positivistic curriculum language precludes conversation and dialogue and allows “only a mindless ritual acting out of the working of other peoples’ minds. . . This is a form of madness.” (Smith, as cited in Pinar et al., 2005, p. 420)

Hermeneutic phenomenology serves me well in the exploration of the lived experience of teachers. It opens up the lived experience of why “*a way to do, has become the way to do, indifferent to differences in the lived world of teachers and students*” (Aoki, 2005f, p.368). It reveals the experience of teachers, those closest to teaching, the ones most however, unheard and unnoticed in the dialogue around teaching and learning.

In conducting this phenomenological study, I follow van Man’s (2003) six components of action sensitive pedagogy: turning to the nature of lived experience, investigating

experience as we live it, hermeneutic phenomenological reflection, hermeneutic phenomenological writing, maintaining a strong and oriented relation, and balancing the research context by considering parts and whole guiding me toward a deeper understanding of the meaning of the teachers' experiences.

Following the Six Paths Toward the Meaning of Teachers' Lived Experience

To bring forth my phenomenon I employ van Manen's (2003) methodological "research activities" to embark on my hermeneutic phenomenological research:

1. Turning to a phenomenon of interest;
2. Investigating lived experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. Reflecting on the essential themes characterizing the phenomenon;
4. Describing the phenomenon through writing and rewriting;
5. Maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
6. Balancing the research by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

Rather than conceptualize van Manen's research themes as 'steps' to be checked off as they are completed, the notion of improvisational jazz music comes forward. In isolation, the music is audible, even perhaps enjoyable; however, as musicians join the song they play, step back, and play again. As a result, the fullness of the song is heard. The result is richer, fuller and greater than the sum of the parts. When blended, the result is a fuller understanding and an expansion of our horizons. During a visit with the faculty of education at the University of Alberta, Bobby Shrew, the noted jazz musician, explains how in improvisation musicians not only respond to each other, but also to whatever calls upon them in that situational moment. No two moments, like life, are alike: "Exact repetition, thank God, is an impossibility" (Aoki, 2005f, p. 368). Although there is a seductive hold of data and reproductive results, hermeneutic phenomenology expands the horizon to consider other options.

Both jazz music and phenomenology bring life and expand the horizons of human understanding. As jazz music opens up space for hand clapping, toe tapping and dancing, phenomenology opens up the space for the “phenomenological nod” and a deep understanding of the shared experience of human living. The notion of “group improvisation . . . how can I be me, without you losing sight of you?” (Marsalis, 2009) is essential to both. The same could be true of van Manen’s (2003) themes. In isolation, each brings forward an aspect of the research.

Turning to a Phenomenon of Interest

If an artist sings deeply enough, they take you to the frontiers of your soul. And that frontier is freedom. Freedom to feel . . . to feel the sensual nature of the “*is*” and the “*is-ness*” of things. The “This is what I feel,” and “You know you feel it too.” (Marsalis, 2009)

The freedom to feel the nature of teaching, the “*is*” and “*is-ness*” of it, calls my soul toward the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB. My work in public schooling draws me toward this phenomenon, to the interior substance of things. The lived experience of teaching under NCLB is my phenomenon of study, not only because it is of interest to me, but because it is within me as an educator.

Teaching in today’s public school classrooms commits me to the world. I wonder, quite simply, what is it like to teach amidst NCLB? What is significant about this experience? I rest uneasily as I feel the inter-workings of NCLB settle into the classrooms. This causes me to reflect on questions around the lived experience of teaching. What does it do to teachers when schools do not focus on teaching illiterate children to decode and read, but rather on getting these children to pass a test? Perhaps it is not an either/or but rather a matter of primary focus. Can it be called teaching if the

programs of study do more to help the school pass the test rather than help a child gain necessary life skills?

Van Manen (2003) reminds us, “Aren’t the most captivating stories exactly those which help us understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly” (p. 19). In my life, teaching is the common, taken-for granted thing. Being *a* teacher and being *of* teaching are part of who I am and cannot be separated from other aspects of my being. Van Manen (2003) instructs that phenomenology requires turning to a phenomenon that stirs our concern, and that we examine the roots of that turning.

The roots of my turning toward researching the lived experience of teaching began near the end of the 20th century on an Indian Reservation in Northern Wisconsin. Teaching on an Indian Reservation revealed to me that the lived experience of teaching was detached from the curriculum prescribed by others. I had recently completed my Master’s Degree and was ready to put my knowledge about teaching and learning into practice. However, there was unease as I opened the government purchased textbooks that did not speak to the history of the students, but to my history as a White person. The concern that this stirred within me heightened my awareness of the chasm between what teaching was and what it was not: “Simply to inform someone that something is the case is not to teach” (Greene, 1986, p. 482). Informing Native Americans of *my* world was not teaching. Feeling this caused me to reflect on my role as a teacher.

Later, as an administrator, my consciousness was stirred as I beheld a confidence shared by the caregiver of a young boy living with AIDS during the already difficult time of middle school. His teachers worried about his test scores; I worried about him much

more. These events drew me toward hermeneutic phenomenology long before I knew what it was. “The human science researcher is not just a writer, someone who writes up the research report. Rather, the researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being” (van Manen, 2005, p. 238). The life experience of teaching resonates within me and I strive to “transform lived experience into a textual expression of its essence” (van Manen, 2003, p. 36). I seek to bring forth such an expression of teaching under NCLB. As Merleau-Ponty (1945/2006) explains, “Phenomenology tries to give a direct description of our experience as it is. . .” (p. vii). I strive to bring meaning to teaching under NCLB and open up the phenomenon as experienced by teachers.

Investigating Lived Experience as we Live It Rather Than as We Conceptualize It

The life-world as explained by Abram (1996) is, “That which is present to us in our everyday tasks and enjoyments—reality as it engages us before being analyzed by our theories and our science” (p. 40). It is the day to day aspects of our life-world, the pre-analyzed aspect, to which we often do not pay much attention that is central to understanding in a phenomenological study. It is in this existence of the life-world on the periphery, not always present in conscious action, that the significance of lived experience dwells.

One way to reveal this periphery is to look at the language of the everydayness of teaching under NCLB. Within the lived language of NCLB, the phenomenon reveals itself and points to questions of meaning and substance. As I formulate questions, they open up the “what” it means to be a teacher, rather than “how” it is that teachers teach. Van Manen (2007) notes, “It is strange, perhaps, that the enigma of existence tends to be

passed over in our quest to understand the whatness of things” (p. 19). This enigmatic nature of understanding human existence drives much research away from revealing the significance of lived experience as it is lived. “In their striving to attain a finished blueprint of the world, the sciences had become frightfully estranged from our direct human experience” (Abram, 1996, p. 41). The direct human experience of teaching under NCLB is what I seek to reveal.

Smith (as cited in Pinar, 2002) explains, “When teachers and others accept the language of conventional curriculum experts as definitive truth rather than as interpretations, hope for the future becomes frustrated” (pp. 420-421). Smith views the traditional language of the curriculum as institutional text (i.e., that of objectives and competencies) as having little to do with the lived experience of children, or for that matter, with the lived experiences of teachers (Pinar). The everydayness of the language of teachers has its roots in the written words of The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. In order to investigate teaching under NCLB, the language brings the experience from the periphery to the forefront of understanding. Teachers speak of AYP and state assessments as if the notion of teaching without them is difficult, if not impossible to imagine. Revealing how the language signifies itself brings understanding to the phenomenon. Aoki (2005a) reminds us that “Language is a way that humans live humanly in this world” (p. 181). The language of NCLB is focused around raising test scores, and is taken as the definitive truth in education. What does this language signify about the significance of teaching for teachers?

Heidegger (1993d) notes that phenomenologists are to attend to hidden spaces of experiences by engaging with “the open region and its openness” (p. 125). Beneath the

data, amongst the lived experiences of teachers, lies a certain way of being in the world. “In curriculum particularly, under the hold of technological rationality, we have become so production oriented that the ends-means paradigm, a way to do, has become *the* way to do, indifferent to differences in the lived world of teachers and students” (Aoki, as cited in Pinar et al., 2005 p. 63). Under the hold of technological rationality, teachers reside amidst competing demands. On one side is the demand of the assessments and technical aspect of being, while on the other is a concern for the self of the teacher and the students.

Heidegger (1993b) questions the contemporary concern with technology, and suggests that scientific theories are historical artifacts used in technological practice, rather than systems of ideal truth. For Heidegger, the problem is not technology itself, but the technical mode of thinking that has accompanied it. “Technology is a way of revealing. If we give heed to this, then another whole realm for the essence of technology will open itself up to us. It is the realm of revealing, i.e., of truth” (p. 318). Such a viewpoint is useful to consider as I discuss the increasingly *technical* environment of teaching under NCLB. Heidegger warns that a technical approach to thinking about the world obscures its true essence. The threat is not technology itself, however; technology, too, often is misconstrued as “a means to an end.” Heidegger’s notion opens up the question, what is the “end” in teaching in today’s classrooms? Most teachers feel the test results are taking precedence over children and exploratory learning. In what ways does technology limit how teachers connect with students and selves? Does technology constrict the horizons of education?

Heidegger (1993b) defines the threat of technology in two ways. First, humans become incapable of seeing anything around them except those things to be brought into readiness to serve some end. Heidegger calls this “standing reserve” (p. 322):

Modern technology, as a revealing that orders, is thus no mere human doing. Therefore we must take the challenging that sets upon man [sic] to order the actual as standing-reserve in accordance with the way it shows itself. That challenging gathers man into ordering. This gathering concentrates man upon ordering the actual standing-reserve. (p. 324)

Consequently, individuals are cut off from understanding the essence of things in their surrounding world. Second, an individual is reduced to the role of “order-er” of things, specifically to some purpose or end, and, as a result, risks becoming something to be ordered as well. Heidegger illustrates these concerns as follows:

The forester who measures the felled timber in the woods and who to all appearances walks the forest path in the same way his grandfather did is today ordered by the industry that produces commercial woods, whether he knows it or not. He is made subordinate to the orderability of cellulose, which for its part is challenged forth by the need for paper, which is then delivered to newspapers and illustrated magazines. The latter, in their turn, set public opinion to swallowing what is printed, so that a set configuration of opinion becomes available on demand. (p. 323)

In other words, the trees, the wood, the paper, and even the forester (whose ancestors once understood the sanctity of the woods) are ultimately subordinated to the will to establish orderly public opinion. The forester, in proverbial fashion, “cannot see the forest for the trees.” Instead of appreciating the majesty and mystery of the living forest, he sees only fodder for the paper mill, which will pay for his next meal. In what ways are teachers relegated to become the foresters of their teaching? Having it measured, counted and calculated is a quest to gain mastery over learning through a technical lens.

NCLB speaks of teaching as a resource to be mined, harvested, ordered, quantified (though test scores), packaged, marketed, and, ultimately, consumed to some calculated

end or purpose, which in turn will serve some other overarching end or purpose. How does this reveal itself? In what ways does NCLB blind teachers from “appreciating the majesty and mystery” of teaching?

Everything depends on our manipulating technology in the proper manner as a means. We will, as we say, ‘get’ technology ‘intelligently in hand.’ We will master it. The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control. (Heidegger, 1993b, p. 313)

Teachers experience NCLB as they are called to “data chats” to converse about which students will be pulled from art and music, to take classes on test preparation. They, too, feel the urgent desire to “get” technology “intelligently in hand.” Additionally they are asked to help students master the test, rather than creating a safe place for mistakes and learning. The notion of standing reserve shows itself to teachers as they are asked to use computer generated predictors about students’ performance on the state exam to determine in which classes the students may participate. Heidegger helps bring understanding to the notion that using tests is to understand teaching as close to the mark in “Leaving No Child Behind,” but is in fact, off the mark.

What is dangerous is not technology. Technology is not demonic; but its essence is mysterious. The essence of technology as a destining of revealing is the danger. . . The threat to man [sic] does not come in the first instance from the potentially lethal machines and apparatus of technology. The rule of enframing threatens man with the possibility that it could be denied to him to enter into a more original revealing and hence to experience the call of a more primal truth. (Heidegger, 1993b, p. 333)

Greene (1986) explains what she believes the purpose of education to be:

“Education is not the cultivation of certain abilities; it is not the communication of certain branches of knowledge. . . The real essence of education is that it enables men [sic] to reach the true aim of their lives” (p. 483). In what ways does this narrowing of the

horizon on test scores reveal itself in teaching? I investigate teaching as teachers order students and their learning.

Reflecting on the Essential Themes Characterizing the Phenomenon

To reveal the lived experience of teaching under NCLB, I reflect on the essential themes. Aoki explains that this is what brings the thoughtfulness in the story. It allows us to know as humans how we inhabit where we are (as cited in Pinar et al., 2005). Van Manen (2003) explains that themes brought forward in a phenomenological study may be understood as the structure of the experience. Bringing forward the words from my conversations and reflecting on essential themes brings out possibilities for understanding teaching under No Child Left Behind. Gadamer (1960/2006) remarks, “Thanks to the verbal nature of all interpretation, every interpretation includes the possibility of a relationship with others” (p. 399). Reflecting on the essential themes brings me to new places of understanding that which were perhaps, hidden:

The joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar. In recognition what we know emerges, if illuminated, from all the contingent and variable circumstances that condition it; it is grasped in its essence. It is known as something. (Gadamer 1960/2006, p. 113)

By opening up more than is already recognized, I uncover an essence of teaching through questioning and reflecting on the language brought forward by the teachers. I strive to “Give shape to the shapeless” of teaching under NCLB (van Manen, 2003, p. 88).

Bachelard (1994) explains, “Concepts are drawers in which knowledge may be classified” (p. 74). However, it is essential through thematizing not to break down the essence of the reflections to the extent that I “do away with the individuality of knowledge that has been experienced” (p. 74). With careful attention to individuality of

knowledge, I attempt to expand the understanding of teaching under No Child Left Behind in its essential elements of the experience.

Van Manen (2003) notes that thematizing reveals hidden layers of meaning:

The meaning or essence of a phenomenon is never simple or one-dimensional. In order to come to grips with the structure of meaning of the text it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. (p. 78)

Revealing the themes of the lived experience is not a technical process of counting, categorizing or color coding. In order to bring the significant themes forward I engage with my own thoughts as well as the meanings brought forward by the teachers, and come to an understanding greater than my own reflections in isolation. As van Manen (2003) explains, articulating themes is not a skill or a cognitive process that can be described, then practiced; however, he suggests that themes come about in a desire to make sense of a phenomenon, a willingness to be open to understanding an experience, and through a process of insightful invention, discovery and disclosure.

Through this research, I strive to reveal the essence of teaching, leaving the familiar notions I have about it, behind. In my conversations with teachers, their words bring about an awareness and connectedness whereby the phenomenon reveals itself. As Gadamer (1960/2006) says:

In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know. . . The path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open. . . The sense of every question is realized in passing through this state of indeterminacy, in which it becomes an open question. (1960/2003, p. 363)

Through the questions the phenomenon comes into focus. I move beyond my own understanding of teaching under NCLB and bring forward the significance of this phenomenon through the stories shared by the participants in this study. Van Manen

(2003) tells us to listen to conversations as a whole, attending to the main significance of what is being said. As I listen, I stay alert for possibilities of error in my interpretation of significance, either because of my own fore-meanings or because of misunderstanding the personal situations of my participants. Next, I search for phrases and stories that reveal something central about teaching amidst NCLB. It was here, within and around the phrases and stories, where I move from awareness of the whole to attention to the parts. I look closely at details asking what is revealed in the words used, or in the way the voices sounded as they spoke. Finally, I explore commonalities or ways of naming the experience that occur in more than one conversation, or repeatedly, within the same conversation.

At the same time, van Manen (2003) suggests we attend to the resonance between what we hear in our conversations, and things we have read or experienced ourselves. I listen for related meaning in the words of philosophers, poets, novelists and others. This opens the horizon of the phenomenon and enables me to cast a wider gaze on it.

Describing the Phenomenon through Writing and Rewriting

In order to transform the lived experience into a textual representation, van Manen (2003) asks for writing and rewriting to reveal the essence of the phenomenon. The writing process allows me to challenge custom and tradition of teaching under NCLB. The effect of the text is at once a reflexive, re-lived experience and a reflective appropriation of something meaningful, with such illumination that a reader is powerfully animated in his or her own lived experience.

The text must reverberate with our ordinary experience of life as well as with our sense of life's meaning. This does not necessarily mean that one must feel entertained by phenomenological text or that it has to be an "easy read." Sometimes reading a phenomenological study is a truly laborious effort. And yet,

if we are willing to make the effort then we may be able to say that the text speaks to us not unlike the way in which a work of art may speak to us even when it requires attentive interpretive effort. (van Manen, 2007, p. 26)

Ricoeur (1973) explains that by writing down a description of an action, the action becomes fixed and is no longer tied only to the moment it occurred. Therefore, by “fixing” description of actions in writing, they become artifacts of human activity. As a result, the writing process “emancipates” the actions from the original discourse, and opens up interpretive understandings.

Like a text, human action is an open work, the meaning of which is “in suspense”. It is because it “opens up” new references and receives fresh relevance from them that human deeds are also waiting for fresh interpretations which decide their meaning. (Ricoeur, 1973, p. 103)

This process is particularly important with respect to the lived experience of teaching, as meanings evolve and develop from the lived experience of teachers. It is through the process of writing that the significance of the phenomenon is brought forward.

In doing phenomenological research, through the reflective methods of writing, the aim is not to create technical intellectual tools or prescriptive models for telling us what to do or how to do something. Rather, a phenomenology of practice aims to open up possibilities for creating formative relations between being and acting, between who we are and how we act, between thoughtfulness and tact. (van Manen, 2007, p. 13)

Aoki (2005e) explains that language is culturally constituted: “My interest is in how meanings of words are culturally constituted and how the very words and language we are born into may be shaping us” (p. 284). Consequently,

Being attentive to the etymological origins of words may sometimes put us in touch with an original form of life where the terms still had living ties to the lived experience from which they originally sprang. (van Manen, 2003 p. 59)

Tracing etymological sources uncovers what the language of NCLB and the teachers’ experiences of it reveal about new possibilities for understanding teaching in this

environment. However, phenomenological description is not successful unless I open the space for understanding of the text.

When a text is successful, and when the reader is open to it, then the text may have an effect that is almost inexplicable. The words literally take the reader or listener into a wondrous landscape, evoking a feeling of disorientation, causing confusion that tends to accompany the experience of strangeness, of being struck with wonder. (van Manen, 2003, pp. 3-4)

Phenomenological description draws the reader into an open space where lived experiences are shared, and the writing process brings legitimacy to teachers' experiences, as well as brings forth the experience of teaching under NCLB in today's schools.

Maintaining a Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation to the Phenomenon

In maintaining a strong and oriented relation to the teachers during this research, I remember my pedagogic stance. As van Manen (2003) asserts, educational research often yields theories that do not render very pedagogically illuminating decisions. One need only look at state assessments used to monitor the mandates of NCLB to understand how, without the appropriate pedagogic stance, theories in education can still be void of educational authenticity and value with regard to students' lived experiences. Gadamer (1960/2006) adds to this issue when he asserts:

For it is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself [sic]. A person who is trying to understand a text is always projecting. He [sic] projects a meaning for the text as a whole as soon as some initial meaning emerges in the text. Again, the initial meaning emerges only because he [sic] is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. Working out this fore-projection, which is constantly revised in terms of what emerges as he [sic] penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there. (p. 267)

As I dive deeper into the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB, I am transformed in profound ways.

I came to this study several years ago as an administrator, then teacher and central office curriculum specialist, charged with implementing aspects of NCLB into failing schools. However, I have not lost my teacher voice. Rather, I often find that I am a cast of one speaking out against computerized data charts revealing the failing students and the computerized mathematics and reading interventions teachers are to administer to close the achievement gap. As van Manen (2003) asks, “Where in all this research can we still hear the adult speak with a pedagogic voice? Where in this text is the connection with the everyday lifeworld. . . ? ” (p. 138). Maintaining a strong pedagogical relation to *teaching* as I research teaching under NCLB is important, because “In education we often confuse what is possible with what is pedagogically desirable. Even if it were possible for many children to be able to read by age four, that does not mean that children *should* be reading at that early age” (p. 150). Even if it were possible to have all children become proficient (as determined by state tests) in reading and mathematics by the year 2014, is it desirable? What is not taught to get children to the level of proficiency in mathematics, reading and science?

Phenomenology’s ultimate aim is “the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 2003, p. 12). My questioning began with wondering what it meant to teach amidst NCLB. I wonder what song is in the heart of teachers as they strive to make meaningful connections within themselves and their students amidst the policy. This research is about listening to those who work amidst NCLB, and what significance they bring forward in that being.

Balancing the Research by Considering Parts and Whole

Van Manen's (2003) final component of phenomenological methodology is to balance the research context by considering parts and whole. Phenomenological research is strenuous, and there is a danger that the researchers get so involved in chasing the "whatness" of the phenomenon that they consequently get "stuck" in the phenomenon itself and fail to reveal the phenomenon fully through textual representation. In order to avoid this, my research design and construction is clear and focused. I focus from the beginning on that which I hope to understand and reveal, the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. It is possible to get lost amidst the layers of interpretation and thematizing; therefore, I diligently work to focus on my research question.

Pinar (2004) explains that phenomenology embraces the world as we live it, but in the process of phenomenological study, it also invites us to change the way we live. The way I live as an educator is changed by the methodology of phenomenology. My once taken-for-granted notions of self-understanding and reflection as an educator assist my journey toward understanding what it means to be a teacher in today's public classrooms. Although other methodologies may have allowed me to have conversations with teachers or collect data on job satisfaction, phenomenology brings me toward a careful exploration of the "densely textured" aspect of public school teaching under NCLB.

Phenomenological research does not produce knowledge for knowledge's sake; rather, it produces knowledge to disclose what it means to be human. I now understand I did not know the experience of teaching amidst No Child Left Behind until I saw it reflected in the teachers who live it.

Waiting to Be Heard: Engaging the Teachers

My initial conversations on this topic began over four years ago as a component of research for one of my graduate courses. Since that time, the teachers I first contacted, as well as others, have contacted me to find out, “When will you be ready to talk to me again about this stuff?” I received emails from friends and from individuals I do not know saying, “I heard you are doing a study on NCLB; can I be part of it?” After five years of my own journey, I was ready to continue this conversation. Through the conversations, silences are uncovered and voices brought forward that point to new insights. The silences are significant. In these moments, the “truth” or *aletheia* of the phenomenon revealed itself. As van Manen (2003) states:

In ontological silence we meet the realization of our fundamental predicament of always returning to silence—even or perhaps especially after the most enlightening speech, reading, or conversation. It is indeed at those moments of greatest and most fulfilling insight or meaningful experience that we also experience the “dumb”-founding sense of silence that fulfills and yet craves fulfillment. Bollnow (1982) describes this as the fulfilling silence of being in the presence of truth. (p. 114)

To serve these ends, I now turn to the specific process I employed to uncover the lived experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind. I attempted to draw out what van Manen (2003) calls, “narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding” (p. 66).

Finding the Teachers

I sought out teachers for this study through email correspondence to sixty public school teachers I worked with as an instructional specialist in the district, asking if any were interested in participating in this study. I did not supervise or evaluate any of the teachers. Twenty teachers expressed an interest in participating. I reviewed the list of potential participants and cross-checked this list against my criteria for selection, which

included a balance of public elementary, middle and high school teachers with a minimum of ten years of teaching to ensure they had knowledge of teaching prior to the passage of NCLB. Additionally, I worked to achieve both a racial and gender balance among the teachers. After careful consideration of those interested, I invited eleven teachers to participate in the study.

Over the course of the previous three years, I had the pleasure of collaborating with ten of the participants in a professional development project in the school district, while one was a colleague unassociated with that project. In Chapter Four I introduce each participant; however, for now I provide a brief overview of the study's participants. All are or have been employees of a large public school district in suburban Washington, DC and worked as teachers prior to and since the passage of NCLB. They collectively work at eight different schools. Four of the participants are men and seven are women. Nine identify as White and two as Black. Two are elementary teachers, six are middle school teachers, and three are high school teachers. Prior to our first conversation, I met individually with each potential candidate and reviewed the invitation to participate and the informed consent form with them (see Appendices A and B).

The Conversational Process

To complete the study, each teacher-participant engaged in two individual face-to-face conversations lasting between one and two hours. Eight participants engaged in one of two group conversations lasting two hours each. Meeting times were arranged at a time and place mutually agreed upon by participants and me. The individual face-to-face conversations took place at public facilities, while one group conversation took place in my home and the other in a public facility. The conversations were digitally audio-

recorded and transcribed by a third party. The conversations unfolded like a blanket on a cool winter's evening, providing welcome security and comfort while embracing what it means to be teaching amidst NCLB. However, as Anton (2001) explains, "Speech takes apart and brings back together" (p. 101). In the taking apart and bringing together, the conversations took on a hermeneutic aspect. They were not a linear discussion, a collective piecing together of individual experiences, nor did they follow prescribed questions, but rather an understanding of the phenomenon as it unfolded through a "backwardly-reaching leaping ahead" (p. 104).

The conversations began slowly, almost formally. During the first conversation I provided an introduction to the study, and participants shared experiences of teaching under NCLB. Then, as the conversations developed, the words themselves became a participant in the study. At times we revisited words, opened them up, laughed and at times cried as the language revealed the phenomenon. After each conversation, I provided a copy of the transcription to each participant. Often the transcription enabled participants a place to build upon for subsequent conversations. Additionally, some participants shared written reflections via email about a significant theme that emerged for them.

The third conversation was a group conversation that included eight participants. One group conversation consisted of five participants while the second included three participants. The group conversation was an opportunity for participants to investigate the questions collectively around what it is like to teach under NCLB. Van Manen (2003) reminds us that "... we cannot ignore the insights of others who have already maintained a conversational relation with that same phenomenon" (p. 75). Within the

group conversation we explored the experience of teaching under NCLB that drew upon the themes brought out individually for consideration by the group.

To converse derives from the Indo-European root: *wert*, meaning to turn or wind, but the Latin root, *conversationem*, means “the act of living with or to keep company with” (*OED Online*, 2011). As we lived with the topic of teaching under NCLB, the conversation turned and bent upon itself reflecting a lived experience of teaching none of us fully appreciated prior to this study. Upon the conclusion of the last group conversation, one participant asked if we could continue to meet as a group because she gained insight and comfort through the conversations.

Van Manen (2003) explains that listening to each conversation as a whole the researcher is to attend to the main significance of what is said. However, while listening to the conversation, I stayed alert for possibilities of error in the interpretation of significance, either because of my fore-meanings, or because of misunderstanding the personal situations of others. I used the prompts below to initiate the conversations.

1. What do you understand the meaning of the NCLB policy to be?
2. Do you find any direct influence of that policy on your teaching?
3. If so, choose a particular example and describe what that is like for you.
4. What does it feel like for you the few weeks before and the week of MSA testing at your school?

From these initial questions I asked follow-up questions to clarify ideas. I listened for the essential meaning in the words of the teachers. This opened the space for me to explore and name the essential themes that characterize the teachers’ stories and descriptions of teaching under NCLB.

The Thematizing Process

I made use of themes to get to the experience of teaching under NCLB. As I reflected on the teachers' experiences, I looked for themes in the lived language to help me "get at the notion" and "give shape to the shapeless" (van Manen, 2003, p. 88). Themes allowed me to make meaning of the phenomenon through the creation of a structure to the experience. The transcriptions of conversations, as well as the participants' written reflections, helped me to discover themes and essential elements of the lived experience of teaching under NCLB.

Themes in phenomenological research are different than in other situations. As explained by van Manen (2003), the themes bring me to the experience, provide a shape to the experience and help formulate the context of the phenomenon. The phenomenological quality of a theme includes a "needfulness or desire to make sense" of the phenomenon (van Manen, p. 88). The themes are not the phenomenon itself, but rather entryways into understanding the phenomenon; "Metaphorically speaking they are more like knots in the webs of our experience" (p. 90). Discovering phenomenological themes is not a mechanical process of counting words, or coding selected terms. It is a journey through, beside and around the descriptive accounts provided in conversation and writing.

Uncovering and isolating thematic aspects of a phenomenon generally take three approaches. They are the holistic or sententious approach in which phrases capture the fundamental meaning of the text as a whole; the selective reading approach in which essential statements and phrases about the phenomenon are revealed; and the detailed or line-by-line approach in which a detailed reading of each sentence or sentence cluster

seeks to reveal what is being described about the phenomenon (van Manen, 2003). I used all these approaches as I examined the stories of my participants. First, I examined individual stories looking for overall meaning of the text. Next, I focused on difficult passages and read them several times and reflected on what the participants were describing. Finally, I used a line-by-line approach when the text resisted my attempts to understand it; and then I grouped these statements into holistic statements of themes that synthesized the details into the fullest possible description. This drew attention to significant utterance that suggested particular aspects of the phenomenon. I shared with the participants my insights about themes I developed during the research process.

I called upon the existential philosophies of Heidegger, Gadamer, Sartre, Levin, Abram and Casey. My methodology is grounded in van Manen's structure for conducting hermeneutic phenomenological research as I researched the questions: **What is the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)?** In the following chapter I introduce the individuals who participated in this study and describe the themes that emerged from our conversations.

CHAPTER FOUR: DIS-EASE OF TEACHING

“Will we make it?” “What happens if we don’t make it?” “What do we have to do to make it?” Teachers across America, as well as the teachers in my study consider these questions in their schools on a daily basis. The “it” is Adequate Yearly Progress, the benchmark required to achieve in order to avoid increasingly stringent sanctions (Murnane & Papay, 2010). As a result of the sanctions embedded in NCLB, the discourse and vernacular of educational practice, has also shifted. Greene (1973) reminds us, “The teacher who wishes to be more than a functionary cannot escape the value problem or the difficult matter of moral choice” (p. 181). Amidst the moral choice of trying to escape a functionary role, who do teachers become?

With the transcripts of our forty hours of conversations put neatly into a three ring binder, I pour over our words and look to my notes to make meaning of them. Through a backward-reaching into the conversations, I lean ahead into the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB. I recognize that through the process of the study, the participants question their own being in the classroom amidst this federal policy. Our conversations are emotional and draining, and occasionally peppered with strange stories spelling out the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. Through our conversations, the participants reveal something more than words reflected back at me. Their living in this NCLB place rocks my moral compass as an instructional specialist. Burch (1990) explains, “Phenomenology . . . seeks to discover an underlying truth ordinarily concealed or distorted in that realm, a truth in terms of which the essential meaning of the practical has itself to be determined” (p. 131).

To reveal comes from the Latin *rev* meaning to “remove the covering from or to unveil or raise the lid, unmask or divulge” (*OED Online*, 2011). As I look to unmask the lived experience of teaching under NCLB, I also consider Pandora. Holding hundreds of pages of transcripts in my hand, I wonder what will happen when I open my binder full of spoken words put onto pages? What will be re-vealed? In what way will I divulge the “essential meaning of the practical?” My curiosity, like Pandora’s, gnaws at me. I reflect on the notion of Pandora’s Box; “Once broached, once opened, it gives rise to many complicated problems” (*OED Online*, 2011). With my binder on the table, I open the pages; I am drawn to open up this box and re-veal, to unveil the lived experience of teaching under NCLB. Like Pandora, the teachers’ words reveal a complicated set of problems. During the conversations, the notion of dis-ease in teaching is evident. Unexpectedly, the participants’ words find me contemplating teaching as being in a state of dis-ease. Disease means the absence of ease and comfort, “dis” meaning without, and ease, meaning the opportunity, means or ability to do something (*OED Online*, 2011). In this chapter, I seek to reveal what underlies this “dis-ease” for teachers. As I open up the phenomenon, I use the metaphor of dis-ease, to illuminate the tension between teaching as a means to an end of quantifiable data points and teaching as being in learning as I address my phenomenological question: **What is the lived experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind?**

Listening to the Patient Ones

Patience and time, these are my mighty warriors! (Tolstoy, 1962/2007, p. 1025)

As Tolstoy explains, patience is a formidable warrior. Patient comes from the Latin *patientia* meaning, “bearing or enduring without complaint.” Patient shares an

etymological connection to passion, meaning, “to suffer or endure” (*OED Online*, 2011). A patient is one who is capable of waiting without becoming annoyed or upset, as well as someone who receives medical treatment. As the conversations unfold for this study, I am humbled by how the participants endure the treatment of teaching under NCLB. As I listen to their words, they describe treatment akin to medicine more than that of education: “The *treatment* we are to give the students depends on the data.”

The participants in this study are the patient ones, those who make available the abundance of learning through patient nurturing of personal relationships, outstanding knowledge and practice of pedagogy and stellar understanding of curriculum. While engaging with the teachers in this study, I was impressed with how my participants resembled those teachers who strive to transform their students not simply by a transmission of knowledge to their students, but through opening up the abundance of learning and creating a deep understanding of knowledge. To introduce the participants in my study, using a pseudonym, I provide a brief description of where they teach, using a pseudonym, what subject and or grade they teach, and how long they have been teaching.

James Madison Elementary: Liz

James Madison Elementary is the only school in the study that receives federal Title I funding. Many of the parents are not citizens, so they are not eligible for public housing. Instead, many families share housing. This means two or three families will rent a two or three bedroom apartment. The recent downturn in the economy has seen an increase in students at James Madison, due to this shared housing. Madison serves a large immigrant population with 68% of the students receiving ELL services and 90% of the students receiving FARMS. The school serves a predominately Hispanic population

(68%). The White population is less than 1%, while African Americans and Asians make up 18% and 12% respectively.

Liz teaches kindergarten at James Madison with 95% of her students receiving ELL services. I met her for the first time five years ago on a school visit with her area superintendent. Liz's patience is evidenced by her ability to wait calmly. She is neither hasty nor impetuous, but quietly expectant of her teaching and her students. She does not waiver on her belief in her students to achieve at high levels. As a teacher, she is captivating and enthusiastic. Upon my first visit to her classroom, I commented to the superintendent that I did not want to leave the classroom. She started her career in New York City in a Title I school. Since then she moved to Washington, DC and has been teaching kindergarten at Madison ever since. Although she had not given it much thought, when I asked her if she was aware of the federal law NCLB, she explained that it influenced her life when she moved from New York to Washington, DC. In fact, it was NCLB that prevented Liz, a New York state certified Title I teacher, from being qualified as a teacher in Maryland for her first two months due to the "highly qualified" clause of the law. Although Liz could have worked in a non-Title I school upon moving to Maryland, and start the school year at a teacher's pay rather than at the substitute salary, Liz's dedication to working with children who were living in poverty was a driving force for her to work at Madison. This meant that for her first two months, although inconvenient, Liz worked patiently at the substitute-teacher pay, even though she taught for two years in New York City, and holds a Master's Degree in Education from Columbia University, as well as a teaching certificate from the state of New York.

I really wanted to work in a Title I school. In this school, I was not considered highly qualified because I didn't take the Praxis exam. I did not have health insurance until I took and passed the test.

Although NCLB proved to be a hurdle for Liz when she moved to Washington, this did not seem to diminish her love for teaching. She has a contagious energy coupled with tremendous knowledge of pedagogy. Liz also teaches graduate level courses to teachers at Johns Hopkins University. Since the completion of the study, Liz has moved to the position of staff development teacher in the district.

Bower Middle School: Mike and Judy

Bower Middle School sits in an urban area. Surrounding the campus are predominately large high-rise apartment buildings where many of the students live. Bower's FARMS enrollment is 43%. Built in the 1930s the physical structure of Bower initially served as a high school in one of the nation's first suburbs. Since its initial construction until the late part of the last century, the school served a predominately white, upper middle-class neighborhood. Within the last twenty years, the school's demographics have shifted to predominately minority, working-class (30% African-American and 36% Hispanic). Bower has been in and out of various levels of school improvement as dictated by NCLB. If the school meets its targets on this year's test, it will be "safe" for at least two years.

Mike is a quiet and thoughtful man with over thirty-seven years of service in education. He is a tall man whose size and stature could find him on the sidelines of a NFL football field as a coach or earlier in his life on the gridiron as a player. Throughout our conversations, Mike is cautious with his responses. His patience is noted through his ability to persevere without being daunted by difficulties. He provides an interesting

comparison between high school and middle school teaching. This year is Mike's first year as a middle school English teacher. Of the participants, Mike has the most diverse experience, both in years of teaching as well as positions he has held in education. For most of his career, Mike taught high school English. Additionally, he has worked as a school-based staff development teacher and a county-wide staff development specialist. Furthermore, Mike is a parent of a high school student in the district. Although Mike does not directly address the subject, there is a sense that in his role of a staff-development teacher, he did not share the same vision for teaching, learning, and testing as his principal, which is likely the reason he has returned to the classroom. Since the completion of the study, Mike has moved from Bower to a high school in a less-diverse region of the district.

Judy is young, ambitious and tolerant. Her energy and enthusiasm for education, teaching, and children are infectious. Walking down the hallways of the school, her petite physique and athletic build help her easily blend in with the teenagers she teaches. Judy began her teaching career the year prior to the passage of NCLB. She has spent her entire career at Bower Middle School. As a science teacher, she brings an analytical side to our discussions of NCLB that I find refreshing and necessary. Throughout our conversations, she brings up the validity of the data points: "The data [are] always a little muddy when you're looking up students because you're not always comparing the same students. It's a problem because you're comparing last year's seventh graders to this year's." Judy is a team leader and, as such, is a member of the school's instructional council.

Marshall High School: Laura

Marshall High School sits off a major thoroughfare in the district surrounded by single family homes. Marshall has met AYP every year since the passage of NCLB. The FARMS rate is 39%. The school is majority minority with 44% of the students being African American, 27% Hispanic and 13% White. Marshall has an International Baccalaureate program which aims to “Develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help create a better, more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.” Although not a school known for stellar successes, it also is not one to be known for failure. This year Marshall brought on a new principal. The previous principal retired after a long tenure at the school.

Laura teaches high school social studies at Marshall. She is in her seventeenth year of teaching. Prior to coming to Marshall, she taught at a predominately White affluent school within the district. She teaches advanced placement (AP) classes and a junior level course called Modern World History. This is noteworthy as neither of the subjects she teaches are “tested subjects” under NCLB. Outside of her classroom responsibilities, Laura is involved on the national level with the AP program and regularly attends, as well as speaks at, The College Board’s national workshops and summer institutes. She has a keen understanding of assessment, and its challenges as well as validity in standardized assessments. She is a strong proponent of opening AP classes for all students and encourages her colleagues to promote students who do not normally see themselves as “AP students” to do the same.

During both of our conversations, students came by after school to complete assignments, tests or give college recommendations to Laura. Being a teacher, to Laura,

does not end at the bell. She fosters relationships with her students outside of her class time and beyond the scope of her course. She openly works with struggling students and guarantees they will complete her course. She qualifies her statement, “They have to actually earn it, but the only students who could fail my class would be the ones who wouldn’t come.” Laura’s first career was at The National Endowment for the Humanities, an independent federal agency in Washington, DC. During her tenure at this institution, she learned much about the political interrelationships between organizations and the influence politics has in strategic governance of organizations. This insight proved to be helpful in our conversations around the lived experience of teaching under NCLB.

John Muir Middle School: Ginny

John Muir Middle School is located on a major thoroughfare in the district, bordered by businesses and strip malls. Concrete rather than lawns surround the school, and the limited green space around the school is overrun with weeds. The school serves a population that is 51% FARMS. The demographics of the school are 36% Hispanic, 34% African American, 15% Asian and 15% White. Less than 10% of the school receives ELL services; however, this percentage increases every year. Muir Middle School was one of the first schools in the district to face central office assistance, as dictated by NCLB, due to poor results on the state assessments. As a result of poor scores for the school’s special education population, the principal was asked to move to another school, and a new inexperienced principal took over the position. The principal is in her fourth year of her position and has a limited ability to create positive relationships with her staff, but a keen interest in passing the state assessments.

Ginny teaches ELL at Muir as well as English at the community college. Over the last twenty years Ginny has worked as a teacher in public schools, community colleges, in a Montessori school, as well as in France for the Ministry of Education. Although she is fluent in French and Spanish, English is her native language. She is a trained lawyer and spent several years practicing as a lawyer. Ginny is the least patient of the patient ones in this study. Her patience is exhibited in that she is subject to supervision by her principal; however, Ginny is known to question the status quo, which has caused her to have a reputation of being irreverent and confrontational. Nevertheless, over the course of the study, Ginny's principal has begun to rely on Ginny as an instructional leader in the school, a drastic change from her initial course of action with Ginny. Ginny's passion for teaching and learning is apparent. Many of her students are learning to read, not just English, but learning to read for the first time in their lives at age twelve, thirteen or fourteen. Ginny's tough academic standards, coupled with dynamic, engaging and infectious teaching, inspire anyone who enters her classroom.

Parker Middle School: Donna, Jerome and Larry

Parker Middle School rests in the outmost region of the district on a large campus. Although the school is surrounded by single family homes, the FARMS rate of the school is relatively high at 40%. Demographically, the school's population is 63% African American, 14% Asian, 11% Hispanic and 12% White. Four percent of the students in the school receive English as a Second Language services. It is a mid-sized middle school with an enrollment around 800 students. Over the last several years, the school has failed to meet improvement on the benchmarks set forward under NCLB in the category of ELL reading and mathematics. As a consequence, the school is required to provide updates on

data points through monthly meetings with central office. If the school fails to meet the benchmarks during this year's test administration, the school will go into Corrective Action.

Donna is Parker's literacy coach. She is a passionate teacher who has worked in both elementary and middle schools for the last twenty-two years. As a literacy coach, Donna works with students who are struggling readers, including ELL students, as well as the teachers who teach these students. Donna feels pressure to ensure the students are given the best possible opportunity to pass the state assessment. Throughout our conversations, Donna brought both passion and sensitivity to our conversations. Her pain and affliction are brought forward emotionally in our conversations. The topic was a difficult one for her to discuss, and she became tearfully emotional discussing the stresses put on her as a result of her school's failure to meet the state's benchmarks.

Jerome is the staff development teacher at Parker. As such, he is responsible for organizing the monthly meetings with the central office staff as required by the school's performance on the state assessment. He is an integral part of the school and dedicates himself to the work through enduring focus. Although he readily articulates his notions of NCLB, his calm nature also demonstrates that he is capable of persevering through it. He is well skilled at his job and outworks many on the staff, including the administrative team. Jerome could readily move into many other positions in the school system; however, he likes to work in the school his children attend. He has worked as a school-based administrator, elementary teacher and middle school social studies teacher. Jerome has an entertaining sense of humor and quick wit, which can usually lighten up the most serious conversation. He is well-liked and respected by the students, school-based and

central office staff. Due to his affable personality, it is difficult to hear Jerome explain that teaching today “Is about math and reading and nothing else. Drill them and hit them. Work with them and pull them from lunch. There’s much more of a grind. It’s all about these indicators that we all know are being asked. So some of the creativity is gone.” Of the participants in the study, I have known Jerome the longest, and over the years, he has participated in several projects in which I was involved. As a result, I feel our conversations more easily reached a depth of honesty and candor.

Larry teaches sixth grade English at Parker. He has a creative spirit and infuses this into his teaching. Larry works with constancy, diligence, effort and perseverance. He is a music enthusiast and brings this love of music into his teaching. He dedicates much of his free time to put on an annual multi-performance student-led rock concert in the spring. The concert is a community favorite and receives critical acclaim in the local paper. He views his role as a teacher to nurture young minds and open up inquiry for his students. He defines teaching as sharing: “Sharing your life, sharing your experience and giving what you know and what you love to kids and to anybody. This is good stuff.” Larry regularly tweaks the county’s curriculum to include critical thinking and technology into his lessons.

East High School: Patty

East High is located less than one mile from Parker MS. Most of the students who attend Parker will attend East HS. East is a traditional high school with a stable administration, but one that is adverse to change. With little interest in changing practice, the administration runs the school with a top-down approach. In many respects, the term mediocre comes to mind when visiting East. Walking through the halls of the building, I

find the physical structure neither impressive nor dilapidated. On a recent visit to the school, I found the teaching neither engaging nor dreadful. The school is one of three high schools in a consortium of schools.

Patty has taught English at East High School seven of the last ten years. For three years, she took a leave of absence to move to Japan with her family. Her husband is an American diplomat, and as a result, over the last eighteen years she has taught in schools in Japan, French Guiana, Kuala Lumpur, and Israel. She is enthusiastic about her role as an English teacher. During our conversations, she is thoughtful and passionate about the role of educators in children's lives. She readily takes on the lowest performing students, and thoroughly enjoys her time with them. The state of Maryland has an alternative project available to students to complete who do not pass the state test, and Patty oversees this project for students at East High. Patty openly invites visitors into her classroom and stands out as an outlier in a school of mediocre teachers. She is knowledgeable about NCLB and readily admits that because the school has met the benchmarks set forth under the law, as teachers "We have pretty much latitude in what we do in the classroom." She demonstrates forbearance and patience in our conversations as she discusses the phenomenon.

Lincoln High School: Phil

Lincoln High School rests in one of the most affluent and highly educated locales in the country. Surrounded by single-family homes selling for a minimum of \$500,000, the school is one of the least diverse schools in the county. The school serves a predominately White student body (76%), with Asians accounting for 12% of the student body. The African American and Hispanic students account for 5% and 7% respectively.

The sprawling campus and manicured lawns make the school feel more like a community college than a public high school.

During our conversations, **Phil** is both eloquent and thoughtful, and it is no surprise that his first career was one as a litigator. He left the legal world to work in a career he felt was more rewarding. He holds teaching certificates in both social studies and English and has taught both middle school and high school over the last fifteen years. Phil acknowledges that his perspective is different from the other teachers in the study due to the demographics of Lincoln High School. Referring to NCLB directly he qualifies his perspective, “I’d say that we don’t feel it perhaps as much in the same way as the other side of the County may; and, of course, I’m just basing it on hearsay and sort of my own speculation.” The patience Phil exhibits is that of a passive recipient of NCLB. He believes that the curriculum lacks rigor due to NCLB. “I would say that perhaps while people on the east side of the County are facing pressure to bridge the gap, as it were, from the bottom up, we – many of us on the west side of the County feel that the standards that we have achieved may be eroding. In other words, we are sort of being asked to compromise the intensity or the quality or the rigor of the curriculum in order to meet the State standards.”

Belleview Elementary School: Shirley

Belleview Elementary is nestled in the heart of single-family homes. A relatively small percent of students receives FARMS (7%), and the school serves a predominately White (51%) and Asian (35%) community. The school’s principal has worked in the position for the last four years, and can readily recite the county’s talking points in

mathematics, reading, race and equity; however, staff and parents do not view him as being either effective or visionary in his management.

Shirley has been teaching for over twenty-five years. Her classroom is alive with learning. She infuses pedagogical practices, which use kinesthetic, visual, and auditory modalities. She rarely sits at her desk, and is in constant motion throughout her classroom. Hers is a classroom that nurtures the innate creativity of young minds. Shirley most recently taught second grade at Belleview and practices “listening to her students” to help them learn. She provides the metacognition of how she helps the learner who does not learn well sitting at a desk. “You don’t learn well sitting there listening. You just don’t. So, what can we do? Well, here’s what we can do. What way can I teach that will really pinpoint the kinesthetic learner? And champion that, and let the child know, you’re incredible this way. And also let children know what kinds of learners they are.” Shirley is the only participant in the study who no longer works in public education. In her building, her inability to mute her discontent, to be patient, encouraged her to seek a teaching job outside of public schools. As a result, Shirley left public school teaching to teach at a private elementary school, one where she felt she has the ability to use her creativity in the classroom.

Here amidst the patience of the teacher-participants, I find the teachers grappling with the idea that they are both the cause of and the cure for the “illness” in education. They are both patients who must wait calmly as well as patients who require “fixing” in order to perform their job. I begin the unraveling of their experience, then, of teaching under NCLB by drawing upon the medical metaphor and how illness plays out in this context.

Diagnosing Dis-ease

As I look through my notes, listen to the transcripts and lean into the language brought forward from the participants, I reflect on the phenomenon of teaching under NCLB. What does it say about the world in which the teachers are living? I am drawn by the realization that nested within the language is a powerful revealing of dis-ease.

The word disease is a compound of “dis” meaning without and “ease” from Old French *aise* meaning comfort, pleasure, well-being and opportunity (*OED Online*, 2011). The participants reveal their lack of comfort, pleasure, well-being and opportunity. Through such language they give “shape to the shapeless” experience of teaching under No Child Left Behind (van Manen, 2003, p. 5). Noting the lack of opportunity, of ease, to teach in a way she wants Ginny notes, “I am not free to teach my subject. There is pressure to hit a target until a certain number is achieved.”

Apple (2010) notes how language weaves into life, “Like a fish who cannot understand that it is in water, people see the world through their systems of language without realizing it” (Apple, 2010 p. 98). In an attempt to bring awareness to assumptions that underpin daily lives in school, I look to the language the teachers use. Reflecting on van Manen’s (2003) call that, “to do research is always to question the way we experience the world” (p.5), I question why language common in the treatment of disease is revealing itself to me.

In medicine, investigating symptoms, usually through a series of tests, disease is diagnosed. To diagnose comes from the Latin *diagnosis* meaning, “to distinguish or discern” and “to perceive” (*OED Online*, 2011). Diagnosis is the determination of the nature of disease accomplished through investigation of symptoms, often through a series

of tests and taking a history of the patient. Hayne (2005) notes that diagnosis is a way of naming a disease by granting “classifiable symptomatology” (p. 182). As a result, diagnosis turns something into an object; a cough into pneumonia, confusion into Alzheimer’s, fatigue into diabetes. Diagnosis names something. In the case of this study low test scores becomes a way to classify teaching as ineffective. In what ways are the classifiable data points, as a result of testing, granting objectification to teaching? To what extent is the diagnosis of schools and the teachers within them as “failing” altering teaching itself? “After diagnosis our world is no longer the same. Life is altered” (van Manen, 2005, p. 194). How does this objectification of teaching alter life for teachers?

“Phenomenological research consists of reflectively bringing into nearness that which tends to be obscure, that which tends to evade the intelligibility of our natural attitude of everyday life” (van Manen, 2003, p. 32). However, van Manen cautions phenomenological researchers not to be side-tracked, wander aimlessly or indulge in speculation. To this end, I discuss with participants the notion of dis-ease in teaching. They explain the naming of their experience as being in a state of dis-ease provides a scaffold to understand the experience itself. Jerome comments:

The notion of dis-ease fits what is going on in education. How can it not be? Look at the symptoms. The demonization and scapegoating of teachers and unions, many minority students cannot read beyond the fourth grade level, and narrowing of curriculum. Where is the ease in that?

Likewise, Larry notes, “The term dis-ease brings forward the appropriate constraints this law has placed on teachers, administrators and students. The school experience should be about so many more things than meeting standards on a test.” In a reassuring note, Larry follows up, “You did not stretch this too far, the dis-ease of teaching. Honestly, maybe

it's not far enough!" The notion of dis-ease is seen through the work of Valli and Buese (2007). A school-based administrator explains how life has changed as a result of NCLB.

If you're a little bit on edge about things I think you perform at a higher level. But you can certainly hit the point of diminishing returns where it becomes debilitating. . . The teachers definitely feel, I think, more stress than they have felt in the past. (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 549)

As teachers are pushed to "the edge," how can they be with ease? Resting on the edge, what engagement do they have with students? Is it a viable long-term treatment for teachers to teach youngsters as they teeter on the edge? What teaching and learning take place in this state of dis-ease? Why is the treatment of teachers one that debilitates them? In pushing teachers to debilitation, what knowing is revealed? How can debilitated teachers teach with pleasure? Debilitate, from the Latin *debilis*, means "weak" (*OED Online*, 2011). Why are systems in place that weaken teachers? In the place of not finding ease, of being on the edge, teachers describe the phenomenon of teaching amidst NCLB. Collectively they provide touching stories of the dis-ease in schoolhouses through the looming of diagnostic language focusing on the margin of error and exposure to dis-ease.

The Looming Diagnosis

In waiting for diagnosis, something looms. Receiving a diagnosis of dis-ease hangs in the air. Amidst diagnosis of dis-ease one waits to understand. In what ways will life change? What must change? Will I survive? What will be the treatment? As our conversations unfold the language of dis-ease, catches me off guard. Van Manen (1998) reminds us, "Disease too shows itself not always directly or only as a body sensation but also as a changed physiognomy of the world" (p. 7). This changed physiognomy brings reality into being. However, dis-ease does not always first present itself as physical symptoms within the body, but with how we interact with the world. How do the test and

the resulting data show themselves to teachers? Jerome discusses how the state assessment reveals itself in his school: “It looms. Everything we do is geared to that one test. That’s part of the teachers’ frustrations. The test looms because, I would say, almost daily everything is about getting these kids to pass the MSA.” What does it mean for the test to loom? The etymology of the verb, loom, is the East Frisian *lomen*, meaning, “to come slowly towards” (*OED Online*, 2011).

Initially, the tests and what they diagnosed came slowly toward the schools. When they first arrived, the required state assessments were taken up as an event to attend to, a few days taken out of the instructional program to assess student knowledge in math and reading; then, teaching continued. For the first few years of the law, students did not receive practice tests, were not pulled from electives, and the school year went on relatively untouched by the looming of the test. Teachers’ pedagogical practices were not modified. However, a changed physiognomy resulted as data diagnosed some schools as ill and the teachers in those schools as failing to thrive. Consequently they were named similar to diagnosing dis-ease.

A further look into derivation of loom finds that in modern usage it means, “To appear as a large or indistinct and sometimes menacing, shape” (*OED Online*, 2011). Eventually, the results from the tests, the diagnostics of teaching, began to take on a menacing shape and continued to change the physiognomy of teaching. The world for teachers became different as the shape of NCLB took hold.

We may first discover that we are ill, not because we feel body symptoms, but because we notice how changed aspects of the outside world become symptomatic of something that must be wrong within us. Everything seems to become too much, too difficult, too cumbersome. Quite literally, the world has become sick. (van Manen, 1998, p. 7)

The outside world began to tell teachers they were ill. The diagnosis loomed. However, the menacing shape that overwhelms teachers is not necessarily seen through bodily symptoms but in how the outside world overburdens teachers. One principal explains, “They’re overwhelmed period . . . new curriculum framework . . . new testing, new state testing” (as cited in Valli & Buese, 2007 p. 549). As if given a terminal diagnosis, the principal admits, “there is nothing I can do for them, you know. I can’t make it go away” (p. 549). The principal gives credence that there is something wrong. In fact, “it” is wrong and “it” looms.

Heidegger (1993c) asserts, “In anxiety, one feels ill at ease. What is ‘it’ that makes ‘one’ feel ill at ease? We cannot say what it is before which one feels ill at ease” (p. 101). The principal’s language reveals the teachers live where anxiety hovers. “Anxiety leaves us hanging because it induces a slipping away of beings as a whole” (p. 101). Anxiety is not to be confused with fear. “We become afraid in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect” (p. 100). Teachers do not fear NCLB; however, as it looms it leaves them hanging. What is slipping away from teachers as they live with the looming diagnosis?

Guilfoyle (2006) explains that for schools that do not meet the benchmark, “severe consequences for schools loom just around the corner” (p. 8). During one of the group conversations Donna, uncertain if her students have done well enough to pass the assessment, explains that upon the completion of the test, there is not a sense of euphoria, only a sense of more uncertainty. “It’s like running through a finish line, with no finish line. It’s like, okay, that’s over; but it is such a crap shoot that let the data fall where [they] may.” Although the test is over, at the conclusion of it, she remains hanging. She is

unable to know herself if the diagnosis will be healthy, causing the indistinct shape of the test to hang heavy in her mind.

I am also reminded of a loom used for weaving. In what ways does the loom of NCLB hold the craft of teaching as standardized and tensioned? If the test is what holds teaching, what is the shape of learning? Teachers pull students, shuttle them, from some classes and provide test-taking support to ensure uniform performance on the assessments. As if pulling students like thread through a loom, teachers pull students to provide additional test-practice. To pull means, “to apply force to somebody or something so as to draw or tend to draw that person or thing toward the origin of the force” (*OED Online*, 2011). Jerome remarks, “Kids are being pulled from band and orchestra. Pulled out of these classes to work on math or reading. Kids are pulled out of lunch.” Ginny clarifies what happens at her school, “We’re going to be pulling them from classes they can afford to miss: Gym, computers, music, nothing that’s ‘content.’ And we’re going to be doing practice MSA work with these children.” What does this say about teaching that students can afford to miss band, computers and other electives? In affording this pulling, what is lost? In everyday engagements and dealings, teachers “pull students” from classes they enjoy so that they can master the courses they do not enjoy by these means. Teachers pull children out of art, music, foreign language, computers and physical education.

Related to the Low German, *pulen* means, “to remove the shell or husk” often used in the sense of removing teeth or weeds (*OED Online*, 2011). Heidegger (1993e) discloses, “We listen to language in such a way that we let it tell us what it’s saying” (p. 411). What is the language saying about the role of teachers as they pull students from

classes in which they thrive to work on test preparation? As Heidegger (1993a) reminds us, in the home of language, man dwells. What dwelling is created amidst the pulling? As if pulling the shell off students so they are fully exposed and vulnerable will help them learn test-taking strategies. What does this tugging of students do to teaching? How does the pulling narrow and limit the weft of instruction? Teachers pull students from classes that give students a design and depth to help students pass the test.

Jerome provides a rich description of the pulling within his school to prepare students for the test:

What do we do? We start pulling kids. We start pulling kids out of PE. We start pulling kids out of electives. And we give them MSA preps. We start giving them double math. We start giving them, you know, more and more and more in the hopes that when they sit and take the test, so we get as many kids above that bar as possible. So it's all about the test. It's not about relationships. It's not about creating good people. It's not about seeing kids work together. It's about can they choose the correct multiple choice answer? (Jerome)

Through the pulling, teachers become aware that at the expense of preparing students for the exam, they do not form relationships with students nor are they able to help students form relationships together within classrooms. This looming recognizes teaching as an act of showing students how to choose the correct multiple choice answer. Teachers juggle the shift of expectations and the sense of what is important. Van Manen (1998) explains, "We discover the object-like nature of our body when the unity of our existence in the world is broken. This happens when we notice something that is conspicuous such that we begin to reflect on it" (van Manen, 1998, p. 9). The conspicuousness of pulling students calls attention to the teachers' role inside the schoolhouse. Teachers notice their existence in the schoolhouse as they pull students from electives. The pulling calls attention to something and changes the physical

environment, not only of the classrooms vacated, but inside those where the test preparation takes place. Incomplete drawings remain in art class, songs are unpracticed in band, and teachers usher students into vacant classrooms to tutor students. The physicality of both classrooms is altered. Gadamer (1960/2006) asserts that a word, “is correct if it brings the thing to presentation” (p. 410). As teachers pull students out of classes this language brings to presentation an unnatural act between student and teacher in the quest for higher test scores. This looming holds the structure of teaching.

Loom is also closely tied to the word *heirloom*, a compound of *heir*, “The person who receives or is entitled to receive property of any kind as the legal representative of a former owner” and loom (*OED Online*, 2011). What does it mean to teachers to have the results from the tests be the *heirloom* of their work, the collective memory of their teaching? When someone is diagnosed with a physical illness, he/she must also grapple with the notion of the illness becoming his/her heirloom. In what ways do the test results create the legacy of teaching? Who do teachers become as the result of this?

Larry acknowledges students do not see the state assessment as important as he tells me, “No kid is ever going to come back to me next week or in twenty years and go, ‘Hey, you know, thanks for getting me those MSA scores. Man, you’re the man. That’s cool.’” Larry does not wish for the test scores to be his legacy, for the scores to explain his life as a teacher. Larry hopes for a more impactful memory of his teaching.

We look to our sons and daughters
To explain our lives
As if a child could tell us why

We rise again
In the faces of our children

We look to reincarnation to
Explain our lives.
(Debison, 2002)

As students become the legacy, the heirloom of a teacher's life, what story is to be told?

What explanation of teaching comes forward through this story?

Throughout our conversations, the teachers reveal how the lived experience of teaching amidst NCLB looms. In both waiting for and living with the diagnosis, the physiognomy of teaching changes through the practices used and the legacy these practices create. The test-driven framework within schools enframes and defines their teaching. The participants disclose the test creeps slowly into practice; it becomes a menacing shape and is a machine that defines teaching. As a result, this jeopardizes the memory, the legacy of teaching. The looming language speaks about teaching and what home teachers dwell in amidst the testing framework.

The Color of Diagnosis

I'm finally mad
like a rush of blood to my weary head
no longer sad
the emotional tide has turned and I see red.
(Blasko, 2010)

As a diagnosis of a medical illness holds the structure of how "the colour [sic] of life's landscape is altered," so too, does a diagnosis of teaching amidst NCLB alter or color life for teachers (Hayne, 2005, p. 194). From the looming of diagnosis I move to the color of diagnosis. As the diagnosis is received in schools, teachers deal with emotions. In healthy schools, teachers continue down one path. In schools that do not meet the benchmark, the emotional tide turns red. Throughout the conversations, teachers vacillate between sadness and frustration. However, amidst the language a specific way of being is

exposed. Larry explains, “I have my blue kids, my green kids and my red kids. That’s the way I am supposed to look at it.” This naming grants a specific distinctiveness to teaching. A student is no longer Juan, but “red-math.”

A word is not a sign that one selects, nor is it a sign that one makes or gives to another; it is not an existent thing that one picks up and gives an ideality of meaning in order to make another being visible through it. . . . Rather, the ideality of the meaning lies in the word itself. (Gadamer, 1960/2006, pp. 416-417)

The idea of teaching through color-coded language comes through in the words from the teachers themselves. Mike opens up the naming of students in colors through an explanation of the “data-chat” meeting he attends. At the meetings, he is given spreadsheets containing his students in color-coded rows and columns. “You sit down in your little meeting and it’s all color coded for your reds, greens, and blues; and that’s the bottom line.” The objects are discussed, not the students. “To name is a special way of calling someone” (Hayne, 2005, p. 182). For Shirley, a troubling aspect of this naming is that it asks her to care about her students in a specific way. Explaining the data sheets at her data meetings she recalls:

They were colorful and each color would represent something in a statistical way that would designate these students aren’t meeting what they should be. I hated it, and it wasn’t because my students weren’t doing well. And it wasn’t because I didn’t care about them. It was because we were caring about them in one particular way.

The color-coded language of teaching influences how teachers experience teaching. As Shirley explains, it does not recognize the multiplicity of who she is as a teacher, and it makes her feel she is to care about her students in a specific way. The data reveal objects of her teaching, but they do not reveal who or how she is as a teacher.

Entering into the conversation Liz uses the vernacular in her school to explain that her administrators are “looking for the green kids. When I get the printout back, if it’s

green that is good. Blue is better.” I wonder what does a green kid look like? How would a blue kid look better than a green kid? If I visited Liz’s classroom would I be able to discern the green from the blue? How different would the red student look? What becomes of teachers as they are to see students as green and blue? Lewis Hyde (as cited in Jardine et al., 2006, p. 9) notes, “The way we treat a thing can sometimes change its nature.” When teachers treat students as colors, in what ways does that change the nature of teaching? A diagnosis can change everything. A person with a cough is told they have pneumonia, and then they are a person living with pneumonia. A teacher teaching red children, rather than students with names and personalities, changes how they are as educators, let alone how the children are seen.

Similarly, Mike discusses his team meetings where the student data are discussed. He explains his teaching efforts throughout the year are around children colored red: “It’s all the kids who are predicted to go red.” Larry expresses his notions about how children are turned into data, then colors, then become something that does not represent a child at all. At his team meetings he and the others are asked to focus their teaching efforts on students who are most likely not to pass the test, but are close to passing. In the place of naming children as colored objects, Gadamer’s (1960/2006) notion of language in science resonates:

The world of objects that science knows, and from which it derives its own objectivity, is one of the relativities embraced by language’s relation to the world. . . . But in being known in its being-in-itself, it is put at one’s disposal in the sense that one can reckon with it—i.e., use it for one’s own purposes. (p. 447)

In what way does the objectification of students into colors demonstrate the purpose of teaching? What does this objectification say about the purpose of red, blue and green children in education?

Mike explains a bizarre example of how staff members embrace color-coded diagnostics in his school. During the week of testing, staff members are encouraged to wear green clothing to motivate students to do well on the assessment. Mike explains at his school, “There are people dressing up as the go-green guy to motivate the students. One staff member painted his face blue.” It may be arbitrary that teachers paint their faces or are encouraged to wear particular clothing to motivate students to do well on the test, but the unquestioned practices show how teachers live amidst NCLB. The notion that a physician or even a mechanic would wear clothing in hopes of assisting a test result seems quite ridiculous; however, this practice exists and is encouraged in schools.

Language is not merely a tool of communication in which thoughts are put into words, nor is it merely a bearer of representational knowledge. Language is a way that humans live humanly in the world. . . The challenge to evaluators of this [hermeneutic] persuasion is to disclose life as lived in and through language, thereby disclosing in some way what it means to be human. (Aoki, 2005a, p. 181)

The teachers disclose a way of living, through their language, that demonstrates what it is like to be a teacher amidst the color-coding of dis-ease. As students are turned to colors, teachers are to teach to that color, not the students themselves. This language is not merely a tool of communication for meetings.

The whole of the reforms, the school climate, and the various actions by the administration appeared to encourage a lockstep emphasis on conformity, which silenced opportunities for creative thinking. School conditions did not encourage innovative ideas; instead, they emphasized managing resources efficiently, controlling teaching, and bracing for attack. (Olsen & Sexton, 2009, p. 22)

What becomes of teachers living in a way that is more akin to a soldier, rather than a nurturer? As teachers navigate lockstep emphasis on conformity, they try to act as if this is ordinary.

We can attempt to hide our diagnosis to prevent being hidden behind its label. In fear of being devalued, of being marginalized, we try to act ordinary. . . After

diagnosis our world is no longer the same. Life has altered. It may have become, in some ways, suspended, in other ways more imminent. (Hayne, 2005, p. 194)

Consequently, how is teaching hidden behind the color-coding of students? In what way do teachers suspend aspects of who they are as educators to teach red, green and blue students? Likewise, in what ways does this cause teaching to be more imminent?

Although teachers try to act ordinary as they teach students as colors, no doubt, different judgment is involved in doing so. The distinctive naming of children in terms of colors grants objectification to teaching. Life is altered for teachers through the color of diagnosis.

As I listen to the teacher participants discuss this objectification, I also hear them discuss teaching within and around margins. As I hear them speak of teaching within and around margins, I feel a shift to the margin-of-error language.

Margin of Error

Palmer (1998) reminds us, “Everything depends on the lenses through which we view the world. By putting on new lenses, we can see things that would otherwise remain invisible” (p. 26). Likewise, other gazes can obstruct the visible. The lens inside schools, especially schools defined as failing, is focused on a set of students, curriculum and teaching inside a narrow margin. “Because of diagnosis things are seen in a different way” (Hayne, 2005 p. 194). As a result, “The diagnosis thus becomes a device for a new comprehensibility. The world now speaks in uncommonly explicit ways” (p. 194). This comprehensibility is revealed throughout the conversations as marginalized content, pedagogical practices and even teachers themselves. Ginny explains, “I resent the fact that because of the MSAs only English and Math are important; other subjects are marginalized.” Mike describes that creative writing is moved to the margin because he

teaches children how to read test-preparation paragraphs and answer multiple-choice questions. Comparing this to his teaching before NCLB he explains, “I used to have journal writing at the start of class, but I don’t do that anymore. I give test preparation now as my warm up.”

Margin from the Latin *margo* means, “edge, retaining wall or border” (*OED Online*, 2011). The margin on the page is the edge. In statistics, the margin of error is the permissible or tolerable degree of deviation from a correct or exact value or target” (*OED Online*, 2011). If there is a tolerable degree of deviation in teaching under NCLB, what happens to the things beyond that point? What are teachers to do with the subject-matter and students who fall outside of the margin? What becomes of the teachers who teach content both inside and outside the margins?

The participants speak about being able to teach only students within the margin. Ordinarily teachers do not reflect on who they may not teach; however, Judy’s explanation of the one-on-one tutoring her administrators mandate from her is telling:

These are students who are on the bubble. They could go either way. So we focus on them. And these aren’t the ones who need the most help; and these aren’t the ones who, you know, already got it. These are the kids who are right on the line between proficient and basic; and really could go either way, depending on how things go.

Judy brings forward the uncommonly explicit nature of teaching on the margin as she explains, “These aren’t the ones who need the most help.” She feels she is asked to turn a blind eye on those who she feels need her the most, those outside the margin. Those who merit her help are those who have the greatest chance of positively affecting the school’s test scores. Her focus is to be on the students who rest “on the bubble.” What becomes of teachers when they see teaching as an act of focusing on students who are on the bubble?

Judy, as she explains teaching bubble students, compares it to an election. “These are students who are on the bubble, kind of like swing states in an election. They could go either way. So, we focus on them.” In naming students as bubble students, those on the margin, teachers work with students as pollsters do the electorate.

Utilizing the diagnosis as a tool for compressibility, Jerome provides the following explanation: “Who are we most likely to move from basic to proficient? That becomes your focus students. If you’re at the bottom of the heap in eighth grade, they are not our focus.” Teachers are to focus their teaching for school gain first, not on those most vulnerable and needy, nor in the areas where they have the most interest and expertise. Teachers are told those at the bottom of the heap are terminal, beyond help. Valli et al. (2008) find, “‘Bubble’ students were to receive special attention, not those who were functioning toward the bottom of the basic category” (p. 155). Being at the bottom of the basic category for a student, then, is a diagnosis. It is a diagnosis, which will lead to minimal additional support. As teachers turn a blind eye toward those who struggle the most in their classrooms, they restructure who they are as teachers.

Creating bubble students helps schools predict success and focus treatment. Hayne (2005) explains diagnosis as to “explain, predict and perhaps control things” (192). However, this way of living in teaching makes it difficult, if not implausible, for teachers to question this diagnostic in schools. Although teachers see students who they would like to focus their energies on, they do not feel that they should do so because healthy skepticism is not encouraged. Larry provides a gripping tale of the pressures on him to focus his attention only on the bubble kids or kids on the margin. “I wouldn’t feel right pulling a gifted kid, into my room and mentoring this kid.” He explains his focus is

to be on the students who have the best chance of positively influencing the school's chances of passing the state assessment. Once teachers become objects in the raising of test scores, what does this do to them? Likewise, Jerome speaks to the gifted students, who also fall outside of the margin, "So the high flyers, the gifted and talented kids, the kids that are in accelerated classes, nothing happens with them. There's nothing—there's no emphasis on them. There's nothing special towards them. There's no focus on them."

From the Latin meaning of focus, "the hearth or fireplace," the focus of a disease is "where the illness manifests" (*OED Online*, 2011). The focus on the narrow group of students on the margin causes the dis-ease to appear. In its current use, the focus of something can mean "the centre of activity or an area of great energy" (*OED Online*, 2011). The teachers explain the center of activity is on the narrow margin of students, but at what cost to the others in their classrooms? At what cost to self?

Inside Donna's classroom she struggles with the realization that those who understand the material are not challenged: "Some kids, if they're high enough, they are left alone. And sadly we're not spending our energies to advance them as much as we can." Donna acknowledges that when her students reach a quantitative threshold, the teaching she should provide is complete. What does this do for her existence in the world, knowing she is not challenging students in meaningful ways? In the acknowledgement that she, too, as a teacher is an object in the world of raising test scores, Donna's disappointment reveals itself. Donna notices and reflects that she is not to use her energies to help students who have passed a threshold of knowledge. Without the focus, there is no need for those beyond the threshold as they are beyond the margin of error.

As the participants speak of the fragmented nature in which they are to engage with students, I am reminded of the hyphen which is used to segment a word into separate syllables of a single word, often at the margin, to parcel long words begun near the end of a line, that do not fit. In what way do teachers hyphenate learning, segment it, to fit in what must be taught for students to pass the test? Who do teachers become when they do not feel the freedom to teach and mentor all of their students at deep and meaningful levels? At what point does the hyphenation of teaching become so fragmented that it does not resemble teaching at all? In addition to teaching students who fall within the margin, the participants in the study disclose how they are expected to teach a narrow set of content, one that falls within the margin.

Afternoon. Across the garden, in Green Hall,
someone begins playing the old piano—
a spontaneous piece, amateurish and alive,
full of a simple, joyful melody.
The music floats among us in the classroom.

I stand in front of my students
telling them about sentence fragments.
I ask them to find the ten fragments
in the twenty-one sentence paragraph on
page forty-five.
they've come from all parts
of the world—Iran, Micronesia, Africa,
Japan, China, even Los Angeles—and
they're still
eager to please me. It's less than half
way through the quarter. . .

'Nevermind,' I want to cry out.
'It doesn't matter about fragments.
Finding them or not. Everything's
a fragment and everything's not a fragment.
Listen to the music, how fragmented,
how fragmented,
how whole, how we can't separate the music
from the sun falling on its knees on all the

greenness,
from this moment, how this moment
contains all the fragments of yesterday
and everything we'll ever know of
tomorrow!

Instead, I keep a coward's silence.
The music stops abruptly;
they finish their work,
and we go through the right answers,
which is to say
we separate the fragments from the whole.
(Zolynas, in Intrator, 2003, p. 53)

In the fragmenting of teaching how do teachers themselves come as parts of a whole shattered into pieces? On the margins, how are teachers to separate the student from the learning? In what way does teaching to the margin make everything a fragment and everything not a fragment? Bracey (1987) notes that the focus on tests breaks learning into fragmented pieces and subsequently treats these pieces in isolation. As a result, the whole of teaching becomes little more than the sum of its parts. Mathematics is taught in isolation of art, while physical education is void of poetry, reading or science, for example. "When a test drives instruction, parts of subject areas that are important tend to be ignored" (Bracey, p. 684).

Jardine et al. (2008) note that in an attempt to narrow a subject to its most salient aspects, the content itself is isolated into fragments easy to test and assess. "That which is most real or most basic to any discipline we might teach are its smallest, most clearly and distinctly isolable, testable and assessable bits and pieces" (p. 4). The content the teachers are to focus on is easily and efficiently assessed through standardized assessment. Barth (2001) asserts that schools use a model for teaching called the "Transmission of Knowledge" (p. 32). In this model, teachers are to transmit as much information as

possible to students, while the function of students is to learn as much of the knowledge as efficiently as possible and display understanding of it on standardized assessments. The accumulation of knowledge is too large for students to master; therefore, the information deemed most important for students to learn is put forward in curriculum guides. This model is commonly used throughout the United States. As a result, it is the responsibility of the teachers to cover the curriculum mandated. Although the Transmission of Knowledge model may be “successful at generating numbers and holding students and teachers ‘accountable’, it is beset with tragic flaws” (p. 34). One flaw is the content taught in schools.

In an NCLB-driven world, the list of what's not measured far exceeds any list of what is measured. This list includes such subjects as history, art, civics, music, and physical education as well as intangibles like school culture and student health and well-being. Some of these factors are hard to measure, but they nevertheless have a large effect on student achievement and are a significant piece of what we want our students to know and be able to do well. (Guilfoyle, 2006, p. 12)

In an effort for teachers to focus on mathematics and reading, the assessed subjects, the content as well as the depth of meaning in remaining subjects is marginalized. The notion of a narrow definition of learning troubles Shirley: “I’m surprised that we’ve gone to this point of math looking one way and English looking one way and reading looking one way.” At the point of our last conversation Shirley provides a telling example of content being marginalized. Although she no longer teaches in public school, in addition to her private school teaching, she tutors students who attend public school. The student brings a lengthy stapled list of vocabulary words from the book, *Animal Farm*, to the session. Shirley asks the student how far he is in the book. He responds, “Oh, we’re not reading it, we don’t have time for that. I just need to look the

words up. They'll be on the test." Shirley is exasperated to learn the text is lost in an attempt to pass the exam. Why is reading a text removed from English class in order to prepare students for a test? The bits and pieces, the vocabulary of *Animal Farm*, are the most salient and testable aspects of the book, but what is learned in teaching a complex text as a fragmented document? How does the dis-ease reveal itself through this marginalization of content? "Whatever is not on the test is not worth knowing, and whatever is on the test needs be learned only in the superficial manner that is required to achieve a passing grade" (Labaree, 1997, p. 46). As teachers teach in a superficial manner, what meaning is derived from it? How does teaching this way put distance between teachers and students? Content is no longer an avenue to open up rich understanding, but rather a venue to hold within the margins.

Larry opens up how his pedagogy is influenced via teaching within the margins. The manner in which Larry is to teach English to his eleven and twelve-year-old students worries him. The state assessment requires students to write the essay portion of the assessment following a specific formula. Larry shares his concern that the formulaic way of writing limits students' ability to demonstrate knowledge: "I don't think the BCR is the only way to assess a child's ability to analyze and synthesize content." He, then, discloses how this influences his practice. As we discuss the process of teaching students to write inside a box, he wonders about the message he sends his students as he says, "You can express yourself, but you only have six inches to do it." His teaching feels ineffective to him. "I feel I'm reaching fewer children academically." Jardine et al. (2008) explain that an aspect of teaching is narrowed or even fragmented through these types of interactions: "Once things are broken down into isolated, seemingly unrelated

fragments, the only work of the classroom seems to be monitoring and management” (p. 6). As Larry manages the writing to be contained in a box on the page, what becomes of him as a teacher?

In the pressure to conform to teaching within the margins, Larry feels he is reaching fewer children. The work of Valli and Chambliss (2007) support Larry’s own self-analysis. They find the pressures of high-stakes testing under NCLB contribute to teachers reducing student discourse in literacy instruction.

As stakes increase for schools to meet the demands from NCLB for adequate yearly progress, less time may be spent on the types of literacy activities, which are promoted by reading experts and exemplified in Ms. Gabriel’s reading class, and more time could be spent on the test-preparation type of activities depicted in the intervention class, a mistake in our view. (p. 73)

As the test results influence teaching, they also influence the definition of teaching. Valli et al. (2006) find that the state assessments affect teachers’ thinking about “characteristics of effective teaching, classroom experiences for teachers and students, and teachers’ personal images of what it means to be a good teacher” (pp. 154-155). What is becoming defined as good teaching are those teachers who teach within the margin to those students who also fall within the margin. Likewise, Jerome reminds me, “It’s all about math and reading. That’s what you’re being judged on, which leads to another dichotomy in the school about who’s important and who’s not important. And that plays out very readily.” Asking him to clarify, I see Jerome painting the picture about which classes are important, and which teachers face the most stress.

There are the important classes and there are the not important classes. Which leads to there are the important teachers and there are not important teachers. Which leads to there are teachers that are under a lot of pressure and some that aren’t under any pressure. (Jerome)

As teachers reside on the margin and within the margins as they teach, dis-ease is evident. As the lens focuses on content, pedagogies and teachers who teach within the margin, teaching is narrowed to fit within that gaze. In an attempt to explain, predict and control test results teachers find themselves in a narrow, controlled, yet fragmented place.

Exposure to Dis-ease

The exposure and lack of exposure to the dis-ease of NCLB comes forward through the conversations. The participants in this study who have yet to feel the dis-ease first hand provide a candid look into the looming exposure to the dis-ease. Likewise, those already in treatment look longingly at those teachers not yet diagnosed. “Prognosis is like telling the future and so it changes one’s experience of time” (Hayne, 2005, p. 189). The prognosis for public school teachers is one where eventually most schools will be declared failing because though a laudable goal to have one hundred percent of students proficient, this is an unrealistic focus. Patty articulates that because her school has met AYP she does not feel the same pressure as her peers in other schools: “I don’t feel too much pressure about AYP, yet.” In the waiting, how does she modify her priorities? In the waiting, does she suspend part of herself as a teacher? In waiting for the future, is her gaze different? Hayne (2005) explains in the waiting for a diagnosis, the future changes. “The focus is hinged on the present with only cursory glances ahead, to a future that may not have a future” (p. 189). In what ways does waiting change Patty’s experience of the present in her teaching? As she waits for her school’s scores to trigger the treatment she sees in other schools, how does this influence the way she teaches now?

The notion of exposure is brought forward as Laura, almost apologetically, clarifies, “I don’t teach the course that has a high school assessment, but I have to admit

that I would not enjoy being part of the scrutiny.” I ask her what she would do if she received her teaching assignment for the following year and had to teach a course falling under the state mandates. Without hesitation, she answers, “I would quit.” I think of what her words reveal. Anton (2001) reminds us that in speech, meaning is released in layers. “To observe such layers of meaning, we must closely attend to vocalic and bodily gestures that accompany our utterances” (p. 108). Laura, through her language, exposes layers of her experience. She reveals that exposure to dis-ease is not easy nor enjoyable.

The Latin word for expose, *expōnere* means, "to put out or reveal." This gives us a clue to how we use expose today in the sense of laying open to danger, attack or harm (*OED Online*, 2011). Laura exposes her angst that to teach a class with a state assessment attached to it brings a level of scrutiny she does not like. The lack of hesitation in her answer causes me to listen not to her spoken sounds, but *from* them (Anton, 2001). Scrutiny, is from the Latin *scrutator* meaning “to search, even to the rags.” The origin of the word *rag* is uncertain; however it may have arisen as a miscopying of *rage*, from the Middle French *raige* meaning, “a violent outburst of anger.” It is closely tied to the classical Latin *rabi* meaning, “savageness,” and is the foundation for the modern word rabies, “the morbid affection of dogs” (*OED Online*, 2011). The tearing to the rags, the exposure amidst NCLB provides a rich understanding of teaching under the dis-ease of NCLB. Popham (2005) points out that under NCLB in an attempt to standardize, conform and make education efficient, student tests are used as a diagnostic for school evaluation purposes. What is it like for teachers to feel student assessments are the diagnostic that exposes them to dis-ease? In what way do teachers feel torn to rags as they teach to the test? How does the exposure both make them vulnerable as well as angry?

Exposure to the dis-ease amidst NCLB is greater in less-affluent schools as they are most likely not to meet the benchmarks put forward, and consequently, are forced to adhere to the mandates of the law. Likewise, Ogawa et al. (2003) find that “Teachers in schools with the highest proportion of students from low-income backgrounds—a situation that historically has presented daunting instructional challenges—were more constrained than their colleagues at more affluent schools in how they taught mathematics” (p. 166). The daunting instructional challenges are apparent through Jerome’s words:

If you’re in a high poverty, high minority school, you are more likely to feel the pressure because you are more likely not to meet the targets. And that’s how it’s played out. Now, don’t get me wrong, because that doesn’t mean I don’t think all kids can learn. As a matter of fact, I think all kids can learn. (Jerome)

He bases his perception about the differences between affluent and non-affluent schools on conversations he has had with colleagues throughout the school system. He describes a heightened urgency around test data at his school that is greater than other schools.

“There’s an urgency in our school about making it that doesn’t exist [in passing schools].

When I talk to them about the stuff that we do at our school, they don’t have an idea.

Supporting this, Cawelti (2006) finds an imbalance between the high-quality curriculums in affluent schools and the narrow ones in less affluent schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) focuses heavily on using reading and mathematics test scores to determine whether schools are making progress in reducing achievement gaps among various subgroups of students. This narrow focus has resulted in a serious imbalance that denies many students access to the high-quality curriculums that students in more affluent schools enjoy. (p. 64)

How does this serious imbalance of the scale deny support to teachers in low-income areas? The exposure to dis-ease is revealed as those teachers working closest to the neediest children are more susceptible to the attack of sanctions.

Phil, whose school rests on the affluent side of the scale, explains how this system of measurement erodes his teaching as well. His school has one of the highest passing rates in the district, and he agrees that there is a difference in the way schools, and consequently teachers, live the experience of teaching amidst NCLB. Within his classroom he does not feel the pressures of passing the test in the same way as teachers in more impacted schools. However, less exposed to the dis-ease of NCLB he feels he has to compromise the intensity or quality of the rigor in his classroom in order to teach the state standards: “I feel the standards that we have to achieve are eroded in an attempt to close the gap.” Phil laments that in an attempt to close the gap, the county provides a standardized English curriculum causing his teaching to be less rigorous and interesting. Phil opens up the notion that in an attempt to bridge the gap, the rigor of the curriculum is compromised. What exactly, is the bridge over the achievement gap?

Heidegger (1993f) reminds us, “The bridge lets the stream run its course and at the same time grants mortals their way, so that they may come and go from shore to shore” (p. 354). Using standardized curricula and pedagogical practices in an attempt to bridge the achievement gap brings Phil to a place not of his choosing in his teaching. “The bridge does not first come to a locale to stand in it; rather, a locale comes into existence only by virtue of the bridge” (p. 356). A bridge provides a space for a path. In other words amidst NCLB, teaching is defined as the vehicle to “bridge the gap.” Yet, simply because a bridge is built, the gap between shorelines does not close; it merely creates a pathway to funnel people over it. Consequently by nature of exposure to standardized and narrowing curricula and pedagogical practices, a locale has come into

existence in teaching. This locale of dis-ease comes into existence as teachers attempt to bridge the gap of achievement using narrow curricula and pedagogical practices.

Exposed to the mandates in NCLB, teacher work is influenced. Namely, this occurs by centralizing and restricting the flow of information, by constricting control, by emphasizing routines, simplified instructional and assessment practices, and by applying strong pressure for school personnel to conform to the mandates put forward (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). The pressure to conform to the mandates is evident as Larry explains:

I don't want to say, 'I want to leave children behind.' Which is implied if one is against the law and all I am [asked] to do. It's akin to being anti-American. The concept is noble, but the implementation has been fraught with problems. (March, 2010 written correspondence)

Additionally, the exposure to the mandates creates friction and pressure within schools.

During our group conversation Liz, whose school is overly exposed to the mandates of NCLB, explains that during the week before testing, the environment in her school is ripe with dis-ease; "It's stressful. My team is not getting along." The etymological root of stress is the Latin *strictus*, meaning tight, close, or narrow. Also, "the pressure exercised on a person for the purpose of compulsion or extortion" reveals that it is likely an aphetic form of *distress*. Distress, means a "mental suffering caused by grief, anxiety or unhappiness, a lack of basic necessities or physical pain or discomfort" (*OED Online*, 2011). To put stress on something, means to put emphasis on it, such as a word or phrase in speaking, or to place a stress-accent upon a syllable (*OED Online*, 2011). How do teachers become amidst the closeness, the dis-stress of the test? How is the emphasis, the stress, on the test influencing the lived experience of teaching? If the emphasis is on the test, what is not being emphasized? When stressed, the emphasis is put on a different syllable in a word; the word itself changes. In what ways does the emphasis

on testing change the meaning of teaching itself? The tension within schools creates teacher friction.

Olsen and Sexton in their study of a school amidst school reform, as a result of NCLB find “considerable friction between administration and faculty and among faculty subgroups and individual teachers. Dominating our interviews was teacher-initiated talk about school tensions and frustrations that affected teaching practice and teacher perspectives” (Olsen & Sexton, 2009, p. 15). Donna describes the affect in her teaching practice during the group conversation as she reveals what has happened to her teaching. “This has transformed my teaching. It flattened it.” Ginny adds, “It sterilized mine.”

What does flat teaching look like? What becomes of teaching when it is sterilized? The Latin word *sterilis* means to “be rendered incapable of producing offspring or reproducing.” When the teaching is incapable of reproducing students who understand and learn to think, what good is the result? In teaching void of thinking, have we lost sight of the purpose of teaching? Has the gaze moved beyond the relationship between that of teacher and student to tests and results? Heidegger (1993g) reminds us, “We must keep our eyes fixed firmly on the true relation between teacher and taught—if indeed learning is to arise in the course of these lectures. We are trying to learn thinking” (p. 380). Exposed in the teachers’ words is the notion that they are unable to think in alternative ways. As a result of NCLB, there is a clamping down on alternative thinking through tightening of educational procedures, outcomes, and teaching models (Olsen & Sexton, 2009). How does NCLB erode the true relation between teacher and taught?

In what ways does the exposure to NCLB render teachers unable to reach learning? Au (2009) concludes, pedagogical practices as a result of NCLB are changing:

As teachers negotiate high-stakes testing educational environments, the tests have the predominant effect of narrowing curricular content to those subjects included in the tests, resulting in the increased fragmentation of knowledge forms into bits and pieces learned for the sake of the tests themselves, and compelling teachers to use more lecture-based, teacher-centered pedagogies. (p. 262)

Where is the space for the relationship between student and teacher that Heidegger addresses to learn thinking, if learning is test centered? In the world of high stakes tests teachers are unable to fix their eyes firmly on the true relation between themselves and their students. Teachers feel pedagogy is sterilized and flat and that their gaze is hollow. As my participants bring a focus on teaching amidst NCLB, they explain that they feel overly exposed to the test. As teachers are asked to read, speak and navigate the color-coding of diagnosis, I hear them speak of the margins inside of which they must teach. Teachers feel this exposure to dis-ease in schools that are diagnosed as ill and those that are not. I now move away from the diagnosis of dis-ease to the test results that determine the diagnosis in schools.

Test Results

Test results in Maryland arrive in schools near the end of the academic year or early into the summer. The data determine the summer decisions for administrators and teachers. As teachers enter the schoolhouse at the start of the school year in the fall, the data have been reviewed and will be disseminated to the staff. From the first day of school until the state assessment in March, the data and results loom throughout the schoolhouse. As teachers weigh, review and live with the data, in what ways do these numbers force conformity to a standard measurement?

Administrators expected teachers to modify their curriculum to conform to the standards and to adjust their instructional strategies based on assessment data provided by the criterion referenced tests. (Ogawa et al., 2003, p. 164)

Teachers are familiar with the notion of student performance data. They understand that they will be asked to look at data sheets, analyze numbers, review results, pull students from classes and, offer remediation based on data. Little time is given to the notion that the data points may in fact be an incomplete, or worse yet, inaccurate measure of student achievement. Compliance with the data-driven decision making is required. As the conversations unfold, the notions around test results and data are jarring.

Viewing the Results

Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts. (Einstein, as cited in Kohn, 2010, p. 29)

The results of the state assessment are viewed and re-viewed in schools. As the participants describe this, the dis-ease, then, bares itself. During one conversation Mike notes that a colleague's school did not meet the state benchmark. The school then "drilled the data down" to the statistical numbers by which they did not pass the test. The resulting number was half an English language learner (ELL) out of a school population of over six hundred elementary students. One subgroup tipped the scales for the school, which is now in improvement at the district level. As we engage in the discussion, I realize he is less troubled about the failure than the language used to define the failure. Looking at me with a thoughtful gaze he pauses, then asks: "How do you get half of a student?" I reflect that the viewing of results uncovers a notion of teaching that parcels students into fractions. He continues, "It's unfortunate. It's a little bit of a shock. I can't believe it." Mike highlights that the shock for him is that teaching for an entire school is determined by the notion of half of a student. How is a teacher to teach half of a student? How can a fraction of a student be a student at all? What happens as the language fails to reject the notion that half of a student is impossible? At what fraction is the student not a

person, but merely a number? In conceptualizing the number rather than a student, who do teachers become? As teachers teach, how do they participate in meaningful instruction with the notion that passing or failing can be parceled into half of a being? In this way of being there is a dichotomizing of the student from the data. Once the data are separated from the body, the gaze is on the data. What becomes of the detached body?

The word *data* derives from the Latin *datum*, meaning, “A thing given or granted” as well as “something known or assumed as fact from which inferences are drawn” (*OED Online*, 2011). Larry explains how the “thing given or granted” limits him. “I mean, data can tell you certain things, and I can tell you it can’t tell you certain things. It seems like such a rush to just get numbers and get things to what end? It [data] can be measured easily.” Reflecting on limitations of data, Larry uses the notion of building a house as a metaphor:

For example you can measure, I used twenty thousand bricks to build this house. But is it a good house? Well, I don’t know. It’s a matter of taste. It can be a matter of, okay, the house is beautiful but it’s not energy efficient; or the house is energy efficient, but it looks like crap.

Larry questions the “something known” as well as the “inferences drawn” from the data. It is the facts that he questions. Fact derives from the Latin *factum*. Although commonly used today as to denote “precise information,” a fact in the 16th and 17th Century was commonly used to explain an evil deed or a crime, such as “to confess the fact.” To confess, from the Latin *confess* means, “to acknowledge” (*OED Online*, 2011). What wrong doing do the data disclose about teaching? In what way do teachers seek absolution from the data as they view the results?

Liz explains what the data do to her teaching, “I’m not sure when I’m going to do the teaching because I spend a lot of time doing assessments, which are supposed to tell

me how to instruct. But at some point, it feels like we're just collecting data to collect data. You know, they're only five." Five-year-olds become the recipients of data-driven instruction. As Liz speaks, I reflect on my own three children, who also have collections. One has an affinity for rocks. When we go hiking she collects pockets full of them. I ask her what they are for, and she explains to me, "Just for having, mom." Some people collect coins; others collect stamps. I wonder what teachers are to do with all the collected data. What becomes of the collection? As if putting data into containers for storage, I wonder how one actually collects data? Is it possible that the energy put forward collecting data exhausts the collectors before meaning can be found? In what ways do the collections of data become trophies to be gazed at by others rather than something to help teachers? During school visits teachers often say to me, "Would you like to see my data?" "No" I think, "I'd rather see you teach." Gadamer (1960/2006) notes that modern science focuses on knowledge that is controllable:

The world of objects that science knows, and from which it derives its own objectivity, is one of the relativities embraced by language's relation to the world. In it the concept of "being-in-itself" acquires the character of a *determination of the will*.... What exists "in itself" in the sense of modern science is determined as certain knowledge, which permits us to control things. (p. 447)

The participants reveal the ways modern science and data control their pedagogy. Liz explains how the data usurp her students. "I feel like sometimes data is like the only focus, and we're not here for data. We're here for the kids. And sometimes I think that gets lost and forgotten." Liz explains that the data are limiting because even if her students' data do not meet the expectations on testing day, it does not mean her students are not growing and learning. "It is data, collected like a picture. It is a moment in time. You take a picture of that moment in time and that's all it is." Like a picture the data are

flat, while the students they represent are multifaceted. This troubles Liz because if her students do not answer information on the assessment correctly, it does not necessarily mean they will or will not remember it in a week. What students learn is often quickly forgotten, but how they learn is not. How does teaching to the test reach students and prepare them for the world beyond school? Liz has many factors to think about inside her classroom, and wonders how the data acknowledge these things: “Did they eat breakfast? Did they get a good night’s sleep? Did they suffer any emotional or physical abuse the previous night?” The collectable nature of the test results do not reflect the human elements of Liz’s teaching.

Shirley notes that the essence of being a primary school teacher is to understand that no two children are alike, but the narrow assessments, categorize her students together. She tries to remind herself that the test score only tells her, “On this day, at this time, they had this particular score.” Both Ginny and Shirley are troubled that the data are a frozen moment in time. Shirley explains it this way, “My feeling is that education involves a large qualitative piece, and it’s hard to document change qualitatively. That’s where, I think, everything began to fail, because in order to see that schools were meeting these demands, it had to be statistically recorded.”

Liz calls for a more comprehensive and meaningful view of data.

I think they should reevaluate what they think data is. Data could be a portfolio. Data could be journaling. Data could be a combination of those things. And I think especially in the primary grades, it should be. It shouldn’t be all hard data. It should be a combination of keeping a portfolio of teachers’ observations and of hard data in order to make a complete picture.

She rationalizes this by explaining, “Like I said, I think that hard data is just – it’s just one picture. It’s not the whole thing. It’s just a little bit of what the whole thing is.”

Shirley explains why she believes other data sources are not pursued, “Educators have been almost brainwashed into believing that quantifiable data [are] the only way you can understand the problem.” Shirley’s point highlights Gadamer’s (1960/2006) notion that modern science permits a controlling of things. In what way does the quest for controlling results influence who teachers become?

As the results are viewed in her school, Judy criticizes the tendency to blame teachers for students’ scores: “When you do badly the blame is huge, and when you do well, the praise is pretty thin.” To highlight her point she explains a visit to the school by the superintendent. The staff came together to receive something that felt more like a scolding rather than a pep talk after the students performed poorly on the state assessment. Judy relays to me that the superintendent told the staff that if test scores improved, “He would come and serve us ice-cream.” Although the schools’ scores improved years ago, Liz shakes her head and says, “Where’s my ice-cream? I’m still waiting!” What does it reveal about the administration’s view of teachers and teaching to promise a party for improved scores, then perhaps more telling, fail to fulfill the promise. Judy discloses that the teachers receive a scolding rather than meaningful support and resources when the results are poor. Additionally, she finds it telling that the superintendent of a major school system promises ice-cream in exchange for improved scores. The test results become the focus of the gaze. Like a collection of objects, the test results become something to put on the shelf to stare at with pride or defeat, almost if asking, whose trophy is shinier? Whose collection is bigger? In viewing the results, how are teachers lost in the collection? As the results are viewed, they become a weight by

which schools are measured. As we discuss the weighing of results, the participants challenge assumptions around the accuracy and the weighing of this measure.

Weighing the Results

During a school visit, a Canadian Professor and a middle school principal of a failing school engaged in a discussion. The principal provides the professor a packet of data to be presented at a meeting with central office staff later in the day. The principal's pride in the documents is evident. He speaks to the color-coded data, and the tracking of these cells. The professor asks what is learned through the data and the presentation of it at the upcoming meeting. As I listen to the discussion, I reflect on the work of Olsen and Sexton (2008), "Absent for the collected data was any attention on the part of the administration to encourage teachers to think differently about teaching and learning or about school improvement" (p. 22). As they discuss the data, I hear the professor trying to understand the principal's perspective. As we drive away from the school, I ask the professor what he thinks of this conversation. His answer startles me, makes me laugh and provides an uncanny understanding of the American school system's affinity for test results. He answers, "You know on the farm, we say that weighing the pig again and again will not make it heavier." From the outside, from "the edge," he captures what teachers in the United States are doing—participating in a frenzied quest to weigh the same thing repeatedly. "Teachers had so much data from so many tests that they seldom had time to interpret the information let alone use it" (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 548). In the frenzied quest to collect data, educators do not have time to reflect on it. Through our conversations teachers disclose an unaware awareness of data's weight in schools.

I am taken with the ease my Canadian colleague names the experience of testing and weighing data within American schools amidst NCLB. From the vantage point of a stranger, he sees the inside with clarity. Greene (1973) notes, “To take a stranger’s vantage point on everyday reality is to look inquiringly and wonderingly on the world in which one lives” (p. 267). Likewise, “The formerly unquestioned has become questionable; the submerged has become visible” (p. 268). Frustratingly, having sat through meetings for failing schools, I wish I had been able to view the submerged. Although I felt there was something askew in the discussions, I was unable to find the submerged. It was more facile to continue to cast my gaze on the visible.

The Canadian questions the formerly unquestioned; he makes the submerged visible. To be outside is to be on “the edge, border or perimeter of something.” As an adjective, it can mean, “not belonging to or connected with a specified institution or society.” It is a compound of *out* and *side*. *Out* comes from the Old English *ut* and was used as a prefix to mean something external, departing or foreign. *Side* originally denoted the long part or aspect of a thing” (*OED Online*, 2011). Not being part of the American educational institution enabled a clear gaze. As if standing along a barrier looking in, the Canadian captures a fundamental nature of teaching amidst NCLB. As someone external, a stranger to the system, his insights are poignant. Why is the thing itself so easily captured by one not connected with our system? His questions make me reflect, what barrier is erected through the data? How does the barrier of data obstruct teaching?

Hoping to open up questioning of the unquestioned, I share the story of “weighing the pig” during several conversations in this study. When I mention it to Ginny she laughs and frankly responds, “Sure, we weigh the pig again and again, and if the pig isn’t

getting fatter, we shoot the farmer! That's the problem." Ginny reveals that if students' results are not positive, teachers are blamed. While Jerome explains, "There is an assumption made when a school is in jeopardy, it's the farmer. It's the teacher. That the teacher is inadequate." The reasoning that the teachers are the focus for poor test results troubles Jerome, and he challenges this assumption:

If the assumption is it's poor teaching, then the other assumption that I would need to make is if you go to a school that's not highly impacted because their data [are] good, then those teachers must be really good; and, therefore, if those teachers came here, we wouldn't have a problem.

Jerome questions if other teachers are more adept, why are they not moved to the struggling schools? In a candid manner, Jerome examines the everyday reality of the world in which he lives. Jerome's questioning of the status quo is what Greene (1973) challenges teachers to do.

We do not ask that the teacher perceive his [sic] existence as absurd; nor do we demand that he [sic] estrange himself [sic] from his community. We simply suggest that he [sic] struggle against unthinking submergence in the social reality that prevails. If he [sic] wishes to present himself [sic] as a person actively engaged in critical thinking and authentic choosing, he [sic] cannot accept any 'ready-made standardized scheme' at face value. (p. 269)

Mike and Larry share similar stories in which I hear them struggle against the prevailing thought brought forward through the tests. Mike describes what it means to proctor the state assessment. As he circulates around the room during the assessment, he sneaks a peek at the exam. He stands behind a student and reads a passage. In the passage he reads: "If you're below par where are you on the number line?" This passage frustrates him because most of his students have not likely been to a golf course. He realizes they may not have a context for how to answer the question. Consequently, he reflects that his students may stumble on the mathematics question, not because they do not know the

math in order to answer the questions, but because they do not have a contextual understanding of golf. As we talk about this example, he questions which students are easily able to answer a question utilizing golf. They are students from “Another part of the county, in other schools.”

Likewise, Larry shares that during the assessment, he reads a passage over the shoulder of one of his students. Reflecting on the passage about a kayak, he explains, “My students do not have a schema for river activities, much less a kayak.” How do the results from such questions reflect teachers’ teaching? Through this questioning, they reveal what Maxine Greene (2000) calls the language of domination. “More often than not, they are the languages of domination, entitlement, and power” (p. 47). The language of a kayak and a golf course are not the language used by Mike and Larry’s students. Greene (2000) urges us to “hold in mind that the modern world is an administered world structured by all sorts of official languages” (p. 47), and describes silences that are created by some of these administrative languages where the unspoken suffering of children and teachers ought to be made audible. However, both Mike and Larry do not feel they can be audible with their concerns. Mike and Larry, as dictated by the laws of the state assessment, are not to comment on the content of the assessment.

In an attempt to struggle against unthinking in the social reality of teaching amidst NCLB, the teachers in this study question the educational policies and their role in carrying out these policies. When they are asked to weigh the results, they do so, but they also seek further understanding of what the data reveal.

Containing the Results

As the results are viewed and weighed, teachers speak of how they must contain them. As if learning cannot spill outside specified locations, teachers must contain their teaching. From the Latin *continere*, contain means, “to hold enclosed” (*OED Online*, 2011). In medicine, disease is contained to prevent a proliferation of illness. In what ways is learning enclosed through the proliferation of test results? How does the holding of knowledge through data limit the expansion of it?

Shirley explains how students are to answer the state assessment: “BCRs on the MSA have to be literally, inside a box on the paper. If they write outside the box, that part will not be graded. It will not be scored.” Expressing how her students answer the assessment questions she says, “There is just one way to get there. When really there’s probably multiple ways to do it; but everyone feels very pigeon holed into doing it the one way.” To prepare the students for the state assessment, Jerome conveys, “Anything outside the box doesn’t get scored.” As a result, “We practice that, literally, write in a box.” Larry explains this influences the interactions he has with his students in telling them, “You have a box and if you write out of the box, I’m not supposed to read it.” As he explains this to me, he ponders his own words then says, with a forlorn look, “Yeah, literally. You can’t write out of the box. You can’t think out of the box. There’s no time. So, I don’t think in teaching I’m giving kids a chance to try to think out of the box.” Valli and Buese (2007) find, “Teachers’ relationships with students and professional well being deteriorated due to the push to make AYP” (p. 553). Larry then explains the acronym he is to use to help his students learn how to write in-side the box, *ACE*, “I am busy with acronyms and formulas and, you know, I’ve just got to ACE this. *Answer, A,*

C, *Cite, Extend, E.*” What learning is contained as teachers instruct through formulas and acronyms? Who benefits from this containment?

I think of Pandora, whose name means, “all gifts” (*OED Online*, 2011). On Zeus’s orders, Pandora, the first mortal female, is delivered to the mortal world by Hermes as revenge for Prometheus’ theft of fire. She is given a mysterious box and told not to open it. Being curious, she opens the box, and every kind of humankind’s ills fly out. Pandora herself feels guilty about unleashing the evils and tries to close the box, but she cannot do so. In our schools are teachers, like Pandora, the ones who have access to open all gifts? Likewise, do they feel guilty as they attempt to enclose knowledge inside the box? If teachers are to instruct their students “to remain inside the box,” what access do they provide to open all the gifts of their students?

If teachers erect boundaries around learning that are rigid and unyielding, they attempt another god trick. If we curtail children’s curiosity, questions, and freedom of inquiry in the authoritarian belief that such freedom will lead to disaster, we are like Zeus jealous and stingy with our knowledge. (Clifford & Friesen, 2008a, p. 173)

Larry is not to read what his students put outside of the box in their answers. Jerome explains that teachers have to practice with students keeping thoughts inside the box. Teaching students to write inside defined boxes puts teachers in the place of being stingy with knowledge.

Liz provides a powerful story about how she is asked to live in an inauthentic way with her students as a result of the state assessment. Liz and I meet the week before the state assessment for one of our conversations. She explains that the previous day at a staff meeting the principal notifies classroom teachers, “P.E. [physical education] is going to be in your classroom because the gym is going to be used for testing.” As she tells me

this, wondering where she is to hold physical education in her room, we glance at the colorful patterned carpet with twenty-five squares in the middle of her classroom.

Looking at the colorful boxes the students sit in to hear story time, she realizes the carpet is the location she will hold PE. “Two feet by two feet. Yeah. I’m praying that it’s going to be warm outside so they can go outside, otherwise they’re going to have PE in here, which means they’re really not going to get PE during that time.” Liz pauses for a moment, looks up at me with her captivating brown eyes and says, “I feel abandoned.” Then as if she has not heard herself fully repeats herself, “I mean I feel abandoned.”

Etymologically, the word abandon carries a sense of "put[ing] someone under someone else's control," from the Old French *à bandon* meaning, "to surrender." As Liz tells her story, I consider van Manen’s (2003) indictment, “Rather than teaching us to live our lives with children more fully, educational research so often seems to be cutting us off from the ordinary relations we adults have with children” (p. 3). The ordinary relations Liz wants to have with her students are cut off. Where is the ordinary in asking kindergarten students to have PE contained in a box? Where is the space for Liz to become what Huebner (1999g) explains is necessary in a master teacher? “A master teacher maximizes his [sic] individuality, stands out as a person, and continues to search for his [sic] own meanings and significance” (p. 26). The conflicted role of teachers to work, teach and instruct in a box limits their ability to realize the notion of master teacher. As Liz reflects on how the assessments as mandates under NCLB have influenced her classroom, she provides a heartbreaking truth, “It changed teaching for me. I used to teach with my heart. Now I’m teaching with my head. I realize I have sold

myself out trying to get my data to look good.” It is unfortunate and telling that Liz must separate heart and head. Barth (2001) explains:

In addition to a brain, we have a heart—and we want to put it to use in promoting young people’s learning. Exclude this vital organ from our work, and you get compliance at best. Obedience may make superordinates feel influential, but it won’t go very far toward making school educators feel influential, and won’t therefore go very far toward improving our schools. (p. xxv)

Liz’s story shows how she separates her heart from her head in order to be compliant with the system. Levin (2003) reminds us, “We must take our thinking down’ into the body. We must learn to think *through* the body. We must learn to think *with* the body” (p. 61). However, as Liz reveals, the vital organ of her heart is excluded from her teaching amidst NCLB. When she thinks only through her head, she feels abandoned. Liz provides a powerful example of why “the teaching profession desperately needs more than warranted assertions about the teaching process, produced only by scientific activity” (Huebner, 1999g, p. 25). However, teachers, as Greene (1973) notes, are defined by the role they are expected to play in the classroom, while their personal biographies and perspectives are overlooked. “If the teacher agrees to submerge himself [sic] into the system, if he [sic] consents to being defined by others’ view of what he [sic] is supposed to be, he [sic] gives up his freedom ‘to see, to understand, and to signify’ for himself [sic]” (p. 270).

Throughout the heartfelt stories the participants in this study share, I learn that teachers feel submerged in a system as defined by others’ view of education. Through the results, they are unable to see, understand and explore for themselves. Amidst weighing, viewing and containing the results, the teacher participants disclose how this cuts off

ordinary relations with self and students. This treatment, as a result of the tests, will be the next area of focus.

Treatment

As teachers deal with the diagnosis of dis-ease and test the results, throughout the conversations they bring forward the treatment of the dis-ease. What is the treatment of the dis-ease in teaching? Treatment, from the Latin *tractāre* means, “to manage or handle,” originally “to drag about.” It also means, “to entertain with food and drink,” which is the likely connection to medicine. In modern medicine a treatment is, “a manner of handling or dealing with a patient, disease or symptom” (*OED Online*, 2011). What is the treatment or handling of teachers as they live amidst NCLB? Van Manen (1998) reminds us, “The phenomenological approach asks of us that we constantly measure our understandings and insights against the lived reality of our concrete experiences, which of course are always more complex than any particular interpretation can portray” (p. 10). The participants shed understanding on the experience in schools through this look at the treatment of dis-ease. The treatment of the dis-ease shows the complex and ambiguous experience of teaching under NCLB.

While the original intent of the law was admirable (for who can argue with an idea that promotes providing for all children?), the process has all but consumed the progress. The ends no longer justify the means and children are being left behind. (Ginny, written correspondence, March 2010)

Ginny’s words are stuck in my head: “The process has all but consumed the progress.” What are the processes of which Ginny speaks? In what ways do these processes, the treatment, influence teaching and learning? Although processes are part of every teacher’s life (the establishment of routines, starting a lesson and concluding a lesson), the processes and procedures the teachers speak of take on new meaning. How

do processes amidst NCLB shadow the actual progress of children? As the process consumes the progress, what is created? The word process derives from the Latin *processus*, meaning to advance or be carried forward, while progress from the Latin *progressus* means, “growth or development in advancement.” As such, growth and development are stagnated in an attempt to move forward or proceed. To grow, from the Old English *growan*, means “to flourish.” A deeper look reveals that to flourish comes from the Old French *floriss*, and the Latin *florere*, meaning “to bloom or blossom” (*OED Online*, 2011). How does the advancement hinder a blossoming of knowledge? What does an unopened blossom reveal? This sets forward the notion that for teachers there is a lack of development in a pleasing way.

As teachers teach in ways that are not pleasing, who do they become?

We find that rapid-fire, high-stakes policy directives promote an environment in which teachers are asked to relate to their students differently, enact pedagogies that are often at odds with their vision of best practice, and experience high levels of stress. The summative effect of too many policy demands coming too fast often resulted in teacher discouragement, role ambiguity, and superficial responses to administrative goals. (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 520)

As they live amidst ambiguity, who do teachers become? The Latin, *ambiguous*, means, "having double meaning, shifting, changeable and doubtful," derived from *ambigere* which means, "to dispute about," and "to wander" (*OED Online*, 2011). In what ways does teaching at odds with personal vision cause teachers to wander from themselves? Throughout the conversations, the teachers patiently reveal the treatment. They question the policy, but additionally I am saddened to hear them question themselves as ineffective educators. They doubt their ability to enact the processes put in place to strive for progress. The conversations elucidate an automation of teaching, a lack of understanding of the treatment, and an aggressive treatment of the dis-ease. Additionally through this

treatment, teachers question what it means to be a professional. Finally, is it possible that the treatment is causing an illness worse than the initial symptoms?

Automated Treatment

An aspect of treatment is automated and routine, but what becomes of the patient amidst this way of being? Throughout the conversations, the teachers reveal an unsettling notion that their teaching is becoming automated and routine due to standardization and narrowing of curricula. Phil explains what it is like to teach a high school class that students must pass in order to graduate from high school: “It makes you feel like a robot. It makes you feel like eeh, eeh. You’re like on a conveyor belt at a Ford Motor Company, putting together an assembly line.” Phil touches on aspects of an essay written by Antonio Gramsci (as cited in Carlson & Apple 1999). In it Gramsci “used fordism to refer to, among other things, changes in politics, consumerism and the way public institutions were organized (including the acceptance of the factory as the model of the ‘efficient’ organization)” (p.7).

Laura reflects on when she taught a class that was tied to the state assessment. “It was just getting students to act like robots and repeat information.” Donna compares her teaching to McDonald’s expressing that as a result of NCLB, there is a sense that all students are to receive the same information in a model based on efficiency. She states, “I can go to any McDonald’s, anywhere in the world and I get the same burger, but teaching cannot be one size fits all. McDonald’s stamps out the same patties in an effort for efficiency. It’s like an assembly line. It’s very automated.” An aspect of the automation is the scripted teaching prevalent in classrooms. “Anyone can come in and grill burgers.

Anyone can come in and go through the script, and I think we've thrown the joy of education out the window."

The participants reveal what Marx notes as the "Alienation of Labor" whereby workers do not feel connected to their work.

The fact that labor is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The external character of labor for the worker appears in the fact that it is not his own, but someone else's, that it does not belong to him, that in it he belongs, not to himself, but to another. . the worker's activity not his spontaneous activity. It belongs to another; it is the loss of his self. (1844/2009, p. 239)

The most basic form of workers' alienation is their estrangement from the process of their work. Donna explains that teaching with the state assessment in the forefront of her pedagogical practice is "exhausting, unrewarding, automated, disengaging and sad." Amidst this treatment who do teachers become? Where is the self if there is a feeling that anyone can do her job?

Shirley shares that in order to bring her passion for the arts into her pedagogy, she does so secretly: "I had to sneak those pieces into my curriculum." To sneak can be traced to the Middle English *sniken*, meaning "to creep or crawl in a stealthy and slinking manner, as if afraid to be seen" (*OED Online*, 2011). Why is it that Shirley must creep the arts into her teaching, as if afraid to be seen? What would happen to her if she were caught? What would she have to admit about her teaching if she did not sneak the arts into her teaching? Why is it that creativity must become a covert activity? What does this treatment reflect as she closes the door to engage secretly in teaching that fulfills her? In closing the door to teach secretly, who does she become?

On the other side of the door
I can be different from me,
As smart and as brave and as funny or strong
As a person could want to be.
There's nothing too hard for me to do,
There's no place I can't explore
Because everything can happen
On the other side of the door.

On the other side of the door
I don't have to go alone.
If you come, too, we can sail tall ships
And fly where the wind has flown.
And wherever we go, it is almost sure
We'll find what we're looking for
Because everything can happen
On the other side of the door.
(Moss, in Intrator, 2003, p. 37)

On the other side of her door Shirley can explore, but how is it that she does not feel she can do this openly? Where do her strength, humor and creativity go when she is not sneaking creativity into her teaching? What becomes of teaching when creativity is silenced? What does the silence of creativity sound like? In this way of being, where is the opening to teach uniquely? Huebner (1999g) explains that teachers, like children, have common characteristics. However, they also have unique characteristics. Unfortunately, the expectation is for teachers to teach in the same manner in an effort to standardize treatment in the classrooms. Where is the space for teachers to discover the unique amidst the automation of treatment?

Existing studies of children and the learning process suggest that there is a best way of working with children. If a teacher can master the principles of learning and child development; if objectives can be clearly delineated and carefully stated, objectives and lessons planned accordingly—then the crank can be turned—and teaching will be effective. Textbooks [sic], some educational authorities, and administrators frequently assume that the teaching process can be, or is, standardized, and that teachers can be interchanged. This is possible, perhaps, but undesirable. Teachers, like children, have common characteristics. But they also have unique characteristics. (Huebner, 1999g, p. 25)

Ginny explains that the focus on standardization moves her to an uncomfortable spot of being, not to see her students as if they are breathing humans. She compares her students to TV dinners, “I am supposed to put the same ingredients into each section, neatly wrapping them and call them ‘complete.’” She explains that it is difficult to treat her students as a standardized TV dinner because each of her students is different. “It’s not fair to them. They’re not TV dinners. My students are more of an amalgamation of everything that’s good and wonderful about this world, and we’re not letting them love stuff. That frustrates me.” The denial of teacher autonomy in factory-like schools undermines good teaching practice (Ingersoll, 2003; Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Teachers express that they feel part of an automation process, one that creates a by-product more than creating a nurturing setting with children. Through an analysis of changes in teacher tasks, Valli and Buese (2007) suggest that role changes for teachers as a result of NCLB create unanticipated, often negative consequence for teachers’ relationships with students, as well as the narrowing of pedagogical practices.

Phil explains, “There is something that is unsettling about the one size fits all methodology” required of his teaching. Furthermore, he considers, “If everybody’s shoe is horned into the same text or the same methodology or toward the same end that seems to be inconsistent.” The inconsistency he speaks of is the research on teaching and learning. “They’re constantly talking about the different methods of learning, the learning styles. To reach the auditory learners, kinesthetic learners, visual learners, I need to be able to teach differently as well.” However, in an attempt to standardize his teaching Phil is not provided opportunity nor encouraged to alter his teaching or the curriculum to meet the needs of his learners.

Likewise, Shirley feels she does not have the ability to modify assessments to meet her students' needs, "I don't like the idea of one test fits all." The automation of teaching, as if running on a treadmill is heard in Jerome's words as well:

The underlying piece, of course, is that we're working with teachers on more targeted instruction: Narrowing it down to the State curriculum, teaching just the State curriculum indicators, assessing those and then doing it again and again and again. You're running around trying to collect your data and get these kids learning.

The quick, frenzied movement resonates in Jerome's words. As a staff development teacher, he is first to target the teachers. They are subsequently to narrow teaching to a set of quantifiable pieces, teach those aspects, assess what was taught, collect the data and start over.

In mathematics classes, for example, teachers were required to move through mathematics units on the district's schedule because unit tests had to be given within a prescribed time period. Discourse about teaching was often about "keeping up" with curriculum markers. (Valli & Buese, 2007, p. 531)

As I listen to the teachers, I reflect back on my own classroom teaching experiences. I remember what it feels like to teach a lesson to meet county timelines. Although there were students in my classroom wanting to learn an-other aspect of the content, I did not teach it. The teachers try to keep pace. Liz, reflecting on the data she is collecting explains: "It's exhausting. Sometimes it feels like you're running around trying to collect data." Who do teachers become in this absence of teaching? "As long as we are healthy, we may not have reason to take notice of our corporeal being" (van Manen, 1998, p. 13). The exhaustion, disengagement and sadness are noticed through this treatment of dis-ease. In a hurried attempt to cover curriculum or hide practices that are meaningful, the automation of teaching creates feelings of exhaustion. Meanwhile

teachers feel their supervisors, only with their eye on the assessments are saying, “You’re doing splendidly. Speed it up!”

Not Understanding the Treatment

“Why do they do that?” my daughter asks as they cleanse her skin before a biopsy? She is trying to understand what is happening to her body. In asking, she tries to envision and predict the treatment of self. Gadamer (1960/2006) reminds us, “To understand a question means to ask it” (p. 260). Throughout the conversations, I hear a strong desire for participants to understand the treatment amidst NCLB. The teachers question what students learn, as well as their own sense of understanding. In the place of both knowing and not knowing, understanding and not understanding, the participants live this tension. To understand comes from the Old English *understandan*, meaning to “comprehend or grasp the idea of something.” This is a compound of *under* and *standan* meaning, “to stand.” Rather than *under* meaning “beneath,” the context in this compound word is “between or among” (*OED Online*, 2011). Using the etymological roots to bring forward a rich meaning, “to understand” is “to stand among” the knowledge. This is a powerful image for a teacher to think of students standing among knowledge, not beside or alongside the knowledge, but standing amongst it, as if trees in a vast forest of oaks—standing strong—unwavering in knowledge. The mental process of under-standing allows one to be thoroughly familiar with something and clearly see subtleties. Gadamer (1960/2006) reminds us, “This is the reason why understanding is always more than merely re-creating someone else’s meaning” (p. 368). As one receives information about the treatment for an illness, the subtleties of treatment provide insight to the dis-ease itself.

As teachers strive to understand self amidst NCLB, I learn that the teachers did not realize what the federal law would do within their classroom. Not expecting federal policy to dictate pedagogy within classrooms, both Liz and Ginny describe they were ill prepared for what was going to be asked of them because of NCLB. They did not feel they were given proper information about what was coming into their practice.

I think that teachers, for as much as Leave No Child Behind impacts us, there was not a class. There weren't any staff meetings where it was like, "This is what Leave No Child Behind looks like and this is how it's going to change us." It just sort of like hit you. (Liz)

The notion that the policy "hit" the pedagogical practices in the classroom unfolds. The slang meaning of hit "a killing," comes to mind (*OED Online*, 2011). How does a lack of understanding of the treatment kill an aspect of teaching? How does the treatment catch teachers off guard unexpectedly? Ginny discusses the relationship between an influence of the policy in her classroom and her understanding of it. "I didn't realize how much the indicators would play a role in my life when I was in grad school. I mean no one told me this. Where was this course?"

This lack of understanding is why Olsen and Sexton (2008) recommend teacher education programs spend time preparing teachers for the effects of policy mandates in the classroom. This is different from a course that focuses on "how to teach" within the mandate.

We recommend that teacher education programs consider introducing effects of the policy climate in explicit, honest ways that seek to prepare beginning teachers for what it means to work in "underperforming" or "high priority" schools like Hawthorne. By addressing ways that teachers can interpret and navigate these tensions in today's mandate-heavy school landscape, teacher education can offer collaborative preservice development around current policy effects. (p. 40)

This opens up a treatment whereby interpretation of the policy is needed to create understanding. To interpret from the Latin, *interpret*, means, “to explain, expound, translate and understand” (*OED Online*, 2011). What is revealed about teaching as teachers need a translation of policy to understand classroom practice?

Folded into our conversations, I hear about the challenges the teachers face in light of the activities they must engage in with students. They feel that in the quest for technical knowledge, teachers are unable to provide rich experiences for students, and which also hinders understanding. Gadamer (1960/2006) explains, “There is a curious tension between a *techne* that can be taught and one acquired through experience” (p. 313). Likewise, “We learn a *techne* and can also forget it” (p. 315). Liz notes her inability to provide experiences beyond *techne*: “We don’t have the chance to take the field trips and take time away from the classroom to do things and get experiences that I think they need.” The teachers understand that the world of *techne* is not enough for either themselves nor their students, but they do not feel open to exposing students to a world beyond *techne*. “The need to comply with the law stifles innovation and the limited focus on a small subset of subjects narrows the curriculum” (Guilfoyle, 2006, p. 6).

As a kindergarten teacher, Liz’s students do not take the state assessment. However, Liz provides a powerful example from her classroom during the week of the state assessment when she was not able to modify her processes to meet a student’s needs. She was unable to provide the conditions to nurture a slow germination of awareness for a new student in her classroom from Vietnam. Due to testing, none of the ELL teachers were available to support the student, who knows no English because they are busy working as test examiners for the state assessment. Throughout the week, the

student ran around the room and hid under desks while Liz attempted to teach her class. He untied classmates' shoes and giggled. After a few days of the student being without any support, Liz worked to bring a volunteer into her room who spoke with the student in his native language. After a conversation with the boy, the volunteer explained to Liz that in Vietnam, children play in kindergarten, and the student was wondering when he would get a chance to play in his new school. As her heart dropped, Liz thinks to herself, "Oh, honey, you need to sit down and learn your lesson. Play time's over. There is no playing in kindergarten. Get over it. You've got to learn. How awful." The lyrics of Cat Stevens (1970/1999) sing in my head:

I know we've come a long way,
We're changing day to day,
But tell me, where do the children play?

Gadamer (1960/2006) explains, "Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play" (p. 103). Through the student's request for play, Liz reflects on her role as a teacher. How does the seriousness of his question bring understanding to her treatment amidst NCLB? As it dawns on her that her student was wholly lost in play while she rests in treatment, what realization is made about her teaching? The question causes Liz to understand what has happened in her classroom. What assumptions about her role as a nurturer to the youngest and most vulnerable children must she challenge, as she is unable to tap the capacity for more meaningful teaching with her students? For my conversants, teaching amidst NCLB means being in a place of understanding they do not in fact, fully understand. They work to follow the mandates because they want their students to be successful; the measure of

the success, however, troubles them. Revealed through the conversations are questions of what knowledge survives amidst the treatment?

Surviving Treatment

Ginny shares a poignant example of not understanding the treatment for her students as they take the state assessment. She shares how she attempts to help her ELL students survive treatment during the state assessment. However, as described by Rivera and Collum (2006), there is no consensus on what constitutes an acceptable accommodation. Likewise, Wright (2007) contends because the use of accommodations for ELL students is nebulous and ill-defined, teachers are unable to provide meaningful accommodations. What does it mean to have an accommodation? From the Latin, *accommodationem* means, "an appliance or anything which affords aid and a room or lodging," or, "to make fit" from the Latin *ad* and *commodus* (*OED Online*, 2011). Ginny feels her non-English speaking students are not provided aid during the test. In fact, through her story, it seems nothing fits at all. They are placed in her middle school classroom because they have never learned to read in any language. On testing day, the students have an accommodation that allows them to use a dictionary to look up words they do not know. However, the dictionaries provided are bilingual dictionaries—one with a word in English and the definition in their native language, be it Spanish, Farsi, Arabic or French. "If a student looks up the word 'happy,' the dictionary will provide the word "*feliz*," for example. This is not helpful!" She tells me that during last year's assessment one of her students said, "I don't read in my language. I would rather use an English dictionary." Nevertheless, Ginny is asked to provide an accommodation that lacks meaningful support to her students. What good is an accommodation that does not

fit? Ginny tearfully explains, “I’m setting them up to fail because I am to give them a test in English, then ask them to use a dictionary in Spanish, but they may never read Spanish. How does this reflect what they know?” Ginny attempts to understand this treatment but cannot. She has attempted to ask for clarification on this policy from her principal and central office staff, but she is not provided an answer that helps her understand.

While Ginny asks a question, the lack of thinking in the NCLB world of data reveals its shallow reach:

In any case, we still seem afraid of facing the exciting fact that today’s science belongs in the realm of the essence of modern technology and nowhere else. . . A fog still surrounds the essence of modern science. That fog, however, is not produced by individual investigators and scholars in the sciences. It is not produced by man at all. It arises from the region of what is most thought-provoking—that we are still not thinking; none of us. (Heidegger, 1993g, p. 379)

To this end, caught up in a fog absent of thinking, Ginny questions why providing students with a dictionary they cannot read is of any assistance at all. She continues her questioning by asking what NCLB does for her students: “We’re succeeding and then we’re graduating people; but we’re not graduating literate people. That’s No Child Left Behind. They’re not left behind in the public school system; they’re left behind in life. They cannot survive. They can’t survive.”

What does it do for teachers to move students through a system feeling as if they are not preparing them for survival outside of the walls of the schoolhouse? If we give thought to this notion, to survive, there are clues to the challenges teachers face. To survive from the Anglo French *survivre*, the Old French *souviivre*, and the Latin *supervivere*, means “to live beyond, and live longer than,” from *super* “over, beyond” and *vivere* “to live” (*OED Online*, 2011). As such, Ginny expresses she is not preparing

students to be able to live beyond the tests. She does not feel she is preparing them for life outside of school.

Teacher, teacher, can you teach me?
Can you tell me all I need to know?
Teacher, teacher, can you reach me?
Or will I fall when you let me go? Oh no.

Just when I thought I finally learned my lesson well
There was more to this than meets the eye
And for all the things you taught me, only time will tell
If I'll be able to survive, oh yeah

Am I ready for the real world, will I pass the test?
You know it's a jungle out there.
Ain't nothin' gonna stop me, I won't be second best,
But the joke's on those who believe the system's fair, oh yeah.

Teacher, teacher, can you teach me?
Can you tell me if I'm right or wrong?
Teacher, teacher, can you reach me?
I wanna know what's goin' on, Oh yeah.

So the years go on and on, but nothing's lost or won.
And what you learned is soon forgotten.
They take the best years of your life,
Try to tell you wrong from right,
But you walk away with nothing. Oh Oh.
(Vallance & Adams, 1984)

As teachers question their ability to help students survive, who do they become? Larry reflects: "I would prefer to spend less time preparing for the MSA and more time preparing kids for the world that's ahead of them, which is not going to be a multiple choice test or a BCR." He mentions the desire to be able to have conversations with students and to have them justify their rationale for answering questions, rather than to narrow his teaching and student learning down to quantifiable data points. What would it take for teachers to be able to create experience-rich situations in classrooms? Van

Manen (1975) calls for a look at the processes available for teachers to create such opportunities.

Instead of assessing learning in terms of "input" and "output" such understandings probably require a process of slow germination which eventually may make a fundamental difference in the student's awareness, sensitivities and ability to cope in a mature way with the knowledge of social life. One way of dealing with the problem of measurement and evaluation might be to focus away from learner behavior and toward teacher activities. Rather than checking whether the student actually has changed one may check whether in the teaching process the teacher has provided for such change. (van Manen, 1975, p. 11)

Aoki (2005a) asks that teachers “direct their efforts towards clarifying, authenticating, and bringing into human awareness the meaning structures of lived experiences” (p. 180). Where is the space for creating a rich awareness of life inside the bubbles of a multiple-choice examination? Where is the human awareness in writing inside a pre-scripted box? The teachers speak to the desire to want their work to impact students beyond the classroom for a world outside of testing. It seems they are calling for a wider horizon.

A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence overvalues what is nearest to him. On the other hand, “to have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 302)

As the teachers touch the lives of the students, they see a horizon beyond the test, amidst a workplace that does not. What troubles Laura is that the system does not seem to want to focus on a wider horizon. She explains: “I think if it sounds scientific, it sounds logical and it sounds rational; and then the people who create these tests or administer these tests or collect the data on the tests then can justify their jobs.”

The knowing and lack of knowing associated with survival create tension between what the teachers want for themselves as well as their students and what is. This struggle challenges the teachers' sense of being. Throughout the treatment teachers reveal they do

not fully understand it. They question the treatment in an attempt to gain understanding, but in questioning, expose deeper questions about practices to help students prepare for the state assessment. Through treatment a patient hopes not just for survival, but for the opportunity to thrive.

Aggressive Treatment

Treatment of disease can be aggressive, as with chemotherapy or amputation. Such practices are used when no other options are viable to sustain life. I am taken by the use of the word “blitz” to describe one of the practices or treatments several of the teachers implement to prepare students for the state assessment. Judy describes the blitz to me: “Students are identified as needing more intensive tutoring, so we do a blitz. These students are pulled from elective classes in January, and they come to meet with another teacher, and you try to get their skill level up.” Donna describes blitzing at her school: “As part of our blitz we pull students for a month and go over testing strategies.”

“To name is a special way of calling someone” (Hayne, 2005, p. 182). Many of the participants discuss blitzing their students. Moran (2000) explains, “Language can never be completely neutral, never a simple window on experience. Rather, language is already coloured [sic] with the value system of the culture which supports it and which language in turn vivifies” (p. 270). Coulter (2001) explains:

Language allows people to define themselves and their relationship to the objective world or social world. And it is through language that people attempt to come to an understanding with one another by making unavoidable validity claims to truth, rightness and truthfulness. (p. 90)

What relationships are defined as teachers blitz students? Although the teachers take the notion of blitzing as normal and agreed upon, what value system of the teaching culture is

revealed through the notion of blitzing? What understanding of one another is made amidst a blitz of children?

As Mike and I discuss the blitz, he explains that his school uses the practice test scores to predict who needs the blitz the weeks before the test. Mike explains that based on the test results, “The blitz starts in.” I ask him if he has ever thought about the origin of the term blitz, and what it reveals about education. He sits back, reflects and explains that he had never thought of it. Then he notes, “It’s a football term, it’s run them through and move them through. Go deep and see who we can get.” The blitzing, lasts for six weeks, prior and up until the students take the test. An aspect of the blitz that troubles Mike is the notion that no one asks if it works; no one questions it. Why is military terminology of violence and aggression seeping into the pedagogical vernacular without question? He explains that over the course of the last two years, in the weeks prior to the state assessment, students are blitzed. However, no one actually goes back to reflect on whether the practice is effective. To echo Mike’s concern, Murnane and Papay (2010) reveal, “Many teaching in schools serving disadvantaged student populations express frustration that even sustained, coordinated efforts to increase the skills of all students have not resulted in their school making Adequate Yearly Progress” (p. 160). And Judy concurs:

There are times when I wonder if what we’re doing is really working. And at the end of each year, we look at the data and if we’ve made AYP or not, you know, we really cannot figure out what was the reason. We have no idea.

Why do teachers not know if the treatment they are providing is successful?

Although arduous and time consuming, does that necessarily mean the treatment is effective? Why is there no way of knowing the effectiveness of this treatment? In the

process of blitzing, teachers are put through the paces of collecting data, teaching students test taking strategies, providing more practice tests, and collecting more data, but to what end? Mike describes what happens in his building the weeks before the test: “The blitz is starting and everybody’s got to be doing this. To get the kids to pass the test, professional development stops. Team meetings stop so we can blitz the kids.”

Likewise, Donna explains that during the blitz she has to drop everything, “hit the pause button” in her teaching. Ginny, as if trying to justify the blitz, reveals, “I don’t think it’s killing them to miss chorus, computers or gym, but if I think about what I adored when I was in school and why I did so well in my content classes, it breaks my heart.” Within Ginny’s language, I hear her question the blitzing, but she treats her question as a dichotomous one—death or blitzing. In an attempt to stop the metaphorical creep of dis-ease, must she cut off her teaching?

Man [sic] acts as though he were the shaper and master of language, while in fact *language* remains the master of man. (Heidegger, 1993f, p. 348)

I reflect on how language shapes the teachers in this study. Huebner (1999g) explains that man [sic] uses language in dealing with the world. What does the language of blitzing reveal about teachers’ dealings with children amidst NCLB? Huebner (1999g) claims, “Words or labels carry nuances which creep into thought and which unconsciously structure a teacher’s attitudes, feelings or actions” (p. 26). How are teachers’ attitudes structured as they blitz children? Such language highlights what van Manen (1986) calls the language of doing.

The industrial model has deeply invaded schooling....It is almost exclusively a language of *doing* for the future, not of *being* now.... The language of objectives, aims, teacher expectations, intended learning outcomes, goals, ends in view is a disembodied language of hope from which hope itself has been systematically purged. (p. 28)

As the intangible nature of teaching void of hope infiltrates teachers chasing test scores, who do they become? Through the blitzing, how is hope purged? The language of ends-means teaching and learning reveals how this system structures teachers' attitudes and actions about teaching amidst NCLB. Blitzing, both the practice of it and the name itself, shapes who teachers are amidst NCLB in ways that perhaps make them sick or worse. As the treatment calls for language of aggression, teachers expose a way of being. This language gives rise to another focus of our conversations, the language of fear amidst the treatment under NCLB.

Fearing Treatment

As the conversations unfurl, teachers provide rich detail of the meetings with central office staff as being punitive and even lethal to their ability to teach. The teachers in failing schools feel as if they are going through punishment as they work with the central office staff sent to support them. Where is the room for nurturing and development if the teachers are afraid of the supports given to them? Jerome speaks of the meetings with central office staff as being put "in a noose in the square" because there are "penalties being a failing school." The meetings, for Jerome, miss the mark as they do not allow a conversation with central office staff, but they are meetings where he feels judgment and criticism. Through their language the participants reveal a culture of fear inside schools.

We become afraid in the face of this or that particular being that threatens us in this or that particular respect. Fear in the face of something is also in each case a fear for something in particular. . . he who fears and is afraid is captive to the mood in which he finds himself. Striving to rescue himself from this particular thing, he becomes unsure of everything else and completely 'loses his head.' (Heidegger, 1993c, p. 100)

In what ways do the teachers “lose their head” amidst the fearful treatment? The treatment received in the meetings with central office staff bring forward the threatening circumstances that create fearful situations in schools. Several participants discuss the meetings in which they participate as a result of teaching in failing schools. Mike explains that the environment is not collegial, but is one where the staff of his school “spew out data to central office personal sitting around the table.” Donna calls the meetings at her school “a grilling” where she feels “belittled” by outside specialists telling her what to do in her classroom. Reflecting on Donna’s use of the word grilling, I contemplate what it means to be grilled in front of colleagues and supervisors. Grill, from the Old English *gryllan*, means “to mock and scorn” (*OED Online*, 2011). Donna guides me to her understanding of participating in the mandated meetings set up to help teachers in failing schools. Through the meetings, she feels mocked and scorned. Likewise, when one is grilled one feels fearful and afraid. In a state of fear, how can teachers not lose confidence in self? As a result of the meetings, Donna feels she is not supported, and in fact, feels the meetings inhibit her ability to be excited about teaching, “I wish people could see how much they’re suffocating teachers. No one’s asking us what we think.” In failing to ask for her insight, how does Donna render her thoughts as meaningless?

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary desert sand of dead habit. . .
(Tagore, in Intrator, 2003, p. 169)

Amidst the fear of meetings how can knowledge be free for teachers? How do teachers see themselves when they are critiqued and challenged? How can teachers enjoy the

treatment in classrooms amidst narrow fragmentation and shallow depth? Where is the stream of reason amidst a treatment of fear?

Likewise Crocco and Costigan (2007) conclude that teachers in their study found supervisors, mentors and administrators as ones to enforce mandates rather than support the teacher around pedagogical practices:

Many of our participants reported that support from district offices was negative, consisting of one or several supervisors arriving unannounced in the classroom to see that desks were arranged in a certain way, blackboards and bulletin boards conformed to prescriptions, the lesson was the mandated one for that day, and the curriculum was “covered” and taught in the prescribed way. (p. 525)

What happens when supervisors become “enforcers?” Enforce means “physical strength,” from the Old French *force* meaning, “force violence or power.” Likewise, from the Latin *fortis* meaning “strong,” it is closely tied to fort, meaning a body of armed men (*OED Online*, 2011). The notion of armed men is heard through Donna’s explanation of the meetings. As if they are at the Alamo she says, “We’re surrounded, and they’ve got weapons. They’re pointing them at us.” Moran (2000) notes that for Gadamer, “Language does not just reflect human being but actually makes humans be, brings about human existence as communal understanding and self-understanding” (p. 270). What self-understanding is revealed through Donna’s reflection of her meetings?

Through her language Judy provides a rich description of the central office support meetings at her school. She laments the pressures of attending these meetings, and she explains she never knows what to expect, therefore, spending time worrying what questions the central office staff will ask. “It felt like you were in front of a firing squad. Someone was going to find something wrong with it and you were going to be shot down, even with your best effort.” The participants through their language reflect that the

meetings initially set up to *help* the teachers feel more like a lethal nerve-wracking punishment. The fear created through the supports put in place to help teachers speaks to the role teachers have as professionals within the profession of teaching. Coercive meanings of fear are brought forward by the participants. As teachers question these practices, they also question their role as professionals in the profession of teaching.

We Need a Professional Here!

Although teachers doubt and question the diagnosis and treatment living amidst the dis-ease of NCLB, the diagnosis is heard as the “truth.” Many people do not doubt the “judgment” of diagnosis (Hayne, 2005). If there is a declaration of dis-ease there is absoluteness in this. This causes the participants to question what it is to be a professional in teaching. A professional is someone who engages in an occupation requiring skill, derived from the Latin work *professionem* meaning a public declaration (*OED Online*, 2011). However, what is declared as teachers are not able to engage in meaningful conversation about the treatment inside classrooms? The participants disclose that the narrowing of curricula and focus on the test give them little confidence that the educational system, and perhaps society as a whole, view them as professionals.

Lord, I can't preach like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. or Jesse Jackson or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou, but I care, and I'm willing to serve, and to use what talents I have to build a world of peace. . .
I'm not brilliant like Dr. Du Boise or Elizabeth Cady Stanton or as eloquent as Sojourner Truth and Booker T. Washington, but I care and I'm willing to serve. . .
Use me as Thou wilt to save Thy Children today and tomorrow and to build a nation and a world to where no child is left behind, and every child is loved and every child is safe.
(Wright Edleman, in Intrator, 2003, p. 21)

Although willing to serve, and wanting to serve, the teachers feel their ability to do so is limited. In the quest to leave no child behind, how are they asked to ignore love and safety of these children? Shirley explains early in her career she felt like a puzzle

solver as she worked with her students. “The challenge of being a successful teacher, so that you yourself feel successful, is in solving the puzzles of each child.” However, she also explains when she entered teaching she believed her administrators thought she was a trained professional who could solve problems. During her last year in public school teaching, she remembers feeling, “The puzzle solving piece was being taken away.” One example she provides is around the scripted curricula stating, “Then the scripts came about.” Her sense is that the scripts prevented her from creating love for teaching and learning inside the classroom. She then asks if anyone would want a lawyer who was asked to read from a pre-determined script:

One script for manslaughter, one script for theft and so on. We would think he was a terrible lawyer and not go to that lawyer, but we’ve taken away from the teachers the creative part that lets us be an expert. (Shirley)

Donna highlights that we do not blame dentists for the number of cavities patients get, but that’s what is happening to the profession of teaching. The very people who are to support the neediest children are blamed for the problems. At one point Larry hedges on whether he is a successful teacher. Although students are excited about and engage with reading and English while in his class, he questions what success means. He explains that a doctor who works with terminal patients, who in fact do not get better, can be considered an excellent doctor because s/he provides nurturance, care, compassion and knowledge. However, teachers are expected to “fix” all the students or be deemed a failure. Mike uses an example in industry to elucidate his point.

Let’s say pollution. Pollution will decrease by a certain amount by 2014. Well if it doesn’t happen, we don’t fire the head of General Motors. We don’t fire the people working on the line. We don’t fire these people. But if kids don’t make it, we’re threatening to fire principals, to fire teachers, to up end schools and take them over. What sense does that make? And it’s an unreachable goal. (Mike)

Judy touches on a concept in schools called fidelity. As a result of NCLB, schools are provided strategies and programs they are to implement. Teachers are not to modify the teaching of these strategies, but rather are to “teach the strategies with fidelity.” Fidelity, from the Latin word *fidelitatem* means, “faithful adherence.” Faith, from the Latin word *fides* means, “to trust and believe.” Who do teachers become as they use strategies they do not trust? “I can go through the script, but does it mean my students absorb the material?” What does this faithful adherence to meaningless strategies do to teachers? What does it mean for teachers to know knowledge is standing waiting to be taken into the body?

If teachers teach without fidelity, does that mean they are teaching with infidelity? Infidelity, is a term generally used for adultery and marital disloyalty. Where is the space for creativity when teachers are faced with a dichotomous decision of fidelity or infidelity to the script?

Teachers make an easy target, for they are such a common species and so powerless to strike back. We blame teachers for being unable to cure social ills that no one knows how to treat; we insist that they instantly adopt whatever “solution” has most recently been concocted by our national panacea machine; and in the process we demoralize, even paralyze, the very teachers who could help us find our way. (Palmer, 1998, p. 3)

What declaration is made of teachers as they teach through faithful adherence to scripts? In what way does targeting teachers as unfaithful practitioners paralyze and demoralize them? Where is the space to understand self as teachers are demoralized through the processes in place? Who will be drawn to the profession amidst this place of being?

An Iatrogenic Effect

In the curious journey of teaching amidst NCLB teachers face the notion that they are both the cause and the cure of the dis-ease. On one hand, they are told their teaching

is so inadequate that they caused the problems of failure, but they are also asked to be the cure for it. This illogic follows as such. As defined under NCLB, the dis-ease is poor teaching as demonstrated through the data, low test scores. The cure as defined under NCLB is improved instruction, which should be visible through improved test scores. Cure the test score and kill the student. Likewise, cure the test score and kill the teacher.

Questioning the focus on high stakes tests, Barth (2001) asks, “I wonder if these tests have an iatrogenic effect. That is, does the attempt to remediate a problem cause a greater problem than the one we were originally trying to solve” (p. 93)? An iatrogenic effect is when a doctor brings on a symptom or illness unintentionally. Etymologically, the term "iatrogenesis" means "brought forth by a healer" from the Greek *iatros*, meaning healer. In its earlier forms, it could refer to good or bad effects (*OED Online*, 2011). In an attempt to heal one ill-ness, how has a greater ill-ness possibly been created?

This treatment inside schoolhouses calls to mind Ellsworth’s (1997) notion of mode of address. She uses the notion of mode of address, a terminology in film and media studies, to reflect on pedagogical practices. In media studies, *mode of address* opens up the question of how viewers are positioned within relations of power associated with race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age, ability and so on. Additionally, mode of address reflects on how audiences, acting as their own agents, take up and use film’s address to fashion different social and cultural identities. Ellsworth contemplates how teachers make a difference in power, knowledge and desire, not only by *what* they teach, but *how* they *address* students, “What is taught is never what is learned, and teaching is structurally incomplete” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 56).

Borrowing from Ellsworth's framework, I contemplate the structural integrity of the treatment of teachers amidst NCLB. I ask myself, who does this policy think teachers are? The structural incompleteness of teaching is highlighted through Judy's questions. "There's so many variables, how could you ever figure out what it is? Is it better instruction in the classroom? Is it the blitz? Who? No one knows." Judy, bringing the keen eye of a scientist, wonders what the results actually reveal. She explains, "I'm very uncertain about it. Does it work? Does it not work? I have no idea. Calling for the obvious she says, "I would like to see some kind of data that says, 'yes it does' or 'no it doesn't.'" Judy, as she challenges the conclusions that are and are not made, explains, "And I think if anyone did know, then they'd be making millions of dollars. They could say, each school do X." But here again, we see the creep of language that "fixes" through prescription.

Structurally, teachers are to follow a framework of efficiency to teach students. The flaw, however, is that there is limited, if any, data to reveal the data collected, reviewed, and analyzed has done anything to cure the dis-ease in schools. This speaks to Ellsworth's point, "The field of education is driven by research aimed at determining ever more exactly who the student is so that s/he can be more efficiently and effectively addressed. And such assumptions, desire and research shape education's structures of address to its imagined audiences" (p. 58). Throughout the conversations in this study, the teachers reveal that the desire to shape education through an efficiency model, may be causing a dis-ease worse than the one initially diagnosed, or one compounded by the wrong treatment of the results. Teachers live with treatment that is automated and often

incomprehensible. Burch (1990) asks, “What might an experience be if it were not ‘lived’” (p. 132)?

As the teachers reveal their experiences, it is a challenge for them to feel they are helping prepare students for survival beyond the test. The supports put in place create feelings of fear causing an overwhelming question of professionalism. The unfolding of conversations allowed participants to capture the notion of being ill-at-ease in teaching amidst NCLB. Their gaze is away from the student and on the test, away from learning and on the data the students produce, away from student-centered pedagogies and on lecture-based fragmented knowledge necessary for students to pass the test. The teachers in this study provide a call for rethinking the meaning of practical.

Grundy (1991) brings forward the need for practical judgment or *phronesis* to guide educational decisions. In the absence of practical judgment or *phronesis*, decision-making becomes strategic and “the action is fundamentally technical rather than practical or professional” (p. 183). *Phronesis*, a complex Greek term is not easily translated into English. Although practical knowledge is one aspect of *phronesis*, it also involves taste. Taste has to do with what is fitting’ on a particular occasion” (p. 61). Tellingly, Grundy (1991) warns:

If the decision-making which characterizes the interaction is strategic rather than practical (that is, consensus is based upon rules rather than upon reciprocal agreement), then the action is fundamentally technical rather than practical or professional. (p. 183)

In ancient Greece, the desired outcome of political decisions was, “a state of being not a particular result of some kind” (Grundy, 1991, p. 64). The participants in this study also call for a state of being in education, not a result of some kind.

The Gaze Deflected from Treatment

At the conclusion of this chapter, my gaze is again on the binder containing my transcriptions for this study. In the strangely de-tached world of the policy of NCLB, to its lived experience in the classroom, the metaphor of dis-ease, diagnosis, results, and treatment apt for medicine, strangely fit the world of teaching inside public schools. I did not seek out these meanings; rather, the meanings came to me from the participants' stories, pauses, reflections, tears and laughter.

My interest in NCLB began almost as soon as the law was passed. My later research on this topic began in a questioning of "How does a federal policy become a lived experience?" Although I had a sense of change happening in schools, I was initially uncertain of how that change would be revealed. The naming and revealing now are much clearer to me. If federal policy is to have a lasting impact it must move beyond the document it is written on and into the lives of its citizens. Whether it be tax policy or an educational one, this is the case. To that end, NCLB is an effective policy. It is the most impactful federal policy of education of this generation. However, it is necessary to consider the lived experience of such a far-reaching policy on the practitioners. This federal role in education, although not unprecedented, is doing little to examine the experience of those nearest to the policy at the classroom level. The participants in this study see the need for a richer language of teaching beyond the "treatment" of teaching, as well as learning that is broader and more complete. Moreover, they see the need for a language to do this that resides outside of the medical arena. Through this work, I hope to bring a wide-awake-ness to the discussion of teaching in public schools.

To bring the school community into an open discussion, to consider the moral issues in light of over-arching commitments, to talk about what is actually known

and what is merely hypothesized. At the very least, there would be wide-awakeness. (Greene, 1978, p. 45)

It is not the time for more results to weigh the progress toward meeting or not meeting the benchmarks put forward under NCLB by 2014. It is time for a fundamental change in the definition, assessment and professional development of teaching and learning. In the next chapter I bring forward the pedagogical implications of this study by re-focusing the gaze of education away from testing onto a different horizon.

CHAPTER FIVE: REFOCUSING THE GAZE

Van Manen (2003) suggests that the aim of phenomenological research is to bring about pedagogical insights for the teaching and learning process. I arrive at the final chapter in this phenomenological study casting a gaze beyond what I could have imagined. As a result of this study, I am humbled by the visible horizon I did not know existed. In this chapter, I seek to bring the parts of the whole together. As teachers in the study reveal the dis-ease in teaching, what is learned?

Van Manen (2007) explains, “Phenomenology is a project of sober reflection on the lived experience of human existence—sober, in the sense that reflecting on experience must be thoughtful, and as much as possible, free from theoretical, prejudicial and suppositional intoxications” (p. 1). In an attempt to open up the lived experience of teaching under NCLB, beyond the suppositional, I journeyed into ‘the heart of things’ (van Manen, 2007, p. 1). My fascination with the meaning of teaching under NCLB permeated me, and transformed my under-standing of what it means to be a teacher.

Phenomenology is also a project that is driven by fascination: being swept up in a spell of wonder, a fascination with meaning. The rewards phenomenology offers are the moments of seeing-meaning or “in-seeing” into “the heart of things” as Rilke so felicitously put it. Not unlike the poet, the phenomenologist directs the gaze toward the regions where meaning originates, wells up, percolates through the porous membranes of past sedimentations—and then infuses us, permeates us, infects us, touches us, stirs us, exercises a formative affect. (van Manen, 2007, p. 1)

I was stirred by the tension revealed through the dis-ease of teaching. In Chapter Four, reflecting on the words from the participants, I was able to provide a “careful exploration of densely textured moments which point beyond the immediacy of the context in which they occur” (Polakow, as cited by Pinar et al., 2002, p. 407). Now in

Chapter Five, in what way will I make sense of the whole? The reader must join me on this journey to find his/her own sense of meaning in this study. As Grundy (1991) explains: “The right of each subject to determine meaning to the extent of his/her capacity is an important principle to be safeguarded” (Grundy, 1991, p. 68). This is an important aspect of a hermeneutic study because, “We cannot fully understand any given situation unless we apply it to ourselves” (Grundy, 1991, p. 15).

In applying my meaning, I return to my question of inquiry: **What is the lived experience of teaching under the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001?**

Pedagogically, what is learned through this study? As the participants reveal, the focus of their teaching is on the dis-ease in teaching caused by testing and data. As a result of the words brought forward from the participants themselves, I call for a re-focusing of the gaze in teaching. As discussed in Chapter Four, the Latin meaning of focus is the “hearth or fireplace.” A further look reveals that the English word *foyer* comes from the Old French translation of *focus* (OED Online, 2011). This etymological tracing images the *focus* or hearth in a home and its central importance to movement and functionality of a living space. Changing the location of the hearth, or the focus, in a home alters the lived experience in the space. Suddenly, how people move in the house is different. An unexpected view of the forest, once obstructed by a wall, is now visible. There is something transformative in how the light casts different shadows as it enters the room. Once the focus is changed, the dwelling within the space is changed as well. As NCLB enters its second decade of federal education policy, it is time for movement and dwelling inside school houses to be re-focused to enable a significant revisioning of teaching—it is time for a transformative shift of the movement in teaching and learning.

However, my goal in this final chapter is not to create a “commensuration of theories, but [to] . . . find footing” (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 424). To find my footing, I turn to language that brings me beyond the walls of testing and the technical. As Gadamer (1960/2006) reminds us: “For what is a *technical term*? A technical term is always somewhat artificial. . . a word that has become ossified. . . Using a word as a technical term is an act of violence against language” (p. 415). It is time to remove the artificial covering of teaching as seen through testing-language and imagine a new knowing within teaching.

To this end, it is time to take deliberate action on federal education policy and its impact within classrooms. To deliberate, from the Latin word *deliberare* means, “to weigh or consider well,” from the meaning “entirely,” and the Latin word *librare* meaning, “to balance or weigh” (*OED Online*, 2011). In discussing the notion of deliberation as a component of ancient Greek governance, Grundy (1991) explains: “For Aristotle the goals of morality were not in question. One did not deliberate, for instance, about whether just action was desirable, only about how to act justly. Deliberation is, thus, an essential element of practical action” (p. 63). Reflecting on experiences of the participants in this study, I ask myself, how can we act justly in re-focusing the gaze in public education? In this chapter I do not question whether or not there should be a federal education policy; rather, I ask in what ways can such policy guide decisions which will prepare America’s children for the future as members in an increasingly interdependent global world?

Policy, from the Latin *politia*, at first was the same word as police, meaning “civil administration” and closely tied to the Greek word *politeia* meaning “the state” (*OED*

Online, 2011). Reflecting on this etymological rendering, how might the state governance of education be more than a system of tests and resulting data? Likewise, how might a policy support teachers rather than be used as a punitive measure? Forte (2010) challenges, “Thus, the question is not how to smooth NCLB’s rough edges but how to create a fundamentally different model for improving schools that encompasses large-scale assessments and accountability systems without imposing unworkable limits restrictions on state and local autonomy” (p. 85)? In asking what a plan of action or management of education policy could look like, I call for a focus that enables the practical judgment, rather than a mathematical algorithm, to guide pedagogical practice.

To seek practical judgment, how might we look at what we see in education differently? How might we see the hidden horizon? How we look at something modifies what we see.

Each presence presents some facet that catches my eye while the rest of it lies hidden behind the horizon of my current position, each one inviting me to focus my senses upon it, to let the other objects fall into the background as I enter into its particular depths. (Abram, 1996, p. 52)

How might looking beneath current horizon of testing culture provide pedagogical suggestions for future policy? I contend the answers are there; we must, however, look at teaching and learning differently. How many times do we look for our keys or glasses only to find them in the end just where we were looking? Often, leaving the room and returning with a clean gaze is the only way to see what is present before us. It is time to leave the metaphorical room with a gaze on testing and look with a clean gaze on what is present in education. Jardine et al. (2008) remind us that too often the arguments that enframe educational discourse often involve “ideas of breaking things down, fragmentation, isolation and consequent dispensing, manipulation, and control of the

smallest, simplest most meaningless bits and pieces of the living inheritances that are entrusted to teachers and learners in schools” (p. xiii). However, in calling for a change in understanding of teaching and learning they postulate:

Imagine if we treated these things as the basics of teaching and learning: relation, ancestry, commitment, participation, interdependence, belong, desire, conversation, memory, place, topography, tradition, inheritance, experience, identity, difference, renewal, generativity, intergenerationality, discipline, care, strengthening, attention, devotion, transformation, character. Imagine if we treated as *basic* to teaching and learning listening openly and generously to each other, not just to have a healthy and sane understanding of other, but of self. (Jardine et al., 2008, p. xiii)

As the participants in this study reveal the experiences of teaching amidst NCLB as being in a state of dis-ease, how might this study guide a refocused gaze? Encompassed in this is a need to focus our senses on a new horizon within education beyond the technical language and testing culture. Through this gaze, the vision for teaching and learning might be altered. To initiate such a plan, I call for a tri-focal gaze: a focus down into teaching, a focus on the whole of teaching, and a focus on the richness of the unique within teaching. By shifting the gaze in convergent, divergent and new directions, a space for envisioning teaching in a new light becomes possible.

A Focus Down, Not Up

An alternative to the current focus on a testing gaze would be a focus down into the “body” of education: the teachers, communities and students at the genesis of learning. At the base of the Grand Canyon, flows the Colorado River. When people speak of visits to the Grand Canyon, they recall the canyon’s visually overwhelming size and its intricate and colorful landscape. Often, the Colorado River goes unmentioned. However, casting a downward gaze into the canyon and reflecting on the river’s importance is meaningful to understanding the canyon itself. From many vantage points, the river is not

visible and can be forgotten; however, without the river, there would be no canyon. From the rim of the canyon the river looks peaceful, simple and soothing as it meanders through the riverbed. As one descends into the canyon the power of the river is heard and felt. At the base of the canyon, from the river's bank, its roar can be overwhelming and you realize there is no denying the awesome mark it has made over the years. Without hesitation, the water continues to carve, flow and create a landscape for the future, and without the river there would be no canyon.

Likewise, the participants in this study reveal that NCLB misses that which rests at the base of education, the teachers, students and communities at the genesis of teaching and learning. Our current position obscures other gazes. Abram (1996) explains, "By linguistically defining the surrounding world as a determinate set of objects, we cut our conscious, speaking selves off from the spontaneous life of our sensing bodies" (p. 56). By defining teaching through numbers we cut our conscious awareness and bodily engagement from teaching itself.

In an attempt to objectify teaching and learning, the living dimension of teachers is forgotten. "In their striving to attain a finished blueprint of the world, the sciences had become frightfully estranged from our direct human experience" (Abram, 1996, p. 41). For example, Meier (2004) notes that children, families and teachers are removed from making impactful pedagogical decisions.

Above all, NCLB assumes that neither children, their families, their teachers, nor their communities can be trusted to make important decisions about their schools. It defines such parties as special biased self-interests, whose judgment is inferior to that of the bureaucrats at the Department of Education and the various testing services. (p. 71)

A pedagogical implication of this study calls for school leaders and policy analysts to re-focus the gaze by looking to those at the base of the hierarchy. Amidst the top-down policies put forward under NCLB, the participants in this study reveal the need for a re-focused gaze down into that which rests at the foundation of educational policy: the teachers themselves, and the communities that create their dwellings with students and away from the current hierarchy.

Hierarchy, from the Greek word *hierarkhia* means, “the rule of a high priest” (*OED Online*, 2011). In consideration of this, why is the rule of the high priest who preaches to the necessity and validity of tests heard over the practitioners? To what extent do the high priests understand the pedagogical and curricular realities practitioners face on a daily basis? Have they left sufficient flexibility for practitioners to address the needs of students? Likewise, have the high priests of testing left enough space for autonomy to attract creative practitioners to the profession? By failing to address these questions, this creates a system where teachers, students and communities are at the mercy of policy makers who pay homage to the tests and resulting data. Levin (2003) reminds us:

But political theory cannot prudently continue to ignore the body of our political life: above all, the political protection, the political control, and the political interpretation of the human body. The body is shaped by its society, shaped in conformity with a specific vision, a specific image of the political. Once it has been shaped in that image, the body carries within its frame an implicit schema of comportment, a ‘tacit knowledge,’ the character of which is defined through its experience of the body politic. (p. 255)

Reflecting on the interpretation of NCLB on the human body as brought forward from the participants in this study, how might it be possible to acknowledge the humanness of teaching and learning?

One of the perplexing things about intimate knowing is that, even though it is deeply reliable, it is not literal and discursive. Intimate knowing is not explicit,

clear, univocal and certain. Instead it is, in its very familiarity and reliability, implicit, ambiguous, multivocal, and full of the ‘perplexity and disorder that is already intrinsic to life.’ (Jardine et al., 2006, p. 111)

Teaching, if viewed as an intimate knowing, is at our fingertips. However, to disclose it we must uproot teachers from the familiarity of the teaching world as lived through NCLB. To change course Levin (2003) explains, “The next steps we need to take are steps we actually must take as bodily beings” (p. 275). To consider the notion of unearthing the bodily nature of teaching, I call for a deliberate movement from the canyon’s edge atop the hierarchy of education policy down to where teachers, students and their communities interact. Here is where teaching begins, forms and transforms.

A Focus on the Teachers

I ask you now to think of a really good teacher that you have experienced in your time. Allow him or her to be present before you. I believe that the truth of this good teacher of yours is in the measure of the immeasurable. And now, say to him or her: He *is* teaching; she *is* the teaching. And, after you have said these words, allow the unsaid to shine through the said. Savor now the illusively true, the mystery of what teaching essentially is. (Aoki, 2005g, p. 197)

When I ask people to describe a favorite teacher, a response is often readily available. Whether the question is posed to a third grade elementary student or a ninety-five year old grandmother, an answer comes forward. A short pause as time is rewound is followed by a rich description of funny stories, meaningful learning or individual nurturance. For example, they say, “Mr. Rattan taught me to love history,” or “The dioramas I made in Mr. Douglass’s geography class taught me about the world,” and from a struggling reader, “Mrs. Levin helped me learn to read when we ate lunch in her room.” I am struck how the teacher and the learning are connected in the memory. The memory in the students’ minds does not separate teacher from content and pedagogy.

They are sharing what Aoki (2005g) explains as “the mystery of what teaching essentially is.”

This teaching is like the river meandering through the canyon. It appears, in both the memory of and visits to classrooms as seamless and easy; however, effective teaching is neither of these and is the most impactful thing in education. Therefore, I suggest a gaze into classrooms looking for “the mystery of what teaching essentially is.” Rather than using AYP results to blame and punish teachers, perhaps use test results to look at schools with an eye toward innovation in teaching and learning that is sparked accordingly. Might we define exceptional schools as those making innovative growth with student learning, a uniqueness, not necessarily those meeting the mathematical targets of AYP? Researching teaching within these classrooms will bring the gaze from the hierarchy of policy to where the deliberate re-focus should and could be in teaching. Such research might look at ways teachers are effective in supporting understanding and knowing, rather than rating teachers by the number of students scoring at or above proficiency on a standardized test. Thomas (2011) challenges the use of data-driven schools and demands for “knowledge driven schools.” He notes meaningful use of data being more than a view of test scores, “Data analysis is not about the numbers. It is all about improving instruction” (p. 36). However, through such research a generative list should not be created, nor should a reproducible list of qualities and character traits. It must lead to a deeper understanding of teaching and learning at the classroom level.

How might the language brought forward in the following letter to a teacher, provide a framework for retrieving a suppressed tradition in teaching?

Dear Teacher:
Please teach my son.

He will have to learn, I know,
that all men are not just, all men are not true.
But teach him also that for every scoundrel there is a hero;
that for every selfish politician, there is a dedicated leader...

Teach him for every enemy there is a friend,
steer him away from envy, if you can,
teach him the secret of quiet laughter.
Let him learn early that the bullies are the easiest to lick...
Teach him, if you can, the wonder of books...
But also give him quiet time
to ponder the eternal mystery of birds in the sky,
bees in the sun, and the flowers on a green hillside.

In the school teach him it is far more honorable to fail than to cheat...
Teach him to have faith in his own ideas,
even if everyone tells him they are wrong...
Teach him to be gentle with gentle people,
and tough with the tough.

Try to give my son the strength not to follow the crowd
when everyone is getting on the bandwagon...
Teach him to listen to all men...
but teach him also to filter all he hears on a screen of truth,
and take only the good that comes through.

Teach him if you can, how to laugh when he is sad...
Teach him there is no shame in tears,
Teach him to scoff at cynics and to beware of too much sweetness...
Teach him to sell his brawn and brain to the highest bidders
but never to put a price-tag on his heart and soul.

Teach him to close his ears to a howling mob
and to stand and fight if he thinks he's right.
Treat him gently, but do not cuddle him,
because only the test of fire makes fine steel.

Let him have the courage to be impatient...
let him have the patience to be brave.
Teach him always to have sublime faith in himself,
because then he will have sublime faith in mankind.

This is a big order, but see what you can do...
He is such a fine little fellow, my son!
(as cited in Holbert, 2010, p. xxviii-xxix)

I wonder what the educational system and subsequent policy might look like if in fact such language were used to frame pedagogical practices within classrooms. In what ways could such a list be used to create the vision and mission for school systems or individual schools? Imagine starting a school year with a school-based staff asking them to focus their instructional efforts for the year to, “teach the wonders of books” rather than teach “the red kids” or, to discuss how to decipher between selfish politicians and a dedicated leader rather than “blitz” children? In doing so, how might dwelling within classrooms be altered?

As Pinar et al. (2002) remind us, “To work phenomenologically is to dwell with language in ways so that the problems of the everyday world become different problems, and the classroom becomes a different reality” (p. 422). Likewise:

To take seriously the classroom in a phenomenological sense is to portray the specificity and concreteness of our daily lives. To do so requires viewing the everyday in its eidetic quality, i.e. as referring to ‘something else’ as well as to itself. Heidegger believed that everyday ‘speaks’ to us, suggesting who and what we are as human beings. Gadamer asserts that our language tells us who we are now, and who we were once and who we hope to become. (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 421)

Who do we hope to become amidst the testing gaze, and who might we become with an altered gaze beyond the test? Might moving beyond the *techne* of teaching into the humanness of it open up the horizon of effective teaching and learning? Might we think seriously about conducting research beyond the *techne*? Aoki (2005g) uses the idea of a black box to explain the interest in outcomes of teaching, rather than in the understanding of teaching itself.

In this view of teaching, what I resent is the way in which, by ignoring the lives of teachers and students, they are cast into nothingness. That which I consider to be most vital is devitalized into nonexistent darkness. For me, the black box reflects a frightening ignorance of so-called educational assessors and researchers, who,

as assessors and researchers, are forgetful that they are not merely researchers, but educational researchers. They forget the adjective. And by being forgetful, they deny the humanness that lies at the core of what education is. (Aoki, 2005g, p. 188)

One pedagogical implication of teaching amidst NCLB, calls for teachers to be brought back from this “nothingness.” How might a revised policy revive teachers’ vigor and strength? Rather than attempting to “fix” failing schools by blaming the teachers and providing outside experts to tell teachers what to do, might we instead revision and re-language what it means for teachers to work with needy students? After my sister-in-law gave birth to her twin girls, months before they should have been born, my nieces spent several months in a neonatal intensive care unit. In this unit of care, they received exceptional, individualized nurturance from a host of the best medical professionals the hospital could offer. We received updates in areas where they were thriving and where the greatest areas of potential were expected. In what ways could we approach education with this same nurturance and care?

However, Pinar et al. (2002) note, “Educators’ language has been alienated from lived experience to such a degree that the art of hearing profound messages and calls, uttered in the midst of our teaching, has been lost” (p. 422). To this end, rather than utilizing a language of failure in schools rooted in a deficiency model, might we highlight the potential of the children? This is not to say, areas of need would not be addressed, but re-linguaging beyond the deficiency model may enable a re-thinking of teaching. Levin (2003) reminds us, “Thinking is . . . embodied; at the same time, the metaphorical truth of the body, what the tradition has suppressed over a long history is finally retrieved, finally resurrected” (p. 90). What long history of teaching may be retrieved moving to a language of potential?

Likewise, rather than blame teachers for the dis-ease in schools, might we invite the best, most dedicated and creative teachers to work in schools where the challenges create a burning desire to unlock the possibilities and potential found there? Might we develop systems that encompass innovation within the curriculum and pedagogical practices? For example, as a component of working in schools where children need the most support, might we provide teachers the opportunity to teach a meaningful curriculum rather than a script? Might we also invite teachers to work in the schools as a collaborative team to transform teaching, where we abandon curriculum models based on efficiency and embrace models where participation, collaboration, networking and experimentation thrive? “Teachers, then must be experienced, and indeed skillful, at creating around their charges an atmosphere of trust and care conducive to the opening up of bodily dimensions of feelings” (Levin, 2003, p. 246). If we create incentives for good teachers and a system that allows them to address the specific needs of the communities where they work, teachers could then attend to and scaffold students’ unique learning providing opportunities for students to engage in deep, complex thinking, employ strategies that are unorthodox and nonlinear, and to explore ideas that are new and even radical. Moreover, these opportunities should exist in an environment that is positive, upbeat, and provides for experimentation with learning. Finally, as part of accepting the invitation to work in failing schools, consideration could be given to provide teachers a salary which exceeds the salary peers in non-failing schools receive.

Issues around teacher work environment, autonomy, creativity and pay must be part of a re-visioning of education. By conducting research on teaching within classrooms beyond the algorithmic data of AYP, using language of nurturance and growth, providing

teachers the opportunity to innovate, as well as incentivize working in challenging schools, the focus of education might become about learning itself and not one-dimensional test scores. However, in order to do this, the gaze into the classroom must also recognize students as humans, not data points.

A Focus that Recognizes the Humanness of Students

School is the only institution in this culture built specifically for children and youth to live in. (Huebner, 1999h, p. 443)

It is crucial that education policy and resulting practice recognize that students are human, not data points. With alarming candor the participants reveal frustration that the system in place under NCLB does not allow them to see students as people, but as an ailment to be color-coded and treated or blitzed. Apple (2006) argues that accountability systems such as those under NCLB shift the emphasis from “student needs to student performance and from what the school does for the student to what the student does for the school” (p. 64). Students must be brought out of the color coded abyss of the testing culture to a place of human recognition. From the Latin *humanus*, humanness is related to homo meaning "man," and to humus "earth" (*OED Online*, 2011). Maxine Greene (1995) suggests, “To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and peculiarity instead” (p. 10). A gaze into the humanness of students recognizes them as having human attributes rather than non-human ones such as “red, blue and green.” Might shifting to a human gaze bring us closer to a worthy aim in education?

Levin (2003) reminds us of Plato’s aim for education:

The aim of education is virtue: a ‘gentle and cheerful’ soul and an agile and harmonious, well-balanced embodiment, the shining, exemplary embodiment of moral goodness and civic justice. But such goodness of character (ethos) is

exemplified in its glory only when the process of education is true, not only to the beauty of mind (soul), but also to the inherent nobility of its bodily element. (p. 251)

How can a gentle and cheerful soul be cultivated when children are not recognized as soulful or bodily beings? In Chapter Four the participants spoke of being required to teach and test students on material that did not connect with them and “blitz” them to prepare for assessments. Nichols and Berliner (2007) note because low scores in reading and mathematics may impede a school’s capacity for making AYP, such students have increasingly little value. “It is the score increasers, not the sore suppressors, who have value for a school” (p. 59). To this end, Noddings reminds us:

The declared motivation for NCLB was to improve the academic achievement of poor and minority students—that is, to eliminate or at least reduce the achievement gap between whites and minorities. That is commendable, but there is mounting evidence that our poor and minority students are actually being hurt by high-stakes testing. (in Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. xii)

What good is an educational policy if it does not redress its own goals? During one conversation, Ginny who teaches ESOL, likened the curriculum she was to teach her students to the grain force-fed to geese later harvested to prepare foie gras. She questioned, “Whose knowledge do these teachers shove into students and for whose gain? Not the students. The curriculum is not for them.” For whose pleasure and reward is the curriculum? To what extent is a curriculum that ignores the needs of the disadvantaged students able to close the achievement gap?

Might teachers use assessment results to identify areas of weakness and strength at individual student levels? Could a focus on individual student growth as well as progress over time enhance the understanding of successful and effective teaching practices? How might ongoing feedback throughout units of study from peers, teachers

and student self-evaluations be used to highlight gaps in knowledge and areas of strength? Likewise, if learning goals are relevant and clearly articulated might gaps in understanding between individuals and across groups of students narrow? In what ways could this cultivate greater understanding or create an unexpected view of teaching and learning?

To cultivate, comes from the Latin *cultivates*, meaning "tilled." Cultivate shares an etymological history with the word culture. The modern usage of the word culture can mean, "The total of the inherited ideas, beliefs, values, and knowledge, which constitute the shared bases of social action" (*OED Online*, 2011). What shared basis for social action is valued through a testing gaze? Conversely, what social action might be valued through a gaze on students as human agents in the teaching process rather than producers of test scores? Huebner (1999h) asks, "Who in this culture speaks for children and youth? For the most part, they remain essentially voiceless" (p. 443). Likewise, Nodding notes:

To care we have to know the cared-for. Time spent in building relations of care and trust are vital to teaching. When those relations are established, everything else goes better, and the teacher has a chance at helping the student to find meaning in what is being taught. (in Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 74)

Might time be provided so that teachers may build relations of care and trust void of a testing gaze? In what ways could relationships build on care and trust, rather than blitizing and color coding, to nurture meaning in the curriculum?

Pinar et al. (2002) contend, "Mainstream instructional literature expresses a concept of language as a 'tool of communication,' a skill. Such a conception does not permit one to utilize language to orient oneself toward the world, indeed to find a home" (p. 421). Therefore, in what way could the curriculum be a place for students to find dwelling—find a home for understanding and learning.

Coming from incredibly diverse backgrounds, with a wide range of knowledge and experience in the world, children enter the still-19th-century institution of school and immediately become ‘students’ who are handed the menu, not the feast of real learning. (Clifford & Friesen, 2008b, p. 93)

To help students find dwelling might we look to the language used to define or name non-English speakers? Why not consider these students as becoming multi-language proficient rather than English language learners? Although this may seem like a simple re-naming, it creates a place to envision the global world of the future. As the nation strives to prepare itself for a global multi-lingual world, why not capture the abundance of language coming into schools? Poignantly, van Manen and Levering (1996) remind us:

From the children’s point of view, the curriculum is indeed like a race track that they all must run. The fastest and most effective runners win the race, but, of course, children do not all enter the race equally equipped and at the same starting point. Therefore many experience failure and rejection. (p. 161)

Rather than put students on a race track, and ask them to run, Jardine et al. (2008) remind us, “Children develop most fully as passionate learners when they—like all of us—are allowed to claim fully their own experience of the world” (p. 21). The participants expose the need to enable students to claim “fully their own experiences.”

When the educational system is bent on ‘raising’ children by ‘keeping their instincts and active tendencies repressed,’ then what it generates are generations of adults ‘educated not into responsibility for the significance and graceful use of the bodily powers, but into an enforced duty not to give them free play.’ The consequence of this approach are, unfortunately, all too visible. (Levin, 2003, p. 228).

Likewise, Cushman (2003) reminds us, “We know instinctively that teachers, as with physicians and attorneys, perform best when they not only know their material well but notice and respond sensitively to the people they serve” (p. xii). Students must be recognized beyond test scores, and their ideas must be given the opportunity to overflow the banks and carry the learning to new and unexpected places. In moving students out of

the abyss, might they become the focus of education rather than a product of it? In order to do this, however, I also call for the downward gaze to include the communities where students live and schools reside.

A Focus on the Community

When schools become obsessed with test scores, they narrow the focus of what teachers do in classrooms and limit their ability to serve the broader needs of children and their communities. (Karp, 2004, p. 57)

A while back, a friend called me to discuss a situation at her children's school.

The PTA recently completed the annual talent show, which is a fundraiser for the school to help purchase needed supplies. The parents were frustrated because the principal did not attend the event. There was an attitude of defeat among the parents because attending the parent sponsored talent show was not "in the principal's job description." True, I was listening to this story about the principal's non-attendance at the function. And yet, while listening to her words, my focus was beyond this incident to the role of community inside and outside schoolhouses. Thinking back to my conversations for this study I reflect on the dis-connect between teaching and learning and the communities served.

Communities are powerful places and shape the people within them. I wonder about the purpose of public education when the public and the school communities they serve are dis-connected. Might communities become a vital aspect of what becomes and defines schools? When the life outside of the classroom does not connect to the life inside the classroom estrangement will occur. From the Latin *extraneus*, meaning "foreign or strange," and the Middle French *estrangier* meaning, "alienate" (*OED Online*, 2011), estranged relationships create isolation. "Following from such a sense of estrangement, we then demand such isolationism of Earthly things if they are to be properly and

substantially understood, thus reproducing our own loneliness in all things” (Jardine, 2006, p. 269). What becomes of learning inside schools when it is alien to the community? Likewise, what meaning is made in the community when the community is foreign to the school? I wonder, in what ways communities could be brought into the dialogue and creation of curriculum? Might we ask parents and community members to help write the curriculum taught in schools? Might we invite community members to build understanding for teachers of the communities where teachers work? What could the impact of a curriculum be that did not cause estrangement? Might this open the abundance of learning for students?

Community is from the Latin *communis* meaning the "common, public, general, or that which is shared by all or many" (*OED Online*, 2011). In calling for a focus on the community, I am reminded of the Greek goddess Hestia, the goddess of the hearth and community (Casey, 1993). Rather than travel the world, she lived on Mount Olympus and served her family and community. Like nurturing teachers, Hestia never refused hospitality to a stranger. In ancient Greece the town hall, a meeting place for citizens to discuss the community's affairs, was built around a hearth that honored Hestia. This flame represented the energy of all life, and to let the flame extinguish was to invite a cold and barren existence. How might nurturing community prevent the energy and life within schools from extinguishing? Likewise, in ancient Greece, when new communities were developed, fire was carried from the town's hearth to light the fire of the new community, assuring its prosperity. In consideration of Hestia, how might schools build community to assure prosperity within them? I reflect on the words of Liz, "When I taught in New York City before NCLB, I used to take walks in the neighborhood with my

students. I don't do that anymore." Might we open up the doors of the classrooms and bring the students and community together both physically and emotionally? What might this do for understanding and knowing?

Additionally, as the goddess of architecture, Hestia intended that homes be built from the center out, with the center being a hearth that contained her sacred flame. I wonder about building schools with learning as the focus of the architectural plan, the sacred flame for the school? I recently visited a school built by an architect who had a firm understanding of how elementary children learn. As a result, the school was built with wide hallways, tall ceilings and abundant natural light. The hallways were intended for students to use for group work and collaboration. During my visit, children were in the hallways spread on bellies drawing pictures, practicing for a play and completing assignments. Might we consistently build schools with learning as the sacred flame or focus of the architectural plan? Schools reside in the center of communities, but when they become in-dependent of the community, they become nothing more than bricks and mortar. Just as the flames glowing from the hearth soothe us with their warmth, give us security, peace, and comfort, schools, too, should give the communities they serve security, peace and comfort. Might a welcoming understanding of the community's importance within the schoolhouse enhance meaningful pedagogy? Using Hestia as the model for nurturing the school community, current boundaries and notions of estrangement may collapse.

Throughout this section I discussed the three ways a focus down into teaching may re-vision teaching. These include a focus on teacher, students and communities. At the base of educational reform rests teachers, students and communities. By shifting our

gaze off the horizon of the univocal language of testing might an intimate knowing of teaching and learning inside classrooms be revealed? Through an intentional and thoughtful focus on these entities, educational reform might move from something done to teachers, students and communities to something that assists in revisioning the horizon for education. Teachers, students and communities flowing together might create a meaningful landscape for the future. In the next section I consider the importance of revisioning teaching as a whole rather than as fragmented parts that, at times, cannot be recognized as teaching at all.

A Focus on the Whole in Relation to the Parts: A Hermeneutic Circle

This study suggests to me a need to focus on the whole of teaching as well as its constituent parts. Through a reflection on the detailed experiences brought forward from the participants, I reflect on the whole of teaching amidst NCLB. In Chapter Four the participants disclose how teaching amidst NCLB causes them to break teaching and learning down into small fragmented parts. However an understanding of the parts of teaching hinges on an understanding of a larger whole, which, again, can only be understood on the basis of the parts. Gadamer (1960/2006) conceptualizes the hermeneutic circle as an iterative process through which a new understanding of a whole reality is developed by means of exploring the details of existence. This movement back and forth between the parts and the whole helped me see the necessity for re-visioning teaching and learning. For neither the whole of teaching nor any individual part can be understood without reference to the other.

The participants revealed that in an attempt to break subjects down into easily tested material, the content of subjects, became isolated and fragmented. Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2008) write:

Each task faced in the classroom is precisely not an isolated fragment which must be quickly covered and then dropped in order to get on to the next bit. Rather, classroom and curriculum topics, conversations and events are treated as ways in to the whole of the living inheritances that have been handed to teachers and students in schools. One is never “doing” an isolated fragment, but always “doing” the whole living field from a particular locale. (p. 12)

Classroom and curriculum topics should be seen as related rather than isolated from each other. In doing so, might teachers be able to move beyond a survival mode to one that enables them to thrive? To thrive comes from the Old Norse *thrifast* meaning, “to grasp or grip” (*OED Online*, 2011). To grasp information is to “mentally understand or comprehend it,” and a grip is “a sustained hold” (*OED Online*, 2011). Imagine what becomes of learning as students hold onto it with a tight grip? What becomes of teaching if the focus is on “how” students learn rather than “what” they learn? How might a focus on thriving open up deep understanding within classrooms? Three aspects of the whole (parity, understanding driving learning, and teachers as learners) stand out as poignant parts of focus in visioning the whole of teaching.

A Focus on Parity

There is no denying that NCLB has brought attention to the problem of educational inequality in the United States. As results are weighed in schools, teachers in failing schools can tell you how many students of which ethnicity must pass the test in order for the school to make AYP. However, a myopic focus on scores ignores an essential part of the discussion around economic and social dis-parity outside of the classroom.

Parity, from the Middle French *parité*, means “equality of rank or status,” and the Latin *paritas* means "equality" (*OED Online*, 2011). However, what parity or equality can be achieved, if only one aspect of the disparity, test data, is the focus for school improvement? Striving for parity cannot be a thing we do in some contexts but not others, especially, when all of the contexts affect the outcomes. Likewise, parity cannot be a compartmentalized thing because students and teachers do not live in a compartmentalized world. In the quest for parity, might all aspects of disparity be considered? For example, Rothstein (2004) reminds us “Demography is not destiny, but students’ social and economic family characteristics are a powerful influence” (16). Poor children start school with a significant cognitive deficit compared to their middle-class peers. Disadvantaged children as a group start school with an achievement gap. As they progress through the grades, their achievement continues to be shaped by social factors outside formal schooling, such as poverty, health and nutrition, parental education and involvement, access to high-quality child care and preschool, and availability of community resources for learning. Although ample research has corroborated the link between achievement and these other factors, federal policies hold elementary and secondary schools accountable for raising achievement and narrowing gaps with little attention to social factors (Forte, 2010; Lee & Burkham, 2002; Rothstein, 2004). Might including issues which effect students outside schoolhouses in the discourse of student achievement help us see students as more than disembodied color-coded numbers?

Throughout this study the teacher participants reflected on practice, pedagogy and content. Who benefits under the current system where the teachers who work in the least impacted schools (that is to say the wealthiest, predominately white schools) have the

most freedom with curriculum and pedagogy? To what extent does this influence who works in highly impacted schools? What achievement gap is closed amidst such a system? How might we create incentives for teachers to work in disadvantaged schools with a curriculum that engages students? “In order to respond to the real meanings of ‘race’ in children’s lives, the curriculum needs to open itself up to engage with the full range of children’s experiences” (Troyna & Hatcher, as cited in Pinar et al., 2002, p. 332). To this end, the Center for Education Policy (2010) recommends a wider focus on issues of parity to improve academic achievement of students.

Federal efforts to promote educational equity and improve learning for all students must pay more attention to early childhood education, particularly for disadvantaged children, as well as to afterschool, summer, and family educational programs. In addition, the federal role in education should be considered in the context of national efforts to address health care, economic and job security, and other social problems. If fashioned correctly and carried out well, a reformed health care system, for example, could improve student achievement by making children healthier and more ready to learn. Programs to reduce poverty and create good jobs could also help narrow achievement gaps because family income is one of the strongest predictors of students’ test scores. (p. 19)

In light of these recommendations, might a re-focus on the whole in relation to the parts include early childhood education for disadvantaged children as well as after school, summer and family programs?

Likewise, within the most impacted schools, might programs be established to address health-care and job creation? Any federal policy looking to support the teachers working in high poverty areas, must consider meaningful solutions that look beyond the test scores to the larger issues facing children. “State passing rates reveal a disturbing trend, where mostly white, mostly middle-class Americans do okay and those from poverty or for whom English is a second language do poorly” (Nichols & Berliner, 2007, p. 70). Might redressing inequities in the distribution of experienced teachers assist in

gaps that exist between high performing and low performing schools? For example, teachers in high-poverty schools often have less experience than those in low-poverty schools. Although having more experience does not ensure that someone is an effective teacher, it does help prepare one to meet classroom demands. Ensuring that students from all economic backgrounds have access to experienced teachers is a simple matter of fairness (Center for Education Policy, 2010).

The need to focus on the constituent parts of education is not limited to issue of parity. Additionally, I recommend a focus on understanding driving learning rather than data driving teaching.

Understanding Guiding Learning

Throughout the conversations with participants the teachers spoke of how the standardized assessments amidst NCLB bind teaching to serve a specified end. Therefore, one pedagogical implication about the lived experience of teaching amidst NCLB is rather than tests driving instruction, understanding should guide learning. “We must realize that there are experiences of learning that transcend traditional assessment practices” (Strawser, 2009, p. 59). What might learning be beyond standardized assessments? “Curriculum topics entrusted to teachers and students in schools don’t need to be simply covered. They can be loved and cherished and experienced” (Jardine, 2006, p. xxvi). How might such learning be nurtured within classrooms?

Sleeter (as cited by Pinar et al., 2002) declares, “Schools should concentrate on changing themselves, developing the capacity to serve all students, instead of consistently trying to change the nature of the students” (p. 333). Might schools change themselves by breaking with the mechanics of testing culture? “[Teachers] have to break with the

mechanical life, to overcome their own submergence in the habitual” (Greene, 1978, p. 46). The mechanical life includes teaching in a way that states objectives and outcomes and is often solely evaluated through end-of-unit or state assessments. Such submergence in the habitual obscures the learning horizon. As noted by the participants, in the breaking down of material to make it testable, the content, students and teachers are lost.

Many schools have lost a good, fertile and intellectually sound and vibrant understanding of the topics. . . Most topics have been stripped down to easily manageable and assessable and monitorable surface features. The Pythagorean theorem has been objectified into memorizable formula, the possession of which can be tested. It is as if the Pythagorean theorem, has in schools, been stripped to the bone, lost its flesh, lost its eyes and ears, its heat, its desire. (Jardine et al., 2006, p. 143)

To this end, Jardine challenges teachers to invite children into the deep mysteries of learning so that understanding may flourish, “Putting the Pythagorean theorem back into the body of the world of mathematics at once puts the body back into the act of understanding, the act of learning, the act of ecological sound schooling” (Jardine et al., 2006, p. 143).

Might rethinking the whole of education with a focus on student understanding rather than on standardized test scores provide a richer framework for teaching? Might a focus on student understanding develop a capacity to serve all students? What could the whole of education become if the focus is on student understanding rather than test scores? How might this influence the constituent parts of teaching and learning?

When a student knows something, he or she can bring it forth on demand—tell us the knowledge or demonstrate the skill. Understanding goes beyond knowing. Understanding is a matter of being able to do a variety of thought-provoking things with a topic, such as explaining, finding evidence and examples, generalizing, applying, analogizing, and representing the topic in new ways. (Blythe, 1998, p. 12)

Might focusing on understanding nurture the why and how of learning? In doing so, might this spark a further wondering about the world? Rather than focusing learning on a pre-determined set of correct answers as is the case in standardized assessments, might teaching and learning focus on the abundant ways to envision and live curricula within classroom settings? This requires movement beyond testing.

Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better, either in the sense of superior knowledge of the subject because of clearer ideas or in the sense of fundamental superiority of conscious over unconscious production. It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way, if we understand at all.* (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 296)

Likewise, development of understanding is a continuous process, not one with a predetermined end in mind. Although there are breakthroughs and epiphanies as we develop understanding, understanding does not have a specified end.

As we develop understanding, virtually no one reaches a point where he or she understands everything there is to understand about a particular topic: there are always more and more complex tasks to be completed, more and more applications and connections to be explored. (Blythe, 1998, p. 13)

To nurture understanding for his students Strawser (2009) employs a hermeneutic practice he calls, "Mindful Reading Assignments." He established the practice to nurture an understanding of texts through thoughtful connections to self. To complete Mindful Reading Assignments, rather than complete a worksheet or pre-determined questions, students self-select passages from assigned readings that influenced their thinking and use the passage to reflect on how their thinking as been affected (deepened, qualified, confirmed, or raised new questions).

The focus of this assignment is not on demonstrating knowledge about the content or argument found in a particular text, but rather in demonstrating that one has been open to letting the text engage oneself, and has been transformed through an interpretation of both oneself and the text. (p. 61)

The use of Mindful Reading Assignments connects to Gadamer's (1960/2006) notions of understanding. "Not just occasionally, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well" (p. 296). Might meaningful reading assignments become a consistent practice within classrooms? Might a focus on understanding, help revision teaching and learning? As Greene (1973) explains:

Teaching happens when a person begins learning (on his [sic] own) how to do certain things. . . teaching happens when a student begins to understand what he is doing, when he becomes capable of giving reasons and seeing connections within his experience, when he recognizes the errors he or someone else is making and can propose what should be done to set things straight. (p. 172)

It is time to "set things straight." It is time to nurture classrooms that foster understanding rather than knowing. However, this cannot be done with the focus on data and technology. Teachers must be provided opportunity to learn beyond the tests and resulting data if they are to nurture such learning within their classrooms. The final part of this section discusses how teachers as learners are part of the whole in relation to the parts of teaching and learning. Might a gaze beyond testing be nurtured through professional development encompassing more than data and test scores?

Teachers as Learners

When the teachers become the learners, the learning they are participating in is often called "professional development." Throughout the conversations, the participants noted that the dominant aspect of professional development is focused on test-score data. The participants disclose that discussing data in data chats or learning how to use a computer program to produce or read data is the most, and in some cases, the only professional development offered. This echoes what Valli et al. (2008) found, "The

demand for testing. . . distracted resources from classroom teaching and professional development focused on improving pedagogy” (pp. 164-165). This emphasizes simplified solutions to the complexity of teaching and learning. Heidegger (1993b) warns that technology is not neutral, and when it is regarded as such, we remain blind to the essence of technology. “Modern technology too is a means to an end” (p. 313). What end is professional development if it focuses on showing teachers how to utilize test scores? Whose profession is being developed and nurtured through such action? “The end that determines the kind of means to be used may also be considered a cause. Wherever ends are pursued and means are employed, wherever instrumentality reigns. There reigns causality” (Heidegger, 1993b, p. 313). Technology, therefore, influences both the professional development teachers receive, as well as the language by which teachers speak of teaching and learning.

For example, the participants disclosed the district’s fascination, or perhaps seduction, with technology being the driving force of the professional development session which they are required to attend on the predictor tools. Predictor tools calculate how students are expected to score on assessments before material is taught. Predicting student performance on assessments *prior* to teaching concepts is not only used, it is embraced as meaningful. These tools, are enticing and are growing in popularity, resulting in increased professional development on how to use the predictor tools. Such a focus moves discussions away from effective instruction. Forte (2010) contends:

AYP answers the question, ‘Does the percentage of students at this school who scored in or above the proficient level reach the target for this year?’ and does not address whether a school is ‘effective in supporting student learning and progress at an appropriate rate in this school’ or ‘becoming more effective in supporting student learning and progress over time.’ (p. 77)

However, it would disrupt the use of such technology if understanding led the learning, and learning itself was not parceled out as pieces of data that normalize learning and students to a place lacking recognition of self.

In education, the prevailing research ethos is technological. Evaluation is part of this ethos, and evaluators have approached their tasks from that perspective. In fact, the prominent use of assessment in its strict instrumental sense within the language of evaluation speaks of the epistemological tradition to which many evaluators hold allegiance. (Aoki, 2005a, pp. 167-8)

I contend it is time to remove analyzers that predict student performance from practice and the vernacular of learning. As Heidegger reminds us, “We must keep our eyes fixed firmly on the true relation between teacher and taught—if indeed learning is to arise in the course of these lectures” (Heidegger, 1993g, p. 380). What relationships can exist between teachers and students if the teachers see students as a color or test score? As teachers focus on test scores, the gaze moves away from the student to the data points on computer spreadsheets. What relation should exist between the teacher and taught? In what ways should that relation be more than the quantitative results provided through assessment?

What should teacher-training and professional development look like? Greene’s (1973) seminal work troubles the notion of teacher training:

The teacher should be able to distinguish teaching from mere training or conditioning. Conditioning presumes a malleable or reactive creature who responds predictably to external stimuli. . . . No intelligent choosing on the individual’s part is expected; no initiative, no appraisal. (p. 171)

As I train for my marathon runs, I condition my body to respond to external stimuli. Through this training I create habits and automation in my physical self; however, I do not believe teachers should be trained in this way for teaching. “The person who chooses himself [sic] authentically as a teacher is, in a sense, choosing himself as a rebel against

attempts to condition” (Greene, 1973, p. 171). Therefore, might teachers be provided opportunities beyond conditioning and training? Perhaps we ought to be teaching them to rebel? Might teachers be given opportunities to work in collaborative groups and have deep conversations around teaching and learning rather than learning how to use a predictor tool?

I re-turn to Greene (1978) for insight, “The young are most likely to be stirred to learn when they are challenged by teachers who themselves are learning, who are breaking with what they have too easily taken for granted, who are creating their own moral lives” (p. 51). I draw on Greene’s (1978) notion of “wide-awakeness and the moral life” (p. 42). Wide-awake teachers will engage students in questions about their deepest concerns, challenge the blitzing of children, and the validity of the data. Greene (1978) emphasizes the “connection between wide-awakeness, cognitive clarity, and existential concern” (p. 48).

Rather than learning how to use a technological tool to predict passing scores of students before they take exams, teachers might be nurtured to have conversations about effective teaching practices and receive support in content areas where they may need additional learning themselves. How might administrators and central office staff assist teachers with challenging lessons rather than be seen as evaluators blaming them for student failure? Might this help formulate ideas rather than ideologies and nurture effective teaching practice rather than adherence to policy? In doing so, might there be a transformation of space and time within classrooms for teachers and students alike?

In the fragmented world of teaching amidst NCLB the focus on weighing, diagnosing, and treating education as fragmented pieces unrelated to the whole of society,

fails to provide meaningful solutions to the issue. Throughout this section I have opened up parts of the whole of teaching, parity, teaching for understanding and teachers as learners. With attention to the details of the whole, a gaze beyond the test is possible. In the following section, I suggest a third focus for consideration, a focus on the unique.

A Focus on the Unique

In professional fields such as pedagogy, psychology and nursing, the dominance of technological and calculative thought is so strong that it seems well-nigh impossible to offer acceptable alternatives to the technocratic ideologies and the inherently instrumental presuppositional structures of professional practice. (van Manen, 2007, p. 19)

Throughout the group and individual conversations, the participants disclosed frustration regarding the lack of recognition that learning does not always proceed along a single dimension, such that it can be easily measured on an assessment. As I reflect on the simplistic, incomplete and rigid nature of the tests designed to quantify learning, the view of learning is simplistic and incomplete. In contrast to the boxes where writing is contained in English classes and the adherence to teaching within margins, I suggest a pedagogy that enables a gaze on the unique, embracing the fact that learning occurs differently for different children, and at times, in the most unexpected moments in the day. The participants' voices brought me to this place of considering such a pedagogy as they revealed the heavily structured, constraining nature of the current focus.

In Chapter Four teachers discuss teaching as being akin to being treated with a disease in a uniform and homogeneous manner. Such a naming causes me to call for education where teaching is not predetermined by scripted lessons but rather flows quickly in the direction necessitated by classroom circumstances and events: the unique events within the classroom. Unique is from the Latin *unus* meaning, "one" (*OED*

Online, 2011). In this place teachers would be able to freely respond to students' needs and recognize that students are different from each other. What is unique about teaching and learning when taught through a script or pre-determined curriculum? Rather than following a pre-scripted for teaching, I propose for teaching toward the unique. In doing so, teachers would be encouraged to walk outside pre-scribed boxes, revealing a curriculum of discovery. However, this will require a suspension of dis-belief of such thinking.

Playing Outside the Boxes

In Chapter Four the discussion of teaching students to write within boxes and within margins came forward. Considering this, I reflect on my time on the playground with children at recess. I often volunteer for recess duty, and my colleagues incredulously listen to me as I explain that I enjoy recess duty. Smith (as cited by Pinar et al., 2002) notes playgrounds are a ripe place to understand children. "The playground is also a place for understanding what is happening to children. It is a child's place, a place for being able to act like a child, and a place for seeing what matters to children" (p. 440). The liberating aspect of play is that it is unscripted; that is, unfettered by routines and expectations—not quite innocence perhaps, but openness. In what ways could the potential of learning as seen on playgrounds void of scripts and formal assessments transform and inform pedagogy and practice inside classrooms? In the space of the unplanned, tremendous learning and cooperation flow and run. Here in the space outside of the boxes, students thrive. Gadamer (1960/2006) notes in play that individuals become more aware of the world.

The player, sculptor, or viewer is never simply swept away into a strange world of magic, of intoxication of dream, rather it is his own world, and he [sic] comes to

belong to it more fully by recognizing himself more profoundly in it. There remains a continuity of meaning which links the work of art with the existing world and from which even the alienated consciousness of a cultured society never quite detaches itself. (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 129)

As I grab my walkie-talkie and head out for recess duty, I wonder what it says of the free and unplanned time of children void of a script, to be called duty? Do we speak of mathematics duty or reading duty? Duty, from the Latin *debitus* meaning “to owe,” initially was used in the sense of taxes (*OED Online*, 2011). Why is overseeing play an obligation or responsibility in which many educators wish not to participate? I also consider as children move to re-cess, what is stopped and what begins? What are children breaking away from as they move from the scripts inside classrooms to the unscripted outside?

On the playground I observe how play opens an inviting place for children to learn about the world. The children never ask if the game is graded or if there will be a test. In both the cold of winter and the heat of late summer, students do not decline the opportunity for play. As children play chase and soccer, climb and slide, a fundamental part of how children learn is revealed. How might this help envision learning inside classrooms? Might nurturing an understanding of play help teachers see the importance of students not writing inside boxes and within the margins on classroom assignments and tests? Might this nurture an understanding of learning void of multiple choice tests? In the notion of play, places outside of the boxes and beyond margins are exposed while the unique is revealed.

Race cars and spaceships and carnival rides. . .
Daydreams of castles inside crystal balls
While your heroes on posters stand guard on your walls
These are the wonders of the younger

Walking the plank off an old pirate ship
With a fist full of a gold and her kiss on your lips
These are the wonders of the younger. . .

Click your heels
Close your eyes
Make a wish goodbye
Fly away
It's not too late
Change your mind
(Higgenson & McConnell, 2010)

The “wonder of the younger” is a creative world where the unique is necessary. It acknowledges the connection between creativity, imagination and play. However, the final stanza is telling:

Numbers and figures take up all my time
How did this much of my life pass me by?
I miss the wonders of the younger
(Higgenson & McConnell, 2010)

Rather than becoming stuck in numbers and figures, allowing learning to pass by, how might teaching look to play to open up the “wonder for the younger?” Thinking outside the box is where many great achievements came from—flight, relativity and the internet. However, such thinking beckons a shift in the organization of schools and a new understanding of teaching and learning. Rather than parceling school into math, reading and science and offering music, physical education as “specials” once a week, how might notions of play help integrate the pieces of a school day into the whole of understanding? Might we consider a playful pedagogy in teacher professional development? What might be learned and understood about teaching if play became a rich source of the required discourse during meetings?

If we allow ourselves to suspend our current beliefs of teaching and learning and partake in a notion of play, might it be possible to envision schools as playful, unique places that open thinking to a radically new way of being?

Play clearly represents an order in which the to-and-fro motion of play follows of itself. It is part of play that the movement is not only without goal or purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself. The ease of play—which naturally does not mean that there is a real absence of effort but refers phenomenologically only to the absence of strain—is experienced subjectively as relaxation. The structure of play absorbs the play into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative, which constitutes the actual strain of existence. (Gadamer, 1960/2006, p. 105)

Unlike the daily or unit objectives within classrooms, play is as Gadamer explains, without a set goal. This is not to intimate that play is without effort or rules; however, through play there is release of strain, and the rigidity of life is let go. Might a reflection on play and its deep learning be a component of teacher professional learning rather than living amidst a pre-scripted rigidity of the structured curriculum? “Games involving the enactment of imitation are perfect opportunities to teach our children, in the most concrete way possible, namely, through their body of feeling, the morally fundamental meaning of kinship and community” (Levin, 2003, p. 240).

Rather than prescribing learning, how might the notions around play refocus the gaze on non-linear aspects of learning? To foster the gaze outside of boxes, time spent with children void of outcomes might be considered. Children’s questions, confusions and deep understandings do not always follow the linear path curriculum guides expect. In playing outside the boxes of standardized tests might teachers open the door to a curriculum of dis-covery? With a focus on a world outside of the boxes of assessment, might a new experience for understanding teaching and learning be revealed?

Beyond Pre-Scriptions

After I completed this study, I asked a friend and former colleague to read it. I wanted her perspective because after thirty-five years teaching, she became so exasperated by the mandates, scripts and narrowing of curriculum, she retired. I wondered if this study spoke to her. She told me this study “Offers great hope for a dismal predicament.” Framing the need for this study she explains:

Think of all the future teachers out there whose whole educational experience, as student and as teacher, has been framed by NCLB. How will they re-focus their lens? So many of us who taught, and learned, through a completely different lens are now retired or soon to be, so it's left to you, and other educators like you, to widen the lens and re-focus. Godspeed with that work! (Linda)

Linda touches on something I had yet to consider. As the participants in the study all were teachers prior to NCLB, I had not considered teachers who have known nothing other than the narrow curriculum and scripted teaching as both students and teachers. What must be considered in an attempt to re-focus the gaze for educators whose only knowing has been the current one?

In an attempt to refocus the gaze on non-linear non-testable learning, what supports might teachers need to do so? If they have only known the scripted teaching, what needs to be considered to remove the scripts? “In education we have come to be in the seductive hold of a technological ethos, an ethos that uncannily turns everything virtually into ‘how to do’s’ into techniques and skills” (Aoki, 2005f, p. 369). Recently in working with teachers I have noted the difficulty for teachers to understand that writing may constitute more than the scripted writing as mandated on state assessments and learning can be something more than a test score. I began to consider how teachers have grown to find comfort with prescribed and formulaic teaching and measures of learning.

Many of these teachers have graduated from a system as students themselves under NCLB, and have only known pre-scripted teaching and a narrow curriculum. To this end, changing the focus on a unique way of teaching will require more than a change in policy. As noted by Jardine et al. (2006), “Children do not simply *change*; they *develop*” (p. 79). Likewise, teachers will not simply change, we must work to develop a capacity to teach beyond the script and a narrow curriculum. It will take deep and focused work with teachers to teach in a way unknown to them. Rather than data chats might we consider instructional conversations around teaching and learning? Rather than focusing on pre-scripted lessons, might we consider collaborative planning for units of study where both teachers and students see themselves as an important part of the teaching and learning?

A Curriculum of Dis-covery

We spend most of our time and energy in a kind of horizontal thinking. We move along the surface of things going from one quick base to another, often with a frenzy that wears us out. We collect data, things, people, ideas, ‘profound experiences,’ never penetrating any of them. . . . But there are other times. There are times when we stop. We sit still. We lose ourselves in a pile of leaves or its memory. We listen and breezes from a whole other world begin to whisper. Then we begin our ‘going down.’ (Carroll, as cited in Pinar, 2002, p. 471)

The going down and listening to learning opens a place of rich understanding.

Abram (1996) reminds us, “There is an expectancy to the ears, a kind of patient receptivity that they lend to the other senses whenever we place ourselves in a mode of listening—whether to a stone, or a river, or an abandoned house” (p. 130). With an auditory attention inside classrooms, how can we enter into a living relation of teaching and learning that moves beyond the testing culture?

As I tuck my children in at night I pull up the covers and kiss them goodnight. There, under the covers, they feel safe and protected. When they were younger, my girls liked to play peek-a-boo. And still, when watching a scary part of a movie, they grab for the nearest blanket to hide under. Under a cover the world outside is obscured. With this notion of “cover” I reflect on the participants’ use of “coverage” to prepare students for tests or move through curriculum. Through the notion of covering curriculum, how is a false sense of security created? How does the coverage obscure the world inside the classroom from the reality outside of it?

Cover, is from the Old French, *covrir* meaning, “to cover, protect, conceal or dissemble,” and the Latin word *cooperire* meaning, “to cover over, overwhelm or bury” (*OED Online*, 2011). What does this etymological rendering say about teaching? How is meaning of content buried in an attempt to prepare students for tests when material is covered? How is understanding of a subject learned when it is *covered*? In the attempt to cover the material, do teachers conceal meaningful understanding of content? In what way does the test create a false sense of security? How does test-security bury or overwhelm learning itself?

As participants shared the pressure to “cover” curriculum, I would offer a call to “dis”-cover instead. The prefix *dis* means, “the opposite of,” and the word discover derives from the Old French *descovrir* meaning to “uncover, unveil and reveal” (*OED Online*, 2011). What would mathematics, reading, history, and art look like if teachers worked to unveil and reveal these subjects with students rather than cover them?

In the place of dis-covery teachers and students alike could gaze beyond the materials provided to places neither comprehended before the journey. Through a

pedagogy that responds to the unique, dis-covery opens to new possibilities. As Jardine et al. (2006) reflect, too often curriculum is seen as something to be variously submitted to, followed, taught, covered, committed to memory, shoved in a drawer, or accounted for in meticulous detail in the practice of teaching young children. However, a gaze beyond the curriculum-as-coverage reveals a wider horizon.

If we begin by “entrusting ourselves” to the great abundance with children to become full of deep ancestral relations, full of old wisdoms and places for new insight, full of rich, rigorous, real work, instead of time-filling “school work,” full of discipline and care and attention to things, then the curriculum as bare-boned in the curriculum guides will be spontaneously, pleasurable and (comparatively) easily “covered.” (Jardine et al., 2006, p. 227)

As teachers entrust themselves to a curriculum of dis-covery the notion of curriculum in abundance will thrive.

Learning, ultimately, should help students see that things can be other than as they seem, other than as they are. . . this is hard work, and not easily accomplished—which, in itself, poses problems for North Americans hooked on quick fixes and instant gratification. (Clifford & Jardine, 2008, p. 103)

Gadamer (1960/2006) speaks of expanding thinking as expanding the horizon.

The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point. Applying this to the thinking of the mind, we speak of the narrowness of horizon, of the possible expansion of horizon, of the opening up of new horizons and so forth. . . A person who has no horizon does not see far enough and hence over-values what is nearest to him [sic]. On the other hand, “to have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. (p. 301)

To envision a curriculum of discovery what is called for by teachers, administrators and educational policy? Might discovery be encouraged through collaborative planning time? Within a language of discovery, might it possible for students and teachers alike to find passion and meaning within the curriculum? Is it possible that within a curriculum of discovery failure is seen as an opening to new

learning rather than a mandate on limits not reached? To discover a wider horizon, stimulates a curriculum of dis-covery. Often more learning rests beyond the margins than within them. In fact in some situations true learning is discovering that solutions may lie outside the margins of our current understanding. As policy is formed for the next iteration of ESA, consideration for extending learning beyond margins is necessary. Might we teach children the value of learning beyond the margins? In order to do this, there must be flexibility in the current belief systems and a suspension of dis-belief in alternate thinking.

Suspending Dis-Belief

It is difficult to make room for ideas and concepts different from what we already know. The challenge with respect to casting a focus on something other than data and the testing culture is that it calls for a suspension of current belief and accepting something not visible. A belief is an acceptance by the mind that something is true or real, often underpinned by an emotional or spiritual sense of certainty (*OED Online*, 2011). Levin (2003) reflects on the difficulty of understanding that which is different than what we presently know.

We have expanded our civilization into the envelope of outer space; yet we cannot make room, here on earth, for people very different than ourselves. We control a far reach of space; yet we still have no resting place, no near abode, for the weary and desperate soul. We ‘contact’ the most distant stars, but do so in a space without any room for deeply meaningful feeling, since the spatial uniformity which makes such contact possible derives from a theoretical framework that requires the relinquishing of qualitative, bodily felt experiences. (p. 346)

It is time to move beyond what we know to that which we do not. Everything we know, our strongly held beliefs, and, in some cases, even what we consider to be "factual," creates the lens through which we see and experience the world. Beliefs frame

the focus of our gaze. This can serve us well and is important. For example, water can be used to put out a fire. However, holding uncompromisingly onto our beliefs limits our ability to observe things differently and learn important lessons. To that end, in some cases water spreads fire. At times it is easy to hold onto beliefs to the detriment of a deeper understanding or wider gaze on the horizon. With this in mind I call for an approach to education reform which allows us outside the margin of what we already believe.

An important pedagogical implication of this study is troubling the firmly held belief that assessment, numbers, data, and color-coding of students is appropriate and worthwhile. Greene (1973) challenges, “Knowledge should no longer be conceived as an ‘immobile solid,’ solely the province of an elite” (p. 100). The current belief is that learning counts as such if it is quantifiable. If it is not quantifiable, it is not learning. Many of the teachers in the United States have worked only under the high stakes model of NCLB and this testing model is what they believe. As a result, questioning this notion is difficult. By questioning the testing model the participants in this study disclose that they are labeled as confrontational or non-compliant. This creates dis-harmony for them with administrators inside schoolhouses. As a result, I call for open discussion and understanding of varied beliefs about learning. It is time to expose or unmask teaching and learning from the rigidity of the testing culture.

Shifting the mindset around testing culture to other thinking might be possible if teaching beyond objectives and assessments is encouraged and documented. During recent classroom observations I did not want nor did I review student test data before or after the observations. During pre and post observation conferences I asked teachers how

they nurtured understanding. Several teachers wanted to hand me the day's objective.

During one pre-observation conference several days before the lesson I asked, "How can you provide me a lesson's objective several days before I observe you? What happens if this is not what your students need to learn this day?" The teacher responded, "I always wondered that but never thought I could say so." Might administrators nurture a knowing beyond the belief in data by monitoring teaching in ways through classroom observations which do not focus myopically on test data? How might something other than test scores move instruction to another place of assessment?

Dewey discusses the necessity of educating a world in flux for an industrial and open society. Greene (1973), noting Dewey's vision explains, "If the schools continued to treat knowledge as something to be doled out, if they continued working mainly for the command of certain symbols, people would become mere appendages to the machines they operated" (p. 100). Although the "machines they operated" at the time of Dewey's reflection were literally machines in factories, people are just as likely to become appendages to the machines of today. Recalling Grundy (1991) in applying this study to myself, I feel there is great hope for a world beyond the dis-ease of teaching as brought forward by the participants. However, to move in this direction, the focus of education, the hearth, will move away from the test. With a gaze "down" into teaching a look at the whole in relation to the parts and a deliberate nurturance of the unique within teaching, a transformation might be possible.

The End and a New Beginning

I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in. (Muir, as cited in Castle, 2004 p. 22)

Many years ago, I went out for a walk as I began my doctoral studies, and in going out, I found I was really going in. John Muir is a fitting reflection point for the closure of this study. Muir lived his early life in Wisconsin where I, too, was born, and he is a cousin of my paternal grandmother. Throughout this study, in the back and forth, the to and fro of a hermeneutic study, I reflected on the familiarity and strangeness of hermeneutic work. Recently sitting in my sister's house, I gazed at Ansel Adams's El Capitan in Yosemite, an original photograph purchased by our father long before Adams was well known. As I looked at the colossal granite stone I reflected that beauty, knowledge and understanding come when we least expect it. Yosemite became a National Park due to the tireless work of Muir, my father's cousin. Through Muir's descriptive writing, he inspired readers including presidents and congressmen, to take action to help preserve large areas of nature. Long before Heidegger (1993b) wrote about standing reserve, Muir wrote that the wilderness is, "Not a resource to be harvested, but a treasure to be preserved" (*National Park Service*, Online 2011). Such writing transformed how the nation saw the wilderness. Might it be time to consider teaching and learning as a treasure to be preserved?

The threads of historicity call to me as I reflect on Adams's work with the Sierra Club, an organization Muir himself founded. Although Adams never met Muir, he was inspired by his dedication to nature. The dedication of one man, Muir, inspired another, Adams. Both have forever influenced policy and ideology. Having never asked my father, I wonder, was it his relation to Muir that inspired his desire to see the American west and walk on the trails visited by his ancestor? What or who called to my father as he purchased the original images taken by a relatively unknown Ansel Adams? Having

never visited Yosemite, yet growing up viewing Adams' photographs in my childhood home, Yosemite is a place both familiar and strange. Gadamer's (1960/2006) words echo in my final reflections, "Hermeneutic work is based on the polarity of familiarity and strangeness" (p. 295).

In consideration of the hermeneutic quest of trying to make sense of the whole in terms of the detail of the parts, I reflect on this personal circle of understanding. Gazing at Adams' photographs, I wonder about Muir, and reflect on his treks in the unsettled west. While on my journey for a doctorate, I often considered returning *home*, to the known and secure. Often friends and family would ask me why I was writing this work. I wish I had known then to say, "I only went out for a walk and finally concluded to stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in." My "going in" formed and transformed who I am. In my going in, I have discovered a way of being which was, perhaps, always there but undiscovered. I wonder, in going in, will my journey call others in? Having always thought the Ansel Adams' photograph spoke to me, as it hung on the walls in my childhood home, perhaps it did. The work of Muir, Heidegger, Gadamer, Adams, Greene and Palmer were there; I simply needed to, "stay out till sundown, for going out, I found, was really going in."

As with many beginnings, it is not clear from the onset that they are occurring. Perhaps we are now amidst a new beginning. In August, 2011 Secretary of Education Duncan announced that the Obama administration will seek to unilaterally override the centerpiece requirement of NCLB, that 100 percent of students be proficient in math and reading by 2014. Secretary Duncan called the proficiency standards a "slow-motion train wreck" (Dillon, 2011, para. 3). As a result, the administration will waive the law's

proficiency requirements for states that have adopted their own testing and accountability programs and make certain other strides toward better schools. Dillon (2011) notes, “The administration’s plan amounts to the most sweeping use of executive authority to rewrite federal education law since Washington expanded its involvement in education in the 1960s” (para. 3). Might this be the shift in the hearth, a new focus, one that the participants in this study saw a need for?

Amidst such a shift, consideration must be given to the place from here, policy as written, to there, practice in the classroom. Aoki (2005h) names this the “zone of between.” On the one hand teachers dwell amidst the “curriculum as planned,” written by others creating a “fiction of sameness,” while they also dwell amidst the “curriculum as lived,” acknowledging the diversity of children and interests inside (p. 161). Noting the experience of one particular teacher, Aoki explains, “Miss O indwells between two horizons—the horizon of the curriculum-as-plan as she understands it and the horizon of the curriculum-as-lived experience with her pupils” (p. 161). Dwelling between these two places creates tension. In reflecting on how teachers live amidst the tensionality of the curriculum-as-planned and the curriculum-as-lived, how might such tensionality be acknowledged? Might this enable conversations in schools to move beyond “data chats” and the color coding of students? Through such an acknowledgement, might teachers give voice to necessary changes in federal policy?

. . . to be alive is to live in tension; that, in fact it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck, and that tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung. (Aoki, 2005h, p. 162)

The new song to be sung must attend to the difference between curriculum as planned and curriculum as lived. In speaking to the call for change to NCLB, Secretary Duncan

explains, “I can’t overemphasize how loud the outcry is for us to do something right now” (Dillon, 2011 para. 6). Might this tensionality be creating a new horizon for teaching and learning? Maybe the tension reflected by the participants in this study is being heard and these discordant voices are creating a new song.

In my going in, who I am as an educator is both formed and transformed. Throughout this process, I have read many examples of phenomenological writing and pushed my understanding of philosophy. This hermeneutic phenomenological research has modified my perception of teaching, and given significance and meaning that influences my decisions as an educator. It was, in the end, the experiences of the participants that kept me going. As I journeyed in, I was called to complete this work. In the end, I have gained much in the process. For me, the greatest pedagogical insight in this work is that it has framed my belief that there must be and can be a gaze beyond the test; however like the frame that holds an Ansel Adams photograph this research provides structure to the image, it does not encompass it. The frame serves as an inspiration to something yet to be discovered. My journey has just begun.

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

December 15, 2009

Barbara Woodward
12409 St. James Road
Rockville, Maryland 20850
(301) 545-0460

Dear ,

I would like to invite you to engage in a study that explores the experiences of teaching under No Child Left Behind. I am conducting this qualitative study as a doctoral student in the Department of Education Policy Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Francine Hultgren. The purpose of this study is to understand what it is like for public school teachers to teach in the era of high stakes testing as mandated under the federal law known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). As I seek to understand this experience, I will tape-record and transcribe approximately three conversational interviews, and invite you to write one reflection on your experiences teaching under NCLB.

Our first conversation provides an introduction and a time for you to share your experiences teaching under NCLB. The second conversation will follow my analysis of our first conversation, and the third conversation will be a group conversation that includes all participants in the study. Meeting times will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon by participants and researcher.

After I have completed the research, I will share the results with you. I am interested in setting up initial conversations in early 2010. If you have any questions and/or would like to be one of my conversants, please contact me at **Woodward93@comcast.net** or (301) 545-0460.

By sharing your insights and experience in this research study you will be contributing to a more complete understanding of what it is like to teach in the NCLB environment. It is my hope that the understandings gained in this study will be used to guide and inform policy decisions pertaining to teaching, learning and assessment at a local, state and federal level. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Woodward
Francine Hultgren, Advisor
University of Maryland
Telephone (301) 405-4562

APPENDIX B-Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Project Title	The Lived Experience of Teaching “Under” No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: A Phenomenological Study
Why is this research being done?	This is a research project being conducted by Barbara Agard Woodward under the supervision of Dr. Francine Hultgren in the Department of Education Policy Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are at least 18 years of age and you are a public school teacher. . The purpose of this research is to identify the impact of teaching under the mandates put forward under the federal law, No Child Left Behind.
What will I be asked to do?	The procedures for data collection involve interviews and personal writing which will provide text for analysis. Topics for these activities are derived from (or related to) teaching experiences in public schools. You will be asked to participate in at least two individual conversations for 45-60 minutes, one group conversation for 60-90 minutes, and write one reflective journal taking no more than 45 minutes throughout the duration of the study. All conversations will be digitally audio-recorded and transcribed by a third party. We will meet in locations convenient to you. For the reflective journal entry, you will be encouraged to write on topics generated through individual conversations, and/or choose from prompts.
What about confidentiality?	We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality the audio data that will be collected during the one-on-one interview session and group interviews, as well as the digital transcription of these interviews will only be accessible to the researcher and will be locked in a secure location. To insure greater confidentiality, you will be identified by a pseudo name. If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. Please initial below <input type="checkbox"/> I agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study. <input type="checkbox"/> I do not agree to be audio taped during my participation in this study.
What are the risks of this research?	There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

Project Title	The Lived Experience of Teaching “Under” No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: A Phenomenological Study	
What are the benefits of this research?	<p>This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about teachers’ experiences teaching under NCLB.</p> <p>We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of the lived experience of teaching under NCLB.</p>	
Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?	<p>Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.</p>	
What if I have questions?	<p>This research is being conducted by Barbara Agard Woodward (co-investigator) under the supervision of Dr. Francine Hultgren at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Francine Hultgren at: The University of Maryland, 2110 Benjamin Building, 301-405-4562 or fh@umd.edu.</p> <p>If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact: Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678</p> <p>This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.</p>	
Statement of Age of Subject and Consent	<p>Your signature indicates that: you are at least 18 years of age; the research has been explained to you; your questions have been fully answered; and you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.</p>	
Signature and Date	NAME OF SUBJECT	
	SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT	
	DATE	

APPENDIX C-Group Conversation Confidentiality Agreement

I agree that I will maintain confidentiality with regard to the group conversation associated with research study. I further agree that I will not disclose the content of the group discussion with third parties without the prior permission of the researcher or the University of Maryland.

Print Your Name

Sign Your Name

Today's Date: _____

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PARTICIPATION IN STUDY

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What grade(s) to you teach?
3. What subject(s) do you teach?
4. Are you willing to commit to the time requirements for participation in this study?

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