EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF THE PRACTICUM:
CASE STUDIES OF TWO SCHOOL ADVISORS

by

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Abstract

This study investigates how school advisors, in a secondary-school science context, conceive of and enact their roles in working with student teachers. It describes the interactions between school advisors and student teachers in relation to their personal conceptions of teaching, learning, and the process of learning to teach. The study provides a better understanding of the practicum setting with particular attention to the school advisor’s perspective.

Detail-rich cases highlight a range of issues for school advisors as they enact their responsibilities in attending to the student teachers’ learning. These cases poignantly depict the complexities of the school advisor/student teacher dynamic and the various tensions that arise when conflicts emerge as the practicum unfolds. There are three questions that guide this study: (1) How do teachers perceive their roles as school advisors?; (2) How do teachers enact their roles as school advisors, and what are the foci of the school advisors’ work with student teachers?; and (3) How do student teachers perceive the role of the school advisors? The practicum is a context in which one person assists the other in learning (to teach) and for this reason the conceptual framework used for data analysis is a curriculum perspective.

Two levels of curriculum are discussed; level one of the curriculum framework is meeting the needs of the students while level two is meeting the needs of the student teacher. Both levels must be attended to throughout the teaching practicum. Five thematic areas were identified: (a) the student teachers’ learning, (b) the working relationship, (c) experiences outside of the classroom, (d) lesson planning, and (e) classroom management.

This study makes a significant contribution to the research literature on teacher education. First, it focuses upon the school advisor’s role within the practicum. Second, one
of the two case studies that deteriorated to the point where a change of venues was in order, serves as a rare example of a less-than-ideal practicum experience. Third, the conceptual framework of regarding the practicum as curriculum provides a new perspective for gaining insights into the complexities of learning to teach.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii

Table of Contents iv

List of Tables ix

List of Figures x

Acknowledgements xi

## CHAPTER 1 - Focus of the Study 1

Introduction 1

Purpose of the Study 3

The Research Questions 4

Significance of the Study 5

Limitations of the Study 6

Structure of the Thesis 8

## CHAPTER 2 - The Literature 10

Introduction 10

Models of Supervision 11

Original Clinical Models 12

Humanistic and Artistic Models 14

Technical and Didactic Models 15

Developmental and Reflective Models 16

Summary 19
Perceptions of the Role of School Advisors 20
Summary 29
Explorations into the School Advisor/Student Teacher Relationship 30
Summary 38
Background Conceptual Literature 40

CHAPTER 3 - The Research Method and Conceptual Framework 43
Introduction 43
Context of the Study 43
The Context of STEPP 44
Selection of Participants 47
Data Gathering and Analysis 48
The Conceptual Framework 53
Conceptualizing the Practicum as a Curriculum 54
Levels of Curriculum 54
Summary 59

CHAPTER 4 - The Case of Brian and Amy 60
Introduction 60
Background 60
Brian’s Perceptions of Being a School Advisor 62
The Winter Practicum 67
The Calm Before the Storm 68
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Early Weeks of Teaching</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Struggling Through the Middle Weeks</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surviving the Final Weeks</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After the Dust had Settled</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amy’s perceptions</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian’s perceptions</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER 5 - The Case of Brenda and Nancy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda’s Perceptions of Being a School Advisor</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Winter Practicum</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting on the Wrong Foot</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Rough Road of Teaching</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The End of the Line</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding the Experience</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy’s perceptions</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda’s perceptions</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### CHAPTER 6 - Conceptualizing the Cases from a Curriculum Perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parallels and Tensions Among the Two Levels of Curriculum</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda’s Case</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian’s Case</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptualizing the Curriculum of the Practicum</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisiting the Three Questions of Curriculum Implementation</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Pedagogical Objectives as Thematic Areas</td>
<td>162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Student Teachers’ Learning</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Working Relationship</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies to enhance self-esteem</td>
<td>168</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threats to the working relationship</td>
<td>171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences Outside of the Classroom</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesson Planning</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Management</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### CHAPTER 7 - Conclusions and Implications for Practice and Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answering the Research Questions</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

Table 1. Data collected from Brian and Amy 51
Table 2. Data collected from Brenda and Nancy 51
Table 3. The school advisor’s normal classroom 55
Table 4. The school advisor’s work with a student teacher 55
Table 5. The two levels of curriculum in the practicum 56
List of Figures

Figure 1. The three questions of curriculum implementation 58
Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER 1

Focus of the Study

Introduction

My long-term research interest is primarily focused on exploring ways of enhancing teacher education, with particular attention to how student teachers learn to teach science.¹ Recent studies in the literature have focused on examining the preparatory experiences that student teachers are exposed to, both in the on-campus course work and in the school-based practicum. It is the practicum setting that serves as the focus of this study, since it is in this setting that student teachers first experience a classroom from the other side of the desk. As well, the practicum serves as the student teachers’ formal exposure to the myriad of roles and responsibilities that teachers have as members of a school culture.

It has been stated that the practicum is the “single most powerful intervention in a teacher’s professional preparation” (Turney et al., 1982, p. 47). The extensive literature on learning to teach has explored the school-based practicum experience from a number of different perspectives (e.g., teacher thinking, reflective practice, pedagogical content knowledge, novice-expert comparisons) using a variety of approaches (e.g., case study, narrative, stimulated recall). Although there is disagreement in the literature about the nature of the impact that practicum experiences have on student teachers, the practicum is still a pervasive feature of teacher education programs (Feiman-Nemser, 1990).

¹ Student teachers are also commonly referred to as pre-service teachers or novices.
What is surprising in the literature is the minimal amount of research that explores the role played by the school advisor. In fact, within the research on teacher education, school advisors have been aptly referred to as the “neglected practicum participant,” even though they are the people who have the most direct contact with student teachers during the practicum. This lack of attention to the roles of the school advisor gives the impression that it is non-problematic, yet most people associated with teacher education can attest to the many complications that can and do arise. This neglect occurs both within research on the roles of school advisors and within the realm of the preparation school advisors receive in support of the roles.

Research reports that the roles of the school advisor are poorly defined and that teachers are generally not prepared for the task of student teacher supervision (Fullan, Connelly, & Watson, 1990; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; Martin & Sheehan, 1980; Johnston, 1984). Teachers’ organizations continue to highlight the need for training for school advisors. For example, in a recent issue of Professionally Speaking, which is the monthly periodical for the Ontario College of Teachers, Beynon (1999) cited lack of training and preparation for school advisors and lack of training and support in evaluation of student teachers as two major drawbacks that discourage experienced teachers from volunteering to be school advisors. The British Columbia Teachers’ Federation (1991) adopted several recommendations on teacher education, including the need for training for school advisors so they could acquire the specialized skills required for working with student teachers, and the need for universities to develop appropriate criteria for selecting school advisors.

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2 School advisors are also commonly referred to as co-operating teachers, sponsor teachers, school associates, or associate teachers.
What should this training involve? What are the specialized skills needed by school advisors before they can effectively work with student teachers? What should the criteria for selection entail? Before these questions can be answered, we must be clear about what our 'ideal' conceptions of school advisors are. These questions are difficult to answer in light of the fact that the roles of the school advisor has not been examined extensively in the literature (Kremer-Hayon, 1991).

**Purpose of the Study**

The literature on learning to teach must begin to intensively examine the role that the school advisor plays within a teacher preparation program. My particular examination will begin by exploring the interactions between school advisors and student teachers in relation to their personal conceptions of teaching, learning, and the process of learning to teach. It will also focus on how school advisors conceive of and enact their roles in working with student teachers during the practicum. This study, which is situated within the secondary-school science context, takes on the challenge of trying to gain a better understanding of the practicum setting and focuses on the dynamics of learning to teach with particular attention to the school advisors' perspectives. I take the stance that the practicum setting is a context where one person assists the other in learning (to teach), and for this reason, the conceptual framework that I use for data analysis is clearly a curriculum perspective.

Specifically, two detailed case studies, involving two school advisor/student teacher pairs, illuminate how the school advisors conceive their roles and responsibilities associated

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3 I have used single-quotations marks in this thesis to signal the difference between my own terms and statements introduced by the participants in the study.
with the task of working with someone who is attempting to learn and live the role of a science teacher within a school. These detail-rich cases highlight a range of issues for school advisors as they enact their responsibilities in attending to the student teachers’ learning. In addition, the cases depict the complexities of the school advisor/student teacher dynamic and the various tensions that arise when conflicts emerge as the practicum unfolds.

**The Research Questions**

The research focus of this study is to empirically investigate how school advisors conceive of and enact their roles in working with student teachers. It attempts to document and understand some of the salient aspects within the complexities associated with how someone supports another person in learning to teach. The normative stance of this thesis is that the field of teacher education can benefit from a better understanding of the nature of the relationship between school advisors and student teachers. There are three questions that guide this study.

- How do teachers perceive their roles as school advisors?

  This research question focuses attention on the school advisors’ personal views of what it means to have the responsibility of working with student teachers.

- How do teachers enact their roles as school advisors, and what are the foci of the school advisors’ work with student teachers?

  This research question is concerned with the ways in which school advisors carry out the day-to-day responsibilities of working with student teachers in the process of learning to teach. This question focuses on the conscious decisions that school advisors make and the factors that affect such decisions. It also examines the scope of issues that school advisors overtly support and assist student teachers within the process of learning to teach.
• How do student teachers perceive the role of the school advisors?

Although the primary focus of this study is on the perceptions and actions of the school advisors, it is important to attend to how the school advisors’ intentions are perceived by the very people that the school advisors are attempting to assist. Attention will focus on how the student teachers’ perceptions of the school advisors change as the practicum unfolds.

The answers to these three research questions are presented within the depiction of the two case studies (in Chapters Four and Five) and are further addressed in the analysis of Chapter Six.

**Significance of the Study**

This study has many features that make it a significant contribution to the research literature on teacher education. First, the study focuses upon the school advisors’ roles within the practicum, which is an area that has lacked the empirical and theoretical inquiries that have occurred in other areas of teacher education. The two case studies present rich descriptions of how these two practicum situations developed and changed throughout their durations. As well, answers to the questions raised earlier regarding training, specialized skills, and selection criteria could be informed by the results of this study.

Second, the case of Brenda and Nancy (i.e., Chapter Five), which deteriorated to the point where a change of venues was in order, serves as an example of a less-than-ideal practicum experience. The insights gained from this rare opportunity can be beneficial to all persons associated with the practicum since there is little in the literature that presents negative practicum experiences.

Third, the conceptual framework of regarding the practicum as a curriculum provides a new perspective for gaining insights into the complexities of learning to teach and is
helpful in revisiting the strengths and limitations of the existing approaches espoused in the supervision literature. Viewing the practicum as a curriculum introduces a concept and a language that is familiar to experienced teachers, and, as such, could be helpful in enriching the ways in which school advisors perceive and enact their roles.

**Limitations of the Study**

There are four limitations to this study: (1) research itself has an influence on the practicum; (2) the process of learning to teach is not limited to the practicum; (3) the roles of the faculty advisor (i.e., the university-based representative) were not pursued, and (4) the data collection samples the winter practicum, rather than providing a complete record.

The first limitation of the study is that the research itself was an influence on how the participants viewed the practicum context, and, therefore, an acknowledgement that these particular practicum contexts are atypical. The school advisors involved in this study were involved in the larger Science Teacher Education Practicum Project (STEPP), which is described in detail in Chapter Three. In light of the purposes and prior activities of STEPP (see Erickson, Mayer-Smith, Rodriguez, Chin, & Mitchell, 1994), the school advisors were already attuned to focusing on ways of understanding and enhancing the practicum experience. Throughout this study, the school advisors and student teachers continued to participate in monthly STEPP meetings, and such structured opportunities to discuss the learning to teach process are not part of typical practicum contexts. As participants in STEPP, the school advisors likely focused more thought and attention to their roles with student teachers than would normally occur.
Participation in this particular study added another layer of influence to the practicum context since all participants were fully aware of the purposes of my study. The requirement to audio tape some practicum debriefing sessions and lessons, to participate in interviews, to maintain a reflective journal, and to supply copies of all written materials were divergences from typical practicum practices. The participants were obviously aware of my presence when I was present to conduct interviews, and they were also aware of my presence in the data collection. In some instances, they would ‘talk’ to me while they were audio taping, with the knowledge that I would be listening to the audio tape at a later time.

Interviews that I conducted with the participants inevitably influenced how they viewed the process of learning to teach as the practica unfolded since many of my questions focused on their perceptions of what was happening. As illustrated in Chapter Four, Brian was intrigued when I introduced the idea of the practicum as a ‘syllabus of learning to teach’ and talked extensively about this idea. In these ways, my presence served to sharpen the focus of the participants on the supervision of the practicum and catalyzed them to think more about the process of supervision than they might otherwise have done in a typical practicum context. I see this attention to process as a good thing, because I believe that the school advisor/student teacher relationship can be enriched by more attention to participants’ thoughts and feelings as the weeks of the practicum unfold. I believe that the case studies show that this study did influence the participants’ thinking about the practicum but had little effect on how the practicum actually progressed.

The second and third limitations highlight the limits of the bounded system inherent to case study research. While this study focused on the practicum setting and its role in the process of learning to teach, the practicum is only one component of a teacher education
program (which in turn is only one of many experiences which play a role in shaping one’s abilities as a teacher). In addition, the role of the faculty advisor within the “triad” is acknowledged in the study, but I chose not to include the faculty advisors in the data collection. These were conscious decisions on my part to maintain the focus on how school advisors perceive and enact their roles in working with student teachers, and on how these factors affect the school advisor/student teacher relationship.

The fourth limitation concerns the sampling that was part of the data collection. The participants were encouraged to audio tape debriefing sessions and to maintain reflective journals throughout the study. I encouraged them to audio tape debriefing sessions and to make journal entries at least twice per week. Even in the case of Brian and Amy where the available data are extensive, I acknowledge that such data represent a sampling from the winter practicum. Interviews were conducted at regular intervals with all participants, and, although these interviews assisted in enhancing the continuity of data sampling, these interviews served as recollections of events as opposed to an audio tape of the events themselves.

**Structure of the Thesis**

This study is presented in seven chapters. This chapter serves as an introduction to the study and situates it within the larger realm of educational research in the area. Chapter Two reviews the literature in teacher education that pertains to the school advisor’s roles within the practicum context of working with a student teacher. Chapter Three elaborates on the research method (paying particular attention to the context of the study, the procedures for participant selection, and data collection) and develops the conceptual framework of the
practicum as a curriculum’ which is used to analyze the data. Chapter Four and Chapter Five each present a case study highlighting the experiences of the school advisor/student teacher pairing as the practicum unfolded. Chapter Six presents an analysis of the two case studies utilizing the curriculum framework developed in Chapter Three. The final chapter presents the conclusions and implications for practice derived from the study.
CHAPTER 2

Review of the Related Literature

Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature that focuses on the relationships that exist between school advisors and student teachers in the practicum setting. A high level of importance is assigned to the school-based practicum portion of teacher education programs. Although the practicum is a widely studied aspect of teacher education, research in pre-service supervision has been minimal and little is known about the influence of school advisors on the process of learning to teach (Glickman & Bey, 1990). The research that exists on school advisors is largely from the perspective of the student teacher (Duquette, 1994; Richardson-Koehler, 1988).

The review of the related literature is divided into four sections. The first section provides a brief overview of some key features of the dominant models of supervision that may be applicable to the school advisor/student teacher relationship. Although these models of supervision were primarily designed to be used with in-service teachers, many of the developers suggest that they are appropriate for use with pre-service teachers. The second and third sections of this chapter will report on studies that have focused on school advisors. Section two reports on studies of the perceptions of the role of the school advisor, many of which are garnered from data collected from student teachers rather than school advisors. The third section highlights studies that attempt to focus on understanding how school advisors interact with student teachers within the practicum setting. The fourth section of
this chapter presents some background theoretical literature that informed development of the conceptual framework.

**Models of Supervision**

This section overviews some key features of the prevalent models of supervision that are available. Although this literature is extensive, within the context of the school advisor/student teacher relationship, applicability proves to be problematic for a number of reasons. First, much of the supervision literature pertains to the in-service context, and the research on pre-service supervision has been sporadic (Glickman & Bey, 1990). Numerous researchers (e.g., Fullan, Connelly, & Watson, 1990; Grimmett & Ratzlaff; 1986; Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996) contend that the role of the school advisor is poorly defined. Even within the context of in-service supervision, Goldsberry (1988) argued that most people who supervise teachers “are ill-prepared for the job” (p. 5).

Second, the dominant supervision models are, in fact, models for in-service staff development, which have been imported and advocated as appropriate models for supervising pre-service teachers. Without any alterations, applying these models is problematic because of the assumptions they have about the time constraints on supervision, the ability level of the person being supervised, and the evaluative nature of the practicum itself.

Third, even if one accepts the premise that the supervision models are appropriate for the pre-service setting, a glance into any practicum setting verifies that, for the most part, none of these models of supervision are actually practised (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989). This observation is not surprising given that many universities provide school advisors with little
training in preparation for their role (e.g., Beynon, 1999; Holland, Clift, Veal, Johnson, & McCarthy, 1992). Universities also do not often provide specific training for school advisors (or student teachers) in the use of such supervision models. Hoy and Woolfolk (1989) concluded that it is not clear that models of clinical supervision would be the best choice for work with student teachers (p. 121). In light of these claims about role definition and training, this discussion of models of supervision (typically advocated for use in the supervision of experienced teachers) is presented to highlight the fact that models of supervision are available for use in the practicum setting, but are largely ignored.

Pajak (1993) suggested that models of supervision can be divided into four broad groups: (1) the original clinical models (e.g., Cogan, 1973; Goldhammer; 1969), (2) the humanistic and artistic models (e.g., Blumberg, 1974; Eisner, 1976), (3) the technical and didactic models (e.g., Acheson and Gall, 1987; Joyce and Showers, 1988), and (4) the developmental and reflective models (e.g., Costa and Garmston, 1986; Glickman, 1990; Schön, 1987). A brief overview of some key features of the dominant models of supervision that are germane to the teacher education context follows.

**Original Clinical Models**

All models of clinical supervision involve direct observation, analysis, and treatment of concrete problems, and all models prescribe variations of the typical three-step procedure of pre-conference, observation, and post-conference. Cogan's (1973) eight-stage model included an initial stage of establishing the teacher/supervisor relationship. This stage acknowledges the importance of the initial working relationship but does not attend to the possibility that the working relationship can change as the supervision progresses.
Consistent with the stance advocated in all models of clinical supervision, Cogan believed that clinical supervision was a tool for improving teaching that should not be contaminated by evaluating or identifying weaknesses in the teacher. Thus, supervision is seen as a vehicle for the improvement of teaching and not for evaluation. This stance is problematic within the context of student teaching, since in many cases, the same person (i.e., the school advisor) serves as both a supervisor and an evaluator (Katz & Raths, 1992).

A second original clinical model is that of Goldhammer (1969). This model was based on the premise that teaching behaviour is repetitive and patterned, and the focus of supervision should be on patterns of behaviour that have the greatest impact on students. Goldhammer believed that supervisors must focus on patterns of behaviour that are salient to the teacher, accessible (i.e., the teacher is emotionally and intellectually prepared to address these patterns), and few in number so the teacher is not attempting to remediate too many factors simultaneously. A significant feature of his model was the requirement that supervisors must examine their own supervisory practice and its effects on teachers.

In contrast, Mosher and Purpel (1972) contended that supervision is much more complex in nature. They defined supervision as a form of teaching (i.e., someone who deliberately attempts to persuade another person to change his or her thinking or behaviour in a particular way). They argued that clinical supervisors must be curriculum specialists because what one teaches is inextricably linked to how one teaches, and any analysis of teaching independent of considering content is not feasible. This recognition of the importance of subject matter knowledge in the process of supervision can be likened to a similar argument, within the context of teacher education, advocated by Shulman (1986,
1987). By advocating that all supervisors must be curriculum specialists, these models become unrealistic for most practicum settings.

**Humanistic and Artistic Models**

Blumberg's (1974) model placed increased emphasis on interpersonal relationships to counteract the low trust, defensiveness, and secrecy that is often present in supervision settings. He described such conditions as a "cold war," where the lines of communication degenerate, and cynicism becomes prevalent. The cause of this "cold war" is the differing perceptions and misperceptions that teachers and supervisors have of themselves and each other. He suggested that supervisors need to analyze their own supervisory behaviours and to recognize that teachers need support and guidance, opportunities to grow and develop, and control of their own environments.

Blumberg asserted that there are four possible supervisory styles based upon the different combinations of direct and indirect supervisory behaviours. The combination of high direct behaviours (i.e., giving opinions, telling, suggesting, and criticizing) and high indirect behaviours (i.e., asking a teacher for information, asking for opinions and suggestions, praising the teacher, accepting a teacher's ideas, and discussing feelings about the quality of the communication and the productiveness of the intervention) is the supervisory style preferred by teachers. This assertion is important to the pre-service context since many studies (e.g., Richardson-Koehler, 1988) suggest that over 70% of a pre-service supervisory conference is dominated by the supervisor. The supervisory style most commonly being used would be high direct/low indirect, which, according to Blumberg's research, is the style receiving the most negative reactions from teachers. He reported the
amount of indirect supervisory behaviour is an indicator of the quality of the interpersonal relationship between a supervisor and a teacher. The indirect behaviours are seen as important in sustaining trust and reducing defensiveness.

Blumberg stated that a supervisor serves a different role than an evaluator, preferring that these roles remain separate, but he also recognized that in many cases, both functions are carried out by the same person. He believed that the only way of trying to resolve this conflict is to openly confront it, by having the teacher and supervisor discuss issues related to evaluation and the basis on which decisions will be made.

Eisner (1976) objected to the scientific approach to supervision as an adequate means to understand the events of classroom teaching. The focus on teacher behaviours neglects the importance of the context and the meaning that those behaviours have within the context. The overemphasis on the collection of objective data related to effective techniques neglects other important aspects of classroom teaching, such as personal expression, creativity, and the quality of life in the classroom. It is these aesthetic qualities of teaching that Eisner emphasizes in the supervisory process.

**Technical and Didactic Models**

Acheson and Gall's (1987) model of clinical supervision aims to improve the classroom performance of teachers through the use of a three-stage cycle of planning, observation, and feedback, that focuses primarily on having the teacher acquire specific intellectual and behavioural skills. This emphasis on acquiring effective teaching strategies (which correlate to student outcomes) is a departure from the collaborative problem solving that is prevalent in the original models. In addition, the emphasis placed on observable
teacher behaviours limits the scope of the role of the supervisor. For example, counseling functions and curriculum support are deemed outside of the scope of clinical supervision. Even though Acheson and Gall suggested that clinical supervision is appropriate for the pre-service and in-service contexts, pre-service teachers usually require a supervisor who also attends to emotive and subject matter issues.

**Developmental and Reflective Models**

Glickman's (1981, 1990) developmental model of supervision attempted to encompass many features of the technical/didactic approaches, within a framework of non-evaluative reflective practice. Thus, there is both an emphasis on the mastery of effective techniques and cognitive development of teachers. Although the model is primarily aimed at the in-service context, there are many characteristics of the model which can be helpful in the pre-service context. There is a recognition that teachers vary greatly in terms of their ability to analyze situations and solve instructional problems, and, therefore, need to be supervised in different ways. An important role of the supervisor is to assess an individual's development in terms of his or her level of abstraction and level of concern, but Glickman offers little advice on how a supervisor could make such determinations.

Glickman stated that there are three levels of abstraction: (1) low level, where a teacher has difficulty making rational decisions, lacks ideas, and depends on authorities for advice, (2) medium level, where a teacher recognizes that he or she must change his or her behaviour but has difficulty deciding on specific actions and the possible consequences of those actions, and (3) high level, where a teacher is capable of identifying the problem and alternative approaches and is able to implement change successfully without the aid of a
In addition, Glickman suggested that there are three levels of concern: (1) issues of self-adequacy as a teacher, (2) issues related to better addressing the learning needs of pupils, and (3) issues of interest relevant to the school and the profession. Although Glickman characterized each of these levels in terms of the span of a career (e.g., novices are usually concerned about their own adequacy as teacher), levels 1 and 2 do capture the range of concern characterized by pre-service teachers.

Glickman presented five steps within his model of clinical supervision: pre-conference, observation, analysis, post-conference, and critique. The last step of critique occurs at the end of the cycle and is used to assess the quality and usefulness of the cycle. Glickman identified three supervisory approaches for working with teachers: (1) directive (e.g., giving directions, establishing standards, and reinforcing consequences), (2) collaborative (e.g., presenting information, problem solving, negotiating resolution), and (3) non-directive (e.g., listening, clarifying, and encouraging). The directive approach should be used when the teacher is diagnosed to be operating at the low levels of abstraction and concern, the non-directive approach when the teacher is diagnosed at the high levels, and the collaborative approach when the teacher is diagnosed at the moderate levels. If we were to apply this model to pre-service teachers, the supervision will likely start out as directive, with the intention that (within certain contexts), it will shift to more collaborative and non-directive approaches. Thus, the practicum would start out with high supervisory control, and move towards a high pre-service teacher control. This pattern is consistent with the preferred supervisory style expressed by pre-service teachers (Copeland, 1988). Housego and Grimmett (1983) suggested that decisions about supervisory approach could also be based on whether or not the intervention involved a time concern (leading to a more directive
approach) or a threat concern (which requires a more facilitative approach to reduce defensiveness).

Costa and Garmston (1986) advocated a model of “cognitive coaching” that focuses on a teacher’s perceptions and decision making. They argued that teacher behaviours are interrelated to teacher thinking, and rather than adhering to supervision strategies that emphasize effective techniques, it is more important to appeal to teachers’ intelligence and rationality. Thus, cognitive coaching centres around three important goals: (1) trust, (2) teacher learning, and (3) teacher autonomy, all of which help to focus teachers to make better decisions and become self-supervising. The role of the supervisors is to serve as mediators to help teachers process new information, mainly through the use of questions which help the teacher to understand his or her own decision making processes before, during, and after classroom teaching.

One concern with this approach is that, especially early in the practicum, pre-service teachers lack the experience in anticipating many of the consequences of their teaching and also lack the ability to alter their teaching approach during a lesson. The novice-expert literature (e.g., Borko and Livingston, 1989; Calderhead, 1983; Berliner, 1986) is illustrative of these limited decision making abilities of pre-service teachers. Not having these answers and not receiving any suggestions from the mediating supervisor could erode the novice’s confidence. Thus, the cognitive coaching model begins with the stance of the teacher’s autonomy at the expense of support and guidance.

Schön’s (1987) reflective coaching model contains many of the same elements as Costa and Garmston’s (1986) cognitive coaching approach but expands the supervisor’s role to include support and guidance functions such as criticizing, advising, and modeling.
Schön’s model emphasizes questioning of taken-for-granted assumptions, beliefs, theories, and practices. It focuses on the nature of professional knowledge and solving the problems encountered in practice.

**Summary**

As highlighted, most of the supervision models were designed for use with experienced teachers, and many of them advocate the importance of supervision rather than evaluation. The supervision models serve as structures that encourage conversations about a teacher’s practice for the purpose of improving it. The models are also similar in their focus on the need to collect evidence about actual teacher behaviours in classrooms. They differ in their depictions of the role of the supervisor and the degree to which he or she provides direction, critique, and support.

In his examination of instructional supervision, Waite (1992) argued that supervision has not yet incorporated approaches or methods that address all of the complexities of curriculum and instruction as they unfold in real classrooms. He believed that most supervision approaches focus solely on teacher behaviours at the expense of considering situational factors that are unique to a particular context. He further stated that what is needed is a supervision approach that honours the complexity and uniqueness of each classroom, teacher, and the interpersonal relationships that exists in such contexts.

Holland, Clift, Veal, Johnson, and McCarthy (1992) argued that “clinical supervision’s potential as a vehicle for professional inquiry in both pre-service and in-service settings remains too often unrealized” (p. 177). They believed this was because supervisors often lack the skill and training, and universities and schools cannot allocate the time
required for clinical supervision to be done properly. These same arguments can equally apply to all of the supervision models discussed. What has also been neglected is the need for student teachers to understand their role within a supervision process. If student teachers are expected to analyze their teaching, then they need to be taught the necessary skills as well.

**Perceptions of the Role of School Advisors**

The related literature that explores the nature of the role of school advisors often remarks on the paucity of research in this area. Glickman and Bey's (1990) 13-page review of supervision for *The Handbook of Research on Teacher Education* contained three pages that focused on the pre-service setting, of which one page pertained to studies of school advisors. The second edition of the handbook published in 1996 did not have a chapter dedicated to supervision, although McIntyre, Byrd, and Foxx (1996) discussed school advisors within a section pertaining to interpersonal relations during field experiences. In Wideen, Mayer-Smith, and Moon's (1998) review of 93 studies on learning to teach, one study involved school advisors, and the university supervisor's role in student teaching "appeared noticeably absent" (p. 153).

Many of the research studies focus on surveys of school advisors' and student teachers' perceptions of the desired characteristics that school advisors should possess. Some studies explore the benefits that school advisors gain from taking student teachers, while other studies focus on the concerns that school advisors express about taking on this added responsibility.
In his review of emerging conceptions of teacher education pedagogy, Doyle (1990) reported that the few studies that focus on the effectiveness of student teaching experiences predominantly report on attitudes of the participants and their socialization into the profession, rather than on the acquisition of specific teaching skills. He also concluded that despite the widespread popularity and endorsement of the practicum component in the education of teachers, “the consequences of these experiences are as much negative... as they are positive” (p. 17).

Karmos and Jacko (1977) reported on a survey of 60 elementary and secondary student teachers about whom they perceived as significant others during the student teaching experience. Student teachers were asked to list and rank five significant others and their reasons for designating them as important during the student teaching experience. The authors found that 57% of the student teachers identified the school advisor as the most important significant other, and this percentage increased to 92% when considering first and second choice. Role development (47%), personal support (32%), and professional skills (21%) were cited as the main reasons that student teachers saw the school advisor as a significant other. The student teachers also identified friends, parents, and spouses as important significant others, moreso for the personal support (76%) that they provided. Within the overall results, 47% of all student teacher responses indicated that they identified particular significant others for personal support reasons. This finding suggests the important role that confidence plays within the student teaching context.

Copeland and Atkinson’s (1978) study of 66 elementary-school student teachers’ ratings of audio tapes of directive and non-directive supervisory conferences revealed that they had a clear preference for directive supervisory behaviour. The authors suggested that
such a preference occurred because the directive conference provided concrete solutions to
instruction-related problems. This result is somewhat surprising because all of the student
teachers participating in the study had completed 20 weeks of practicum, and one would
expect a greater sense of autonomy in decision making. The authors also hypothesized that
student teachers are more likely to defer to a directive supervisor’s preferences since the
student teachers require his or her support for letters of recommendation. In the absence of
anecdotal data from participants and since the study occurred within a contrived setting that
lacked such a context, this hypothesis is dubious.

Copas (1984) investigated the attributes defining good school advisors using critical
incidents described by elementary-school student teachers. Data analysis distilled anecdotal
statements of critical incidents into a numerical representation of effective and ineffective
behaviours. She found that guiding behaviours (29%), co-operating behaviours (27%), and
supporting behaviours (15%) were identified as the most common of 14 behaviours school
advisors utilize in their interactions with student teachers. Each category is a report of the
combined results of effective and ineffective behaviours. For example, although 175 data
entries result in the claim that 29% of the data were guiding behaviours, this total included 53
ineffective behaviours, which accounts for over 30% of the entries. The numerical
presentation of results provides little insight into what constitutes an effective or ineffective
behaviour.

Osunde (1996) reported on a study of 50 student teachers’ views of school advisors’
effective practices which had significant impact on their experiences while student teaching.
Analysis of questionnaires revealed that student teachers identified good classroom
organization, positive rapport with students, and knowledge of subject matter as the most
important attributes in school advisors’ classroom practices. The author suggested that the findings can be used as selection criteria for school advisors, but such a suggestion assumes that good classroom teachers are good school advisors. Good classroom teaching may be a necessary but not sufficient criterion in the selection of school advisors.

Applegate and Lasley (1982) examined the problems that school advisors perceived in their work with student teachers using a survey that was administered to 172 school advisors. The authors reported that inadequate preparation of the student teachers while at the university and the school advisors’ lack of familiarity with the goals of the university were the most prevalent problems. The researchers believed that the lack of consistent and interactive communication between the schools and the university may be at the heart of these concerns. Improvements in this area of communication and consultation have been slow to develop since, 14 years later, Zimpher and Sherrill (1996) reported that school advisors perceived that they are consulted less by university personnel than the university personnel perceived.

Grimmett and Ratzlaff (1986) utilized a questionnaire to elicit the perceived expectations that school advisors, university supervisors, and student teachers held for the role of the school advisor. They reported that there was a high level of consensus on orientation, planning/instruction, evaluation, and professional development functions. The researchers also compared these Canadian-based results with the existing data reported in two U.S.-based studies and found a high degree of similarity with the U.S.-based study that was conducted within the same decade.

Beynon (1999) reported that the role of the school advisor is complicated by the fact that there is little training or preparation and that school advisors end up supervising their
student teachers as they remember being supervised in their own student teaching days. In many ways, this is similar to Lortie's (1975) "apprenticeship of observation" relative to how one assists another person in learning to teach. In the same way that Calderhead and Robson (1991) state that student teachers' idealized images of teaching are informed by both positive and negative experiences as pupils, it seems reasonable to conjecture that school advisors' perceptions of their roles are informed by their own positive and negative experiences as student teachers. In fact, these influences may very well serve as a school advisor's rationale for using a given approach with a student teacher. Beynon's advocacy for establishing training for school advisors echoes earlier admonitions by Boydell (1986).

Cole and Sorrill (1992) reported on their one-year qualitative inquiry with a small group of associate teachers using information from informal group discussions and journal entries. The authors found that the way school advisors view and carry out their roles derives mainly from what they can remember of their own experiences as student teachers. The school advisors also stated that they had limited knowledge about the university component of the teacher education program and the faculty expectations for the program. As a result, "most of what [school advisors] do is based on assumptions and guesswork about what is appropriate, required, and expected of them and the student teachers" (p. 42).

The school advisors perceived a need for more support with the evaluative aspect of their roles, with particular attention to how to create and sustain a learning environment that was conducive to growth and development of student teachers. They also wanted a clearer sense of student teacher development and how to adapt their own work to the student teachers' changing needs as the practicum unfolded. Finally, the school advisors raised
issues about the need for more recognition and support for the time commitment needed to work with student teachers.

Duquette (1994) examined the benefits and concerns about the role of the school advisor by analyzing questionnaire data from 23 school advisors involved in a school-based teacher education program. The major benefits centred around opportunities for personal professional development and professional satisfaction. The major concerns that school advisors identified centred around the heavy time commitment, student teachers who do not respond to suggestions made by advisors, and student teachers who do not make adequate progress. The author noted that “if the practice teaching sessions do not work out well, the advisor may count the days till the program is over” (p. 351) and may also feel a great sense of failure and frustration.

Hamlin (1997) analyzed survey data collected from 161 school advisors who worked with two fifth-year MAT university programs. She found that nearly 75% of the school advisors believed that their teaching had changed as a result of supervising a student teacher. In addition, many of the school advisors commented that having a student teacher helped them to refine their knowledge of teaching methods, to become more conscious of their beliefs about teaching, and to become rejuvenated and enthusiastic about their own teaching.

Koerner (1992) explored the reflective journals of eight experienced school advisors of elementary student teachers and analyzed the data for their perceptions about the consequences of having a student teacher and for their views of the role of a school advisor. She found that the negative consequences of having a student teacher included an interruption of instruction, a displacement of the regular teacher (resulting in discomfort for the school advisor), a shift of their time and energy (away from the classroom students), and
a disruption of classroom routines. The school advisors felt a great deal of anxiety when student teachers were taking two and three times longer to teach concepts to the students. The positive consequence of having a student teacher was the break from the isolation that most teachers experience (even though they noticed an irony that they had chosen a situation that demanded more work and subjected them to scrutiny).

Koerner claimed that most school advisors drew on their past experience as student teachers to both empathize with the student teacher and to plan what to do as a school advisor. As most institutions are vague in their articulation of expectations for school advisors, she believed that the institutions' strategy could be likened to Lortie's (1975) conception of the "apprenticeship of observation."

Langdon, Weltzl-Fairchild, and Haggar (1997) described the benefits, incentives, weaknesses, and problems of being a school advisor with findings compiled through interviews with seven school advisors. Several school advisors stated that most of their previous negative experiences were with student teachers who had an inadequate grasp of the subject matter. Dyson (1999) interviewed 17 elementary-level school advisors and found that 45% of them were positive about supervising student teachers, even though only 35% of them felt that they received adequate support from the university. The percentage of school advisors who were positive about supervising student teachers seems surprisingly low especially since all had supervised student teachers in the year prior to this study.

Sudzina and Coolican (1994) examined the perceptions of mentoring relationships between school advisors and student teachers by surveying 74 student teachers and 13 school advisors. The school advisors believed that a good mentor should have certain qualities (e.g., leader, helper, open-minded, organized, good listener) and that mentees should be receptive
to criticism, willing to work, prepared, and co-operative. Some of the school advisors saw their role as one where they were clearly in charge and that student teachers should follow their lead and meet their expectations, while others saw mentoring as a shared enterprise which is more accommodating to the student teachers’ developmental needs and perspectives.

The authors also described three examples of failed school advisor/student teacher relationships and highlighted some of the difficulties that arise when expectations and responsibilities are either unarticulated or incompatible. In such situations, the function of mentoring was often “neglected, unexamined, or impossible” (p. 12). In all three cases, mentoring was never explicitly mentioned, and it was assumed that individuals would just know how to do it. The authors concluded that a good relationship, open communication, and a positive work environment are the key factors that contribute to student teacher success. Yee’s (1995) findings echoed these results. What is not clear from these studies is how successful practicum relationships are established and maintained.

Enz and Cook (1992) studied student teacher and school advisor perceptions about the roles and functions of the school advisor by administering a survey that identified personal, instructional, and professional domains. Differences between school advisors and student teachers were found in the instructional and professional domains. Within the instructional domain, school advisors perceived the activities of giving advice about classroom management and discipline as far more important than the student teachers. As well, student teachers placed far less importance on the need for school advisors to demonstrate lessons. This difference is probably due to student teachers’ eagerness to teach rather than to observe another person teaching. Within the professional domain, student
teachers placed far more importance (than their school advisors) on learning about faculty politics and relationships, district policies and procedures, parent conferences, and the role of support staff in the school. The authors concluded that the school advisors “appeared to underestimate the student teachers’ need to understand the culture of schools” (p. 13) and focused more of their attention on issues specific to improving classroom practice.

Ganser (1997) reported on a survey of 157 school advisors and 19 follow-up interviews with teachers. He found that most school advisors believed that they understood the role of the school advisor even though only two-thirds of them had received any formal training. This finding is surprising in light of the consensus view in the literature that teachers are not prepared for the task of supervising student teachers, and the role of the school advisor is not clearly defined. School advisors reported that they enjoyed working with student teachers because the practicum context was a source of new ideas, a stimulus for reflection, and an opportunity to talk to someone about teaching. Some of the school advisors also stressed that their responsibilities in student teaching were ultimately to their own pupils rather than to their student teachers.

Whittington, MacDonald, and Bradley (1995) examined school advisors’ perceptions of what competencies they expected of student teachers and when they should have such competencies. In a survey of 153 elementary- and 150 secondary- level school advisors, the researchers found that all school advisors believed that communication, equity, and health and safety competencies should be attained prior to student teaching. The secondary-level school advisors believed that teaching strategies (65%), planning and delivery (65%), and structuring subject matter (61%) should be skills attained primarily before student teaching. The authors stated that the lack of consensus among school advisors regarding the
importance of particular competencies and when they should be attained points to the need for greater specification of the relationship between the practicum and the preparation that precedes it.

**Summary**

The preceding studies have been helpful in identifying some important attributes in good school advisors. A focus on student teachers' role development, self-confidence, and professional skills (e.g., planning and evaluation) through guidance, co-operation, and support were seen as important factors in school advisors' work with student teachers. School advisors were also seen as role models of good classroom teaching. There is some disagreement whether student teachers prefer directive or non-directive supervisory conferences although this may be an issue that is dependent on student teachers' abilities and levels of self-confidence. Clearly, student teachers perceive school advisors as significant others during the student teaching experience.

The studies highlighted the concerns that school advisors have when taking student teachers. Some concerns include the disruption of their classroom routines, the lack of communication with the university, the lack of training, and the need for more recognition and support for the time commitment needed to work with student teachers. In addition, school advisors expressed concerns about adequate preparation of student teachers prior to the practicum, and about student teachers who do not make adequate progress. In contrast to these concerns, school advisors gained a sense of professional satisfaction and professional growth from working with student teachers and were more enthusiastic about their own teaching.
The studies are less helpful in providing a sense of what the positive attributes of good school advisors are. The majority of the studies were exploratory in nature and utilized survey instruments that often distilled anecdotal comments into numerical representations. Many of the studies pertaining to the attributes of school advisors relied on the perceptions of student teachers as the data sources. All of the studies used survey or questionnaire methods and did not appear to rely on theoretical frameworks about supervision to inform the research. Because of a focus on self-reported data, real-life depictions of how school advisors interact with student teachers within the practicum setting were not collected.

**Explorations into the School Advisor/Student Teacher Relationship**

Glickman and Bey (1990) urged that the focus of future research should be on the interactions and consequent actions that occur between school advisors and student teachers within the context of the practicum setting. Actual explorations of the school advisor/student teacher relationship is an emerging field of study. In addition to surveys, many of the following studies utilized interviews and observations of debriefing sessions between school advisors and their student teachers. Such research is often conducted over a short period of time (i.e., two or three weeks), and have primarily been conducted in elementary school settings.

Richardson-Koehler (1988) studied 14 elementary student teachers and their respective school advisors by using observations and interviews. The school advisors were observed twice and interviewed twice and the student teachers were asked to maintain a daily journal. She reported that the school advisors' "lack of ability or unwillingness to engage in reflection" (p. 33) contributed to a poor quality of feedback received by the student teachers.
She believed that an improved understanding by the school advisors of their own practices, and an enhanced ability to articulate this to the student teachers would help to reduce the confusion and frustration that the student teachers experienced.

One month into the practicum the student teachers were asked about the origins of their specific classroom practice. They stated that 80% of their ideas came from the school advisor, 15% from their university methods class, and 5% from themselves. By the end of the practicum, the percentages had shifted to 40% from the school advisors, 40% from themselves, 15% from university methods class, and 5% from friends or other teachers. The reduction of the impact of the school advisor would be expected as the student teacher gained experience and confidence. The low percentages attributed to the impact of the university methods course suggests that the perceived links between university coursework and field-based practicum are somewhat limited.

Ben-Peretz and Rumney (1991) analyzed the interactions between school advisors and student teachers within secondary-school history, English, and math practicum settings. One lesson and one debriefing conference for each of 35 school advisor/student teacher pairings were observed. The authors found that school advisors predominantly used evaluative comments and often focused on issues specific to subject matter. Rarely did the school advisors suggest alternative approaches that differed from their preferred classroom practices. The researchers hypothesized that the school advisors perceived the student teachers as students who were there to listen and learn. They also found that student teachers were mostly passive and "seemed to agree to whatever was said" (p. 525) by the school advisors. These findings suggest that debriefing conferences show "little manifestation of reflection-in-action" (p. 527), and little attempt to create contexts that allow for school
advisors and student teachers to uncover and share meanings. The authors do not provide relevant information about what point the student teachers are at within the practicum, nor do they report what year of the program they are enrolled in.

Saunders, Pettinger, and Tomlinson (1995) explored the role of mentoring within schools in the UK. They undertook this study because they believed that “accounts of what mentors plan to do, studies of what they actually do, and attempts to evaluate what is effective” (p. 201) are still in short supply. Analysis of 107 questionnaires and 32 interviews of prospective secondary school mentors resulted in the identification of four major types of mentors: (a) hands-off facilitators, (b) progressively collaborative mentors, (c) the professional friend, and (d) the classical mentor (i.e., listening and giving feedback). The interview data also revealed that mentors were enthusiastic about having student teachers but were concerned about time constraints. As well, there was a general underlying assumption that student teachers would learn through the prolonged immersion in the daily life of schools, even without explicit intervention from the mentor. A final observation from the interviews was that the mentors often spoke of their roles in fairly general ways using statements like “help for,” “spending time with,” and “working with” (p. 208) student teachers without any follow-up with more concrete and specific examples. This level of discourse suggests an absence of an appropriate language to discuss the various activities that school advisors engage in with student teachers.

Templeton (1995) reported on a study of one elementary-level school advisor and her work with three consecutive student teachers. Using interviews and document analysis methods, Templeton found that support and challenge were broad mentoring themes within
discussions surrounding the central topics of curriculum, classroom management, and school culture.

Borko and Mayfield (1995) examined the guiding relationships between student teachers and their school advisors. Through the use of interviews and one observation of a debriefing session, the authors focused on 4 middle-school mathematics school advisors. The authors reported that only three of the school advisors believed that they should play an active role in the student teachers' learning, while the remaining school advisor stated that experience itself was the main vehicle for the student teachers' learning. In one example, a school advisor did not identify specific elements for the student teacher to work on because "the things that require improvement simply require time" (p. 508). The authors found that school advisors who believed they could and should play an active role in the process of learning to teach tended to conduct longer (i.e., closer to 30 minutes) and more frequent conferences with the student teacher, and to provide more specific and extensive feedback. Hollingsworth (1989) found that school advisors who intervened with student teachers in this way had a definite positive impact on the student teachers' learning.

Dunn and Taylor (1993) reported on a study where they analyzed the discourse of four experienced and four new school advisors in their work with elementary-school student teachers. For a period of two weeks, one daily debriefing session between each school advisor and their respective student teacher was audio taped. School advisor statements were categorized as consultant advice specific to the lesson, general teacher advice, and solicited or unsolicited. They found that experienced school advisors generally provided more advice (9.6 per meeting) than novice school advisors (6.9 per meeting) but the overall percentage of consultant advice (43%) and general teacher advice (57%) were similar between the two
groups. In addition, only 8% of the statements for both experienced and novice school advisors were unsolicited. Although helpful in depicting a broad sense of the frequency and nature of advice school advisors provided to student teachers, little is known about the effect that such advice had on the student teachers.

Haggarty (1995) utilized content analysis to examine the conversations that took place between five school advisors and their respective student teachers. The author coded data on the dimensions of initiator, source of ideas, participation, and judgements about ideas. She concluded that some school advisors talk far more than had been anticipated, and that such talk was dominated by their own experiences and ideas. As important, the research found that school advisors and student teachers continued to be “very polite” (p. 196) to each other so that any disagreements were either ignored or left unexplored. The study provides little information about when or how many conversations were audio taped for each pairing, and thus provides little insight into whether the nature of the conversations changed as the practicum progressed.

McNay and Badali (1994) interviewed four school advisors and three student teachers about their perceptions of power and authority relationships in the practicum. The authors concluded that there is a reluctance to discuss the power relationship, and that the school advisors were uncomfortable with being both mentors and evaluators. The school advisors aimed for collegial and supportive roles, and were much less aware of issues of power than the student teachers acknowledged. In fact, most of the student teachers “played the game” when their own needs took a backseat to the importance of conforming to their school advisors’ expectations. McNay (1998) confirmed these findings, and argued that in light of
the differences in knowledge, skills, and status between school advisors and student teachers, the power relationships cannot be denied or ignored.

Martin (1997) focused on what actually happens in the classroom when a school advisor is mentoring a student teacher. The researcher utilized video tapes of the student teacher’s teaching, and audio tapes of the coaching conversations between two school advisors and their respective elementary student teachers. The school advisors were not interviewed. In each setting, the school advisor worked with the student teacher for approximately 21 days. Martin reported that one of the school advisors established and sustained an asymmetrical rapport with her student teacher because the school advisor saw herself as the person with experience. In contrast, the other school advisor established a symmetrical rapport with the student teacher, and often stressed examples from her own practice to show the student teacher that she was not much different at that point in her teaching. In this way, the school advisor attended to the student teacher’s emotional and self-efficacy needs by sharing her own experiences in learning to teach.

McNamara (1995) reported that 28 student teachers’ classroom practices were influenced by the advice and support provided to them by their school advisors. Through interviews with the student teachers, it was reported that most of them concurred that the school advisors determined what was to be taught, but that they had great flexibility in how they chose to teach the topic. The implementation of a National Curriculum was cited as the main reason for the tight control exerted on what was to be taught.

Lemma (1993) presented a case study of a school advisor and her experiences over a semester with an elementary student teacher. Data collection entailed two interviews with the school advisor, one interview with the student teacher, the school advisor’s journal, and
audio tapes of three debriefing conferences between the school advisor and the student teacher. The school advisor saw herself in a support role and emphasized the instructional support that she could provide. The school advisor's journal was quite descriptive (i.e., not reflective) and provided little insight into her interactions with the student teacher. Analysis of the debriefing sessions highlighted many discussions about teaching in general, with little focus on specific lessons. As well, the school advisor gave very little direct feedback on the student teacher's performance. The author suggested that this approach was taken because the school advisor perceived that the student teacher was competent, which allowed her to "fade into the background" (p. 339). This is somewhat problematic because in this particular case, a non-directive supervisory approach contributed to the stance of providing the student teacher little feedback.

Stanulis' (1994) study of a school advisor focused on how she made sense of her role in supporting a student teacher learning to teach in an elementary school. Through the use of 6 stimulated recall interviews, 7 structured interviews, and observations, the author concluded that the school advisor encouraged a reflective habit in the student teacher and utilized guided practice to support the student teacher throughout the five-month practicum. This allowed her to slowly reduce her coaching such that she could fade to "a whisper" (p. 35) because the student teacher had internalized the kinds of questions that she should be asking herself. The researcher found that the stimulated recall (i.e., while watching the video tape of the school advisor's debriefing session with the student teacher) acted as a forum for reflection on the process of assisting a student teacher.

Bennett, Dunne, and Howard (1995) aimed to gain a greater understanding of the mentoring process by focusing on the dialogues between school advisors and student
When compared with the university supervisors, the authors found that the school advisors focused their comments largely on craft knowledge. For example, school advisors provided practical tips in 93% of their conversations with student teachers while the university supervisors provided fewer practical tips (i.e., 40%). In addition, school advisors tended to identify things that went wrong in a student teacher’s lesson much more often (i.e., 73% versus 40%). On the contrary, the authors reported that the university supervisors engaged in theoretical issues much more frequently than the school advisors (i.e., 80% versus 33%). These findings have implications for the kind of messages that student teachers receive about the value of the university perspective within the school setting.

Mitchell (1996) examined two case studies of the relationships between school advisors and their student teachers. One post-lesson debriefing session between each school advisor and their respective secondary student teacher was audio taped. She characterized one of the cases as a situation where the school advisor had a clear conception of good teaching and that such information is transmitted to the student teacher. In that case the school advisor spoke 10 times and averaged 254.6 words per turn while the student teacher spoke 9 times and averaged 21 words per turn. In the second case study, the student teacher was a more active participant in discussions about lessons and in the evaluation process. In this case the school advisor spoke 91 times (34.2 words per turn) while the student teacher spoke 90 times (23.7 words per turn). The amount of talk is clearly a function of the school advisors’ perceptions of working with student teachers. The author characterized these different approaches as a “you learn from me” approach and a “let’s find out together” model (p. 48) and developed typical “scripts” that each approach seemed to follow within debriefing sessions. The article is helpful in providing a glimpse of one debriefing session, but it is not
helpful in providing a more longitudinal view and how these approaches affect the practicum relationships.

Kagan and Albertson (1987) examined the subjective accounts of 24 school advisors and their respective student teachers regarding three of their debriefing sessions with the university supervisor. Analysis of the self-reports revealed that conversations centred around five themes: (a) things the student teachers were doing wrong, (b) things the student teachers were doing right, (c) scheduling of meetings, (d) confidence in the student teacher, and (e) conflicts between the school advisor and the student teacher. Interestingly, issues pertaining to lesson planning and subject matter competence were directly related to the confidence that the school advisors had in their student teachers. The authors also reported that it was clear that debriefing meetings were not a uniform experience for all participants. Each person could give a different account or viewpoint of the meeting. In addition, findings suggest that student teachers are hypersensitive to any discussions of their shortcomings, and in this case, they often sensed that a focus on weaknesses seemed to dominate all sessions.

**Summary**

The studies in this section have taken on the challenge of probing deeper into understanding the practicum relationships between school advisors and student teachers. It was found that the school advisors' perceptions of what constitutes teaching, learning, and learning to teach was a determining factor in how they worked with student teachers. Those who believed that student teachers only need access to a real-life classroom took a non-directive stance in their supervision and provided minimal feedback. Those who believed that student teachers were there to learn from the school advisors took a directive supervisory
stance and provided ample amounts of critique. The student teachers assumed a passive stance and quietly agreed with the school advisors’ directives.

The majority of the studies do not rely on a theoretical framework about supervision to guide the research method. Those that do draw upon the concepts of reflection to inform their research, report the difficulties in encouraging school advisors to engage the student teachers in reflective thought. It becomes apparent in many of the studies that there is little mention or linking to the university-based courses.

With the exception of Martin (1997), Lemma (1993), and Stanulis (1994), the studies of school advisors’ work with student teachers focused on a short time frame which provides little sense of changes in the school advisor/student teacher relationship as the practicum progressed. The three studies that spanned the entire practicum focused on school advisors at the elementary-school level and varied in the kind of data that were collected. All three studies utilized audio/video tape data of debriefing sessions, but varied in terms of other data that were collected. Martin’s (1997) study did not involve interviewing, Lemma’s (1993) study involved two interviews with the school advisor and one interview with the student teacher, and Stanulis’ (1994) study extensively used interviews and structured interviews with the school advisor. Lemma’s (1993) study required the school advisor to maintain a journal while the other two studies did not.

My study aims to provide detail-rich case studies of two school advisors as they work with their respective secondary student teachers for the entire practicum. Data collection will include audio tapes of debriefing sessions, numerous interviews with the school advisors and with the student teachers, and reflective journals from all participants. The results of this
The studies of school advisors that have been presented in this chapter have been predominantly empirical in nature and few have established a conceptual framework to guide the research. This is evidence that much of the initial groundwork remains to be done within this emerging field of study. My own study will contribute one of the early depictions of the school advisor/student teacher relationship as the practicum progresses. Only once there is a firm empirical understanding of the complexities of the school advisors' role within the practicum, can we begin the search for appropriate theories that can inform conceptual frameworks in order to account for and extend our conceptions of practicum supervision.

Although my study is clearly not an attempt to make claims about how the current state of affairs corresponds with a particular theory, the conceptual framework of this study is theory-informed. This final section of this chapter presents some background literature that informed my development of the conceptual framework for this study.

At the most basic level, the practicum setting is the context where student teachers attempt to learn how to teach, and the school advisor is the primary contact person designated to assist them with the task. The student teachers' central goal is to learn while the school advisors' responsibility is to assist them in that learning. As such, I believe it is fruitful to cast the student teachers' objectives for the practicum as an issue of curriculum. I draw on Schwab's (1962) commonplaces of curriculum (i.e., the teacher, the learner, the subject
matter, and the milieu) as a starting point for making sense of the complexities inherent to curriculum.

The definition of curriculum that I use for this study centres around the importance of Schwab's commonplaces. Specifically, curriculum is what teachers convey to students in light of the abilities of the learners, the nature of the subject matter, and the contextual factors that impact on the classroom. Curriculum focuses on what is intended for the learner as well as how such intentions are conveyed. This study utilizes these commonplaces to understand the complexities of the practicum by focusing attention on the different learners (i.e., the students and the student teachers), the different subject matter (i.e., science and learning to teach science), and the different milieu (the nature of schools and the nature of teacher education). This is developed more fully in Chapter Three.

Schwab (1969) argued that theoretical constructions are inappropriate to curriculum issues that focus on problems of actual teaching and learning. He argued that "theory, by its very character, does not and cannot take account of all the matters that are crucial to questions of what, who, and how to teach" (p. 1). For this reason, Schwab believed that curricular practice is a very practical act. He believed that differences in outcome, subject matter, origin of problems, and methods characterize the practical from the theoretic. The outcome of the practical is a decision that is a choice among alternatives that can only apply to the case for which it is sought. The subject matter of the practical is something that is taken as concrete yet is highly liable to unexpected change. Grimmett and Ratzlaff's (1986) findings about the expectations that participants had for school advisors showed there was a marked difference between their results and those reported in a U.S.-based study done 15 years earlier.
Schwab believed that practical problems “arise from states of affairs in relation to ourselves” (p. 3) when we recognize that the current conditions are not satisfying or fulfilling. As we gain more information the problem becomes more clear, and the process shifts to a search for solutions. Deliberation is a complex and fluid process aimed at attaining the desired or altering what is desired.

Connelly and Clandinin (1988) embraced the practical and argued that curriculum is “something experienced in situations” (p. 7). Situations are composed of persons that are interacting in an immediate environment, and at all times there is a dynamic interaction among persons, things, and processes. Within the context of schooling, each classroom situation grows out of some preceding classroom situation, which in turn leads to a future situation. Situations have directionality such that “the past shapes the future through the medium of a situation, and the future shapes the past through the stories we tell to account for and explain our situation” (p. 9). My research study aims to capture events as they unfold in situations, and how both the school advisors and student teachers draw on their practical knowledge to move situations to desired goals.

Schön (1983) argued that practice is essentially a sequence of problem-solving episodes where it is the situations and not the theory that is important. There are no general theoretical solutions because there are only solutions to particular local problems as they emerge. Schön characterized the dilemma within professional schools as one of “rigor or relevance” (p. 42) where he typified theory as the safe high ground overlooking the messy swamp, yet it is in the swamp that the difficult problems of practice can be found. Problem setting and problem solving are at the heart of reflective practice, and the swamp of the practicum is the context for this study.
CHAPTER 3
The Research Method and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

This chapter describes the context of the study and provides details about the larger research project in which this study is situated. It also describes how the participants for the study were selected, and highlights the various ways in which data were collected. The chapter concludes by drawing attention to the conceptual framework that was used for data analysis. More specifically, I take the stance that a clearer understanding of the complexities of the practicum setting can be gained by looking at the practicum from a two-leveled curriculum perspective.

Context of the Study

This research was a study of two cases of school advisors and their assigned student teachers, and their work together during the 13-week winter practicum. In the first case study (depicted in Chapter 4), Brian (the school advisor) worked with Amy at Southwood Secondary School, and, in the second case study (depicted in Chapter 5), Brenda (the school advisor) worked with Nancy at Harding Secondary School. The names of the schools and of all persons identified in this study are pseudonyms. Both schools are situated within the same urban municipality and are under the jurisdiction of the same School District. Amy and Nancy were both secondary-school science student teachers enrolled in the teacher education program at the local university. This study was situated within the larger context of the
Science Teacher Education Practicum Project (STEPP) which is described in the next section.

Each of the university’s practicum placements involves the additional participation of a faculty advisor, and, in these case studies, the faculty advisors were Jane (at Southwood Secondary School), and Alvin (at Harding Secondary School). Faculty advisors typically visit the schools on a weekly basis to discuss issues with the school advisor and student teacher, and to observe and discuss lessons with the student teacher. Faculty advisors also co-ordinate the timing of “triad” meetings where all three of the practicum participants (i.e., the faculty advisor, the school advisor, and the student teacher) discuss formative and summative evaluations of the student teacher’s performance. Since this study focuses on two case studies of the school advisors’ work with the student teachers, I acknowledge that the faculty advisors play a role in the practicum, but have consciously chosen to focus on how the school advisors perceive and enact their roles with their respective student teachers.

**The Context of STEPP**

The Science Teacher Education Practicum Project (STEPP), which began in the Fall of 1991 and operated for three years, was a collaborative science practicum project that focused around the prevalent problems associated with initiating prospective science teachers into the varied social practices of the teaching profession (Erickson et al., 1994). The primary purposes of the project were:

a) To provide an opportunity to increase the lines of communication between the university teacher education program and the school advisors.

b) To provide an opportunity for all project members to engage in productive discussions about teaching and learning how to teach.

c) To explore and document a variety of ideas and suggestions for improving the practicum experience.
d) To develop and document some models of coaching student teachers.

e) To obtain from the school advisors their personal and collective wisdom regarding the supervision of student teachers.

f) To obtain from the student teachers a better understanding of the problems and dilemmas of learning how to teach.

STEPP involved the participation of university personnel (i.e., faculty researchers, faculty advisors,¹ and graduate research assistants) --- many of whom served in multiple roles, school advisors from three secondary-school science departments, and the student teachers assigned to the school advisors. All participants shared a common interest in science teaching at the secondary-school level. When the project began, specific school science departments were approached and asked to participate. These science departments were chosen for their proximity to the university, for the fact that each school often took several science student teachers, and for the familiarity that the principal investigator had with some teachers in each of the science departments. In the early fall, an on-campus meeting was held with the student teachers assigned to the school advisors where they were informed about the project and asked to participate.²

All group members (usually numbering between 20-25 people) participated within two venues aimed at promoting and nurturing communication and interaction with the purpose of improving the practicum experience for all participants. The main venue was the monthly group meetings where participants discussed both specific teaching practices being attempted by the student teachers and more general issues in education that were germane to all participants. Some of the meetings focused on topics such as: (a) teaching approaches for

¹ The practicum office arranged for these faculty advisors to be assigned to the participating science departments, as part of the faculty advisor's supervision load. A typical faculty advisor supervised 12 student teachers and, thus, was often assigned to several schools.
² If a student teacher chose not to participate, he or she was told that the practicum office would re-assign him or her to another school. This scenario of re-assignment never did happen.
enhancing student learning, (b) subject matter planning sessions, (c) risk taking by practicum participants, and (d) dilemmas in teacher education. The meetings usually involved a combination of large- and small-group discussions depending on the appropriateness of such groupings. A second venue consisted of in-school meetings of the practicum triad (i.e., student teacher, school advisor, and faculty advisor) at approximately weekly intervals throughout the 13-week winter practicum. The support and feedback activities within the triad were typical of what all student teachers in the university teacher education program receive.

Although the make-up of the group changed each year with the addition of new student teachers and some alteration in terms of university personnel and school advisors, the two venues were the common features present in each year of STEPP with the following exceptions. In year one, all of the school advisors were interviewed to gain some insight about how they perceived their work with student teachers. These interviews were not conducted in subsequent years. As well, another doctoral student was conducting his research with the STEPP student teachers who volunteered to participate in his study. The school advisors received an honorarium for participating in the first year of STEPP. This honorarium was discontinued in subsequent years. In year two, this study was being conducted with the STEPP school advisors and their respective student teachers who volunteered to participate in my study. In year three, to make the student teachers' participation in STEPP truly voluntary, all of the secondary-school science student teachers were informed about STEPP interested volunteers were invited to attend an information meeting with the university personnel. Those student teachers who were chosen from the eventual pool of volunteers were then assigned to the STEPP school advisors.
Selection of Participants

The data for this study were collected during year two of STEPP. The school advisors from three secondary schools (many of whom were involved in year one of the project) were approached at the beginning of year two and invited to participate. Thus, the school advisors had already agreed to participate in STEPP and were then asked if they wanted to participate in my study as well. Two of the school advisors expressed their interest in participating in my study. I then approached the student teachers who were to be assigned to them to invite the student teachers to participate in my study. The student teachers were not 'selected,' since they were assigned to their respective school advisors through the standard procedure used by the practicum office. All of the affected student teachers had already been informed about and had agreed to participate in STEPP. Thus, I was making an additional request to gain their consent to participate in the present study.

In light of the time needed for the anticipated data collection required for the study, I intended on researching only two pairings of school advisors and their respective student teachers. Both school advisors had participated in STEPP since its inception, Brenda as a school advisor in year one and Brian as a district representative. Another criterion used was my desire to conduct the case studies in two different STEPP schools so that it was not perceived within the STEPP group as being exclusive to one school. As well, even though two case studies could not possibly account for all gender possibilities of school advisor/student teacher arrangements, I felt it was desirable to have one male and one female school advisor.
Data Gathering and Analysis

I was interested in how knowledge is presented, shared, controlled, negotiated, understood, and misunderstood by school advisors and student teachers (Edwards & Mercer, 1987). The context of the specific situation plays a role in the acquisition of meaning and since school advisors have different histories, ideas and values, and thus, different perceptions of the situation, their acquisition of meaning is socially and culturally based (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989). Thus, the context of a situation becomes critical, and I needed to try to attend to all features of the experience in an holistic manner (Sherman & Webb, 1988).

The intent of this study was to document and gain some understanding of how school advisors worked with student teachers within the 13-week winter practicum. I was interested in how school advisors interacted with their student teachers as they undertook the task of learning how to teach while working in a school setting. I also recognized that the different participants may have had different expectations and perceptions about the same event. With these considerations in mind, I believed that the research questions of this study could best be answered using a case study approach. Case study research is "particularly relevant to the study of teacher education" because of the obvious importance of understanding complexities and contextual factors (Lee & Yarger, 1996, p. 25).

In using a case study approach, the researcher is immersed in the dynamics of a single social entity and able to uncover events often otherwise missed. Yin (1989) described the case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). Case study research is
often a process of discovery rather than one of using methods that impose themselves upon the situation (Biddle & Anderson, 1986).

With the conceptual framework as a guide, to be more completely described later, I utilized an inductive approach to data analysis. Inductive data analysis in case study research consists of “examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of [the] study” (Yin, 1989, p. 105). Evidence for case studies may come from a variety of sources (Yin, 1989). The evidence “may be interviews, observations, documents, unobtrusive measures, non-verbal cues, or any other qualitative or quantitative information pools” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202).

This study consists of two case studies of school advisors working with their respective student teachers during the 1993 winter practicum (i.e., January 1993 - April 1993). In each case study I attempted to explore the complexities of the practicum setting with the intention of gaining insights into how the school advisors perceived and enacted their roles with their respective student teachers.

Each case study involved the collection of several forms of audio-taped data that included: (a) debriefing sessions between the school advisor and student teacher, (b) interviews with the school advisor, (c) interviews with the student teacher, and (d) lessons taught by the student teacher. I was never present when the school advisor had debriefing sessions with the student teacher, or when the student teacher audio taped her lessons. All debriefing sessions and interviews were subsequently transcribed. I used the audio tapes of lessons taught by the student teacher strictly to ‘get a feel’ for the kinds of lessons that the school advisor and student teacher discussed in debriefing sessions.
Each case study also involved the collection of several forms of paper data that included: (a) all “anecdotal” reports written by the school advisor (which are part of any practicum at the university), and (b) separate journals that the school advisor and student teacher were asked to maintain throughout the practicum. I encouraged the participants to make frequent entries (i.e., at least twice per week) into their separate journals, and to focus on their perceptions, queries, and concerns related to the dynamics of the school advisor/student teacher relationship. I collected all journals at the conclusion of the practicum and subsequently interviewed each participant to discuss his or her individual journal.

The audio-taped lessons, debriefing sessions, and anecdotal reports were used to provide me with a rich pedagogical context to stimulate conversations during interviews. In addition, the numerous data sources were used to ensure that I was accessing clear and consistent perceptions from each participant, which increased the confidence in the reliability of the case studies. Most of the interviews that I conducted could be characterized as ‘structured conversations’ and were typically 45-60 minutes in duration. In year one of STEPP, I conducted interviews with all school advisors (including Brenda) about their perceptions of the role of the school advisor. Brenda’s year one interview was added to the data for this study, and Brian was subsequently asked the same type of questions in his first interview. Table 1 highlights the variety and amount of data that were collected from Brian and Amy.

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3 Brenda found it easier to audio tape her thoughts rather than to write them in a journal.
Table 1. Data collected from Brian and Amy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May-July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of debriefing</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of interviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brian - 2</td>
<td>Brian - 1</td>
<td>Brian - 1</td>
<td>Brian - 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amy - 2</td>
<td>Amy - 1</td>
<td>Amy - 1</td>
<td>Amy - 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of anecdotal</td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of journal entries</td>
<td></td>
<td>Brian - 1</td>
<td>Brian - 9</td>
<td>Brian - 8</td>
<td>Brian - 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Amy - 10</td>
<td>Amy - 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As will become evident in Chapter Five, in the case of Brenda and Nancy, the relationship deteriorated to the point that Nancy was transferred to another school to conclude her practicum. Both Brenda and Nancy were eager to continue their interviews with me, in our mutual goal of trying to gain some insights into why this practicum placement was not successful. Thus, the case of Brenda and Nancy serves as an important contribution to this study, since, under normal circumstances, it is rare to have research access to such events as they unfold. Not surprisingly, the amount of data collected from Brenda and Nancy, as summarized in Table 2, is not nearly as extensive.

Table 2. Data collected from Brenda and Nancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data source</th>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
<th>May-July</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of lessons</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of debriefing</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sessions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of interviews*</td>
<td>Brenda - 1</td>
<td>Nancy - 1</td>
<td>Brenda - 1</td>
<td>Nancy - 1</td>
<td>Brenda - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of anecdotal</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># of journal entries</td>
<td>Brenda - 1</td>
<td>Brenda - 4</td>
<td>Brenda - 1</td>
<td>Nancy - 1</td>
<td>Nancy - 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nancy - 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: I also used Brenda’s year one STEPP interview
The net result of the data collection was over 1,500 pages of transcript, over 150 pages of journal entries, and over 500 pages of additional paper data. More important, the various data sources corresponded to each other such that statements made in journal entries were often repeated in debriefing sessions and in interviews. This overlap becomes evident as one reads the case studies and realizes that certain issues are often supported by quotes from various data sources. There was also a high correlation between the substance of debriefing sessions and the anecdotal reports that corresponded to the lessons that were being discussed. As well, there were consistent answers to similar questions that I asked in my interviews throughout the study. My final interviews with participants about entries in their journals corresponded to earlier statements that they had made in debriefing sessions and in interviews. By maintaining multiple data sources, conducting follow-up interviews to discuss the participants’ journal entries, and asking similar questions in interviews throughout the study, the trustworthiness of the data should be quite high.

Although I was also a faculty advisor for student teachers outside of STEPP, I participated in STEPP as a graduate research assistant. The expertise that I brought to the project included my experiences from five years of secondary school science teaching, my experiences as a school advisor, and from my experiences as a faculty advisor. During year one of STEPP, I was responsible for conducting interviews with all of the school advisors. During this research study (which occurred in year two of STEPP), I spoke with participants on the phone to schedule interviews, and I also served as an empathetic ear to concerns that were raised during these conversations. Participants were aware of the fact that I would treat

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4 My teaching assistant duties entailed being a faculty advisor for three student teachers not involved with STEPP, although one of my student teachers was shifted to Southwood Secondary school in March so she could get some exposure with junior-level courses. Once this student teacher started working at a STEPP school, she was invited to attend the remaining STEPP meetings for the year.
conversations as confidential. In situations where I was aware of differences in perceptions and expectations between a school advisor and a student teacher, I always advised the person to raise the issues with the other person. With the student teachers, the conversations during phone calls and interviews would always touch on difficulties they were experiencing in their classroom teaching. In those instances, I was not reticent to share some of the advice that I would typically give to the student teachers whom I supervised as a faculty advisor. With the school advisors, I would share advice that I would typically give to the school advisors with whom I work.

The Conceptual Framework

As highlighted in Chapter Two, within the learning to teach literature there, are few studies that have focused on how school advisors interact with student teachers. As well, through conversations with other faculty advisors and based on my own experiences, there is little evidence that models of supervision and observation regimens espoused within the clinical supervision literature are used by school advisors or faculty advisors. In light of these two factors, I felt that it was more important to understand how school advisors are working with student teachers rather than looking at how school advisors are not using existing models of supervision. As a result, I felt that what was needed was a conceptual framework that could serve as a useful heuristic for making sense of how school advisors work with student teachers in the process of helping them learn to teach in the practicum setting.

In fact, the majority of the models of clinical supervision are aimed more towards the supervision of classroom teachers by senior administrators, although they are advanced as models that can be used with student teachers.
Conceptualizing the Practicum as a Curriculum

By casting the practicum as a setting in which the student teacher is attempting to learn about both the 'in-class' and 'out-of-class' experiences of teaching, it is important to recognize both the cultural aspects of teaching associated with becoming a member of a profession and the knowledge and skill aspects of teaching related to competency within the classroom. In its simplest form, the practicum is the setting where school advisors work with student teachers to help them with the 'curriculum of learning to teach.' It is this curriculum framework that I used to analyze the data, and the explication of the curriculum framework is the subject for the remainder of this chapter.

Levels of Curriculum

If one takes the view that what a student teacher needs to learn about teaching is a form of curriculum, then a useful way of trying to understand the school advisor/student teacher relationship in learning to teach is through visualizing the practicum as a layering of Schwab's (1962) conception of the commonplaces of curriculum. According to Schwab, there are four commonplaces of curriculum: the teacher, the learner, the subject matter, and the milieu. For example, in a typical science classroom, the teacher would be the person instructing the class, the learners would be the students in the class, the subject matter would be the content/substance of a lesson, and the milieu would be the various contexts that influence what happens in the science classroom. These contextual influences operate at many levels, such as the classroom, the science department, the school, the community, and so on. Table 3 illustrates this first level of curriculum that would occur in a school advisor’s classroom before and after the winter practicum.
Table 3. The school advisor's normal classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER</th>
<th>LEARNER</th>
<th>SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>MILIEU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>school advisor</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>classroom, department, school, community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When this conception of curriculum is extended to the context of a practicum setting, the teacher is the school advisor, the learner is the student teacher, the subject matter is the issue of 'learning how to be a science teacher' (both inside and outside of the classroom), and the milieu includes the specific contextual influences of the university and the teaching profession. Table 4 illustrates this second level relationship between the school advisor and the student teacher during the winter practicum.

Table 4. The school advisor's work with a student teacher.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER</th>
<th>LEARNER</th>
<th>SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>MILIEU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>school advisor</td>
<td>student teacher</td>
<td>learning to be a science teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>university, teaching profession</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the practicum, the school advisor is still the person ultimately responsible for the learning of the students, but he or she also has an additional responsibility of working with the student teacher. More important, some of the student teacher's level 2 learning (i.e., the 'in-class' experiences) directly impacts on the nature of the students' learning in the science classroom, even though the school advisor is still ultimately responsible for what happens in that science classroom. That is, the student teacher's learning directly affects the students' classroom learning. Thus, the school advisor attends to two levels of curriculum that are occurring simultaneously --- one level of curriculum for the student teacher's
learning of how to teach science and one level of curriculum for the students’ learning of the subject matter of science. Table 5 represents these two levels of curriculum that are simultaneously occurring within the practicum setting.

Table 5. The two levels of curriculum in the practicum.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TEACHER</th>
<th>LEARNER</th>
<th>SUBJECT MATTER</th>
<th>MILIEU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>school advisor</td>
<td>student teacher</td>
<td>learning to be a science teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 1*</td>
<td>student teacher</td>
<td>students</td>
<td>science content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: The school advisor is still responsible for what happens at this level.

In many ways, the ‘simplicity’ of conceptualizing the practicum as two levels of curriculum is illustrative of the complexity associated with learning how to teach, since the school advisor and the student teacher take on two distinct roles. The student teacher takes on distinct roles of being both a learner and teacher and must make sense of how the information he or she is getting from being a ‘learner’ of teaching (i.e., level 2) applies to his or her role as a ‘teacher’ of students (i.e., level 1). As well, since one’s classroom teaching experiences can also inform one’s learning as a teacher, then the reverse is also true. Thus, each level of curriculum informs and is informed by the other.

The school advisor has the responsibility for the student teacher’s learning of the knowledge needed to become a teacher (i.e., level 2), yet he or she is also responsible for the students’ learning of the subject matter. Since the primary responsibility of all school advisors is the students whom they teach, and, since taking a student teacher is an ‘add on’ to this role, tensions may arise when the school advisor believes that, in certain circumstances,
the student teacher’s learning is deemed more important than the students’ classroom learning, or vice versa.

The school advisor and the student teacher are engaged in their own personal growth and acquisition of knowledge from each other throughout the practicum experience; however, it is critical to note that the school advisor/student teacher relationship is not a simple hierarchical organization of authority. This school advisor/student teacher pairing is a dialectic in which both parties are continuously involved in the teaching/learning process. Often student teachers come equipped with current practical and theoretical knowledge that can be shared with the school advisor. As well, persons will bring to the practicum their own set of personal strengths and insights that can create a rich interchange within the pairing. As was highlighted in the literature review, many school advisors saw the practicum as a positive experience that informed their own professional growth.

As in any discussion of curriculum, the subject matter to be learned is not solely an issue of what should be taught, but, just as important, it is an issue of how something is taught. Specific to the curriculum framework, how something is taught (i.e., the particular strategies used to convey the subject matter) is captured within the relationship between the teacher and the learner. When viewed this way, good teaching is more than just knowing what the learner needs to be able to do and understand, but it also entails the ability to convey subject matter in a way that attends to the learner’s background, needs, and abilities. Good teaching also requires monitoring of the process so that the teacher is aware of the ability of the learner to both perform and understand the tasks inherent to the subject matter. In my work with students, there are three questions that I address: (1) what is the pedagogical objective that I am trying to convey to the students?, (2) how am I getting at the pedagogical
objective with my students?, and (3) how do I know that the students understand and perform the tasks associated with the pedagogical objective? Figure 1 is a visual summary of the three questions of curriculum implementation that I attend to in my work with students.

Figure 1. The three questions of curriculum implementation.

![Diagram showing the three questions of curriculum implementation: Pedagogical Objective (1), the teaching strategy (2), monitoring of performance and understanding (3).]

Although I use these three questions to guide my work with students, they are just as applicable to the context of a school advisor working with a student teacher. Specific to the curriculum of learning to teach, the three questions become: (1) what is the pedagogical objective that the school advisors are trying to convey to the student teachers?, (2) how are the school advisors getting at the pedagogical objective with the student teachers?, and (3) how do the school advisors know when the student teachers can understand and perform the tasks associated with the pedagogical objective? I will be using these three questions in the analysis of the two cases in Chapter Six.

When the three questions of curriculum implementation are looked at in conjunction with the two levels of curriculum, the analysis in Chapter Six highlights the complexities associated with learning to teach and also focuses attention on the perceived elements of teaching (i.e., the pedagogical objective) that a school advisor sees as necessary for entry into the profession. In addition, a school advisor's expectations and perceptions of the student...
teacher’s performance occurs at both levels of curriculum since what typically is intended to be learned is monitored within the classroom setting. In this way, the conceptual framework attends to both developmental and contextual features associated with the student teacher’s growth as a teacher and the school advisor’s influence on this growth.

**Summary**

This chapter has highlighted the context of this study and has situated it within the STEPP research project. It has also described the methods used for the selection of participants and the data that were collected for this study. The second half of the chapter illustrated the development of the conceptual framework where I have conceptualized learning to teach in the practicum setting in terms of a curriculum framework. The curriculum framework is comprised of a conceptualization of two levels of curriculum and an articulation of three questions of curriculum implementation. The following three chapters illustrate this framework in use. Chapter Four and Chapter Five present the two separate case studies and foreshadow some of the upcoming analysis in Chapter Six. The usefulness of the curriculum framework will be demonstrated in the analysis of Chapter Six as I use the same framework to look at two diverse cases.
CHAPTER 4
The Case of Brian and Amy

Introduction
This chapter is a case study of the practicum experiences of Brian (the school advisor) and Amy (the student teacher) as they unfolded over the 13-week winter practicum. The chapter begins by highlighting Brian’s perceptions of his role as a school advisor working with a student teacher and is followed by a depiction of how the 13-week practicum evolved. It concludes by highlighting some of Brian’s and Amy’s reflections about the practicum experience.

Background
Brian had qualifications that made him an ideal person to serve as a school advisor. At the time of the study, Brian had been teaching for 17 years, and he was an experienced school advisor who had already worked with 12 student teachers in his own classroom. He has a B.Sc. in geological sciences, as well as an M.Ed. degree. His past four years provided him with a host of additional experiences in roles outside of those typical for high school teachers. Specifically, he was seconded to the local university for two years where he taught pre-service methods courses in intermediate science and senior geology. His duties also included being a laboratory instructor in a generic “Principles of Teaching” course for student teachers. He also served as a Faculty Advisor and was responsible for providing support, direction, and evaluations for 12 student teachers each year. Thus, Brian’s recent experiences provided him with a strong understanding of the university’s program and a clear
conception of the role played by the university-based practicum advisor. This experience is in stark contrast to most school advisors’ minimal level of knowledge about their respective teacher education programs, as highlighted in the findings of the research literature on school advisors.

During the past two years Brian had served terms as a science consultant and a secondary consultant in curriculum and instruction for the School District. During year one of STEPP, Brian attended the meetings as an interested person in the School District. This particular study occurred during year two of STEPP. At that time, the School District no longer had the finances to maintain consultant positions and, thus, had recently placed Brian in a teaching position at Southwood Secondary School where he had not taught before. The school has a broad diversity of students where a large number of the students would typically enter the work force after the completion of secondary school, while fewer would go on to post-secondary schooling.

Amy was particularly looking forward to working with Brian because of their mutual background and shared interest in geology. Prior to entering the teacher education program, Amy had earned a B.Sc. and M.Sc. in geology. She had been a practising geologist for two years and had also taught a third-year paleontology course at the local university. Amy already had life experiences that placed her in the role of being a qualified professional (albeit in a different field). Unlike many education students who progress immediately into a B.Ed. program after completing an earlier undergraduate degree, Amy entered the teacher education program after completing some graduate work and after gaining some experience in the world of work. As such, Amy was several years older than many of her peers within the program.
Brian’s Perceptions of Being a School Advisor

Although I had many informal conversations with Brian during the previous year regarding STEPP, we had not engaged in any substantive discussions about the role of the school advisor. At the beginning of my formal data collection, I interviewed Brian on February 2 regarding his perceptions about his role in working with student teachers.¹ The scheduled day for this interview coincided with Amy’s first day of practicum teaching.

As a school advisor, Brian saw modeling as “critical” (p. 5) because he believed that one has to be able to demonstrate an instructional procedure (for example) in order to get that instructional procedure across to the student teacher. He also liked to focus on the “big picture” (p. 6) about why teachers teach in the way that they do, and how this shows off the teacher’s “beliefs about teaching and learning, and the nature of science, and the purpose of evaluation” (p. 6). He was quite conscious of not wanting to “indoctrinate anybody in the way I think and feel” (p. 7) but believed that conversations with the student teacher around such issues as assessment were still quite fruitful. Even though he didn’t like the Ministry of Education’s current emphasis on a narrow scope of assessment practices used with students, conversing with the student teacher provided a “chance to talk about different ways of doing things” (p. 7).

Brian firmly believed that, when working with a student teacher, it is important to address issues in a reactive way rather than in a proactive fashion. More specifically, he stated that the value of what he could contribute to his student teacher’s understanding of how to best manage kids once he “saw the concern in her eyes” (p. 9) in the context of classroom teaching. During the two weeks prior to the start of the new semester, he

¹ All quotes within this section of the chapter refer to the February 2 interview with Brian.
“couldn’t see the point to start talking about how to manage kids when we didn’t have any students around” (p. 9). Thus, Brian saw the issues of learning to teach as context-driven because:

during your practicum you can have ample opportunity to focus your attention and discussions on a whole variety of things, and particularly those sorts of things which are going to be important will come up. (pp. 14-15)

Although Brian contended that student teachers need to experience the concern before it can be addressed by the school advisor, he was not an advocate of allowing student teachers to entirely find their own way. It is not a case of “simply saying, sure you need a place to teach for 13 weeks... well, you can use my kids” (p. 18) because that assumes that “they should know how to teach when they get here” (p. 18). Brian saw student teaching as having a place to practice what had been learned in the university methods courses, in the safe environment of having “some other kinds of support systems in place and someone who is prepared to give some pointers” (p. 18). In addition, Brian indicated that he and Amy had discussed what topics needed to be covered, the sequence of those topics, and an approximate estimate of how many hours or classes that she could spend on any given topic.

When prompted further on the issue of being reactive rather than proactive, Brian expressed confidence in Amy’s abilities based on her performance during the two-week fall pre-practicum observation. But, unlike his assessment of Amy’s abilities, Brian believed that when some student teachers arrive they don’t know where to start and therefore need a lot of structure and control to begin with. He was not an advocate of letting a student teacher try some things until he or she finds something that works because:

it’s not like putting pieces of a puzzle together, and if they don’t fit, there’s no damage done. Here if they don’t fit, you’ve got some trouble and you’re going to have a reputation in your next 12 and a half weeks. It carries with you. (p. 24)

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2 Ellipses points are being used to indicate conversational pauses rather than omissions of text.
He strongly believed that a student teacher “can’t afford to screw up at the very beginning” (p. 24).

When asked what characteristics good school advisors have that extend beyond being a classroom teacher, Brian responded that “it’s a question that I’ve often asked... I don’t know” (p. 17). He went on to suggest that there are some excellent teachers who are extremely good at what they do yet are “completely inarticulate about how they do it” (p. 17). His prior background in education graduate work became evident when he continued by saying:

You know, Schöen goes on about that. I guess what is needed is somebody who looks at, and is able to talk about teaching as a science and as a set of skills, and is able to see and recognize the various components of it, and is disposed to think and talk about. (p. 18)

In addition, he believed that a good school advisor is a person who is “willing to experiment with new things” (p. 18) because such a stance suggests that there is more than one correct way to do something. In addition, Brian stated that a good school advisor is able to identify instances where “the little problem that you can see in the context of a classroom is perhaps an expression of something bigger that is missing” (p. 18). Another characteristic that Brian saw as integral to any position of leadership, such as the role of a school advisor, is that “you can’t just adopt the same paradigm all the time with every client” (p. 24). Thus, each student teacher is seen as unique from other student teachers with whom he has worked, and one approach cannot be used with all individuals.

During the interview, I introduced Brian to the idea of thinking about learning to teach as a ‘curriculum’ and to begin articulating what sorts of items would be in such a ‘syllabus of learning to teach’ for a student teacher. Brian responded that such a curriculum would not be linear, sequential, or hierarchical but would be best defined as a “controlled
"serendipity" (p. 20) where the school advisor has to “build in the opportunities as they present themselves” (p. 21). Upon further reflection, he identified some larger units within the ‘syllabus of learning to teach’, such as classroom management, planning, and assessment.

We went on to discuss the issue of assessing student teachers, within the context of deciding whether a student teacher had met the outcomes of the ‘syllabus of learning to teach.’ While discussing the example of classroom management, Brian stated that:

if management is unresolved after six or seven weeks, I don’t know, we’ll hammer away at that until either we get some considerable improvement or until we run out of time and have to make some sort of summative evaluation. That’s the reality there. (p. 21)

Brian also recalled incidents while he was a faculty advisor where there seemed to be little improvement in a student teacher’s problem areas. In those cases if “certain fundamentals are not in place, then we have to be more directive. We have to say ‘do this’” (p. 22).

Brian found the researcher’s idea of thinking about being a school advisor in terms of helping a student teacher to grasp the curriculum of learning to teach as a powerful way of conceptualizing the practicum setting. Later that day, he wrote in his journal that “the notion of the school advisor as playing out a curriculum is a wonderful concept that will earn some thought.” As will be shown throughout the rest of this case, many of Brian’s subsequent journal entries and several of our interviews continued to return to this idea of the ‘syllabus of learning to teach.’

In addition to the ‘syllabus of learning to teach,’ a second component of this curriculum perspective that I introduced to Brian during the interview was to visualize the student teacher’s classroom as having two different syllabi at play. Specifically, at one level, there is the students’ learning of the material in the ‘subject matter syllabus,’ and at a second level there is the student teachers’ learning of the ‘learning to teach syllabus.’ In subsequent
interviews, my questions also centred on the ways that Brian saw his own views of teaching and learning as similar and different within the context of each of the two syllabi.

When asked whether there are times when one client’s learning (i.e., the students or the student teacher) is more important than the other client’s learning, Brian responded that:

on balance, one shouldn’t be sacrificed for the other. There are times when the student teacher has to have some room to explore and some allowance for mistakes. (p. 24)

He admitted that a student teacher’s mistakes would directly affect the students but, in the short term, little harm would be done. He added that “it’s not as if they’re learning things here that if they don’t master it, they’ll never lead fulfilling lives” (p. 25) in an effort to highlight the fact that some mistakes (e.g., subject matter omissions or errors) have little impact on the ‘big picture’ of students’ lives.

Brian followed up by saying that certain mistakes can only go on for a certain period of time before he would have to make interventions. He highlighted the fact that “my number one responsibility is my job as a teacher of students in this school and in this community” (p. 26). He illustrated a potential scenario where:

you’re starting to get the sense that kids are getting agitated and things aren’t purposeful and they’re really not getting anything from this and their time is being wasted. Then you start raising the concerns of their parents and you get some pointed phone calls asking “What the hell is going on in that school?” (p. 25)

To avoid such scenarios, Brian stated that he needs to know that the student teacher is continuing to improve. When prompted to identify what sorts of things he is looking for as evidence that the student teacher is coming along, Brian listed criteria such as: (a) being able to successfully implement changes, (b) willing to try different things, (c) displaying a greater ease, and (d) displaying growth in self-confidence. As a final point, he commented on Amy’s first day of teaching and stated that he was “starting to see her becoming nervous and
unsettled and uneasy, which is quite normal. I wouldn’t like for that to continue for very long” (p. 27).

The Winter Practicum

The university’s one-year teacher education program was composed of fall course work (including subject-specific methods courses), a 13-week winter practicum, and a spring/summer on-campus period for additional course work. For a two-week period in November, the student teachers participate in a pre-practicum observation period with the school advisor with whom they had been assigned for the winter practicum. My formal data collection did not begin until the start of the winter practicum.

Amy’s first exposure to Brian came in the fall during the pre-practicum observation period. During this two-week orientation, Amy spent a fair amount of time observing Brian (and other teachers) in their teaching. She was able to gain some familiarity with the students, although the ones she would teach during the winter practicum would not be the same ones (because of the semester change). As well, during the second week, Amy became a more active participant in Brian’s classes by teaching small parts of specific lessons. Towards the end of the second week, she was given the opportunity to teach a few complete lessons. Brian’s impressions of these two weeks were quite positive, and he was looking forward to working with Amy in the winter practicum. Brian recalled that:

I gave her a piece of a lesson to do, just a concept, just 20 minutes. She came in and she did it. She organized it really well, and she was well prepared. She carried it off. And, hey, this kid’s got potential.
(Brian, February 2, interview, p. 23)
The following subsections represent a roughly chronological account of the winter practicum through what I have depicted as five major phases: (a) the calm before the storm, (b) the early weeks of teaching, (c) struggling through the middle weeks, (d) surviving the final weeks, and (e) after the dust had settled.

The Calm Before the Storm

The 13-week winter practicum began just before the start of the exam period preceding the semester change in January. Right at the start, Brian assisted Amy’s transition to being a temporary staff member by arranging for such basic requirements as room keys, a mailbox, a parking space, computer codes, and photocopier codes. Amy spent much of the first two weeks of the practicum familiarizing herself with the school and making preparations for the classes that she would eventually teach. Brian and Amy had also discussed some of the broad plans for what topics the students would need to learn, the sequence of those topics, and a general sense of how much time Amy should spend on each topic. At the semester change, she began her teaching on February 1 with a class of grade 8 science students. It was planned that Amy’s teaching load would initially be comprised of two sections of grade 8 science, with the addition of a grade 11 earth science during the final month of her practicum.³

Just before the start of the semester, Brian commented in his logbook about his first impressions of the practicum experience.

I have been impressed so far with her ability to plan, work and act independently. Her organizational skills are considerably better than mine.
(Brian, January 30, journal)

³ This semester, Brian was scheduled to teach all four periods of the day. Brian also had a math class that Amy would not be teaching.
In addition, Brian stated that he and Amy had engaged in numerous conversations since the start of the practicum, and that they had shared stories about their backgrounds, families, and daily domestic events. He stated that prior experience had taught him that spending time to establish the relationship was quite important.

Without mutual trust, respect, and an ability to anticipate behaviours to a certain degree, the intensity and “close living” of this partnership can be quite a challenge. (Brian, January 30, journal)

In preparation for teaching the grade 8 science class, Brian and Amy discussed the general ethos that would be developed. A broad theme that was of interest to Amy was to convey the nature of science (i.e., how science works) to the students. In addition, she was keen to utilize Brian’s lab reporting/peer review scheme and home science activities components. Brian was quite open to this involvement since, in many ways, this approach was consistent with his own, but he was also not sure whether he and Amy shared the same ideals or “if she is simply adopting mine” (Brian, Jan. 30, journal).

Brian also mentioned that managing student behaviour had not been discussed with Amy, and that this omission was partly deliberate. Because Amy’s arrival to the winter practicum coincided with the exam week at the end of the first semester, she had not been in a context of managing students in a classroom context. Brian’s prior experience as an school advisor had shown him that “a problem is hard to address until it has been faced” (Brian, January 30, journal), and that he expected that many future conversations with Amy would centre around situation-specific management issues when “it is recognized by her that there’s going to be a need” (Brian, February 2, interview, p. 4).
Prior to the start of her teaching, Amy was interviewed on February 1 about her perceptions of how things were going thus far. Throughout the interview she emphasized that she needed some of the “nuts and bolts of teaching” (p. 1) that included such things as taking attendance, handing out textbooks, collecting homework, managing classes, and so on. She added that “what I feel I need from Brian is much more concrete” (p. 5). Amy watched Brian’s first earth science class to see “what sort of time he gave to his general introduction and to see how he handled the attendance and textbook distribution” (p. 2). She articulated her pleasure with the developing relationship with Brian in the following way:

I really feel comfortable and I feel that we’ve started with real mutual respect. I think on the level of ideas for lessons we can really talk about it as equals, but in translating those ideas I am definitely the follower. (p. 8)

In response to what her expectations were for her upcoming first day of teaching, Amy responded that “there is lots of emphasis on getting the first day right and getting the pro-active management plan across” (p. 8). She admitted that at the current time her planning was fairly awkward and tentative but hoped that planning would become more concise as time went on. Amy described her abilities to plan lessons in the following way:

I fill in a sheet with words, and I can’t skip that and go with it. If I want a briefer sheet that I can actually use in class I have to do a second one. And I have a greater difficulty putting together a week of lessons or a month of lessons to juggle the time and distribute everything. (p. 10)

When asked whether she perceived that her learning during this practicum was of importance to Brian, Amy acknowledged that it was unlikely that she was the main priority because:

I feel definitely like a satellite in his day of things happening. He’s only been in the school since the middle of September so he still isn’t really firmly established here. So he’s still busy finding his own position in the school. (pp. 12-13)

All quotes from the following paragraphs refer to the February 1 interview with Amy.
Not surprisingly, Amy recognized that a school advisor has many different priorities to juggle and that her own learning was not necessarily the main priority. What is surprising is the fact that she viewed Brian’s main priority as finding his place within this school to which he had been recently assigned, rather than to the students’ learning.

The Early Weeks of Teaching

Amy’s first few lessons of the extended practicum were positive experiences and were well received by the pupils in the class. These lessons were comprised of a series of activities for the students to engage in such as the observing the properties of ‘ooblick’ (a mixture of corn starch and water that exhibits liquid-like and solid-like properties), hypothesizing about the reasons some pop cans float while others sink, and other activities related to changes of state. Now that Amy had started teaching classes, she and Brian typically met on a daily basis after school to debrief the day’s lessons and to discuss future lessons. Some of these meetings would be quite short in duration while others (approximately two or three each week) would typically last 30-40 minutes. In these longer meetings, Brian would go through his page of anecdotal notes that he had made while observing Amy’s lessons. For the purposes of the research study, Brian was asked to audio tape approximately half of these longer meetings. Thus, by the end of the practicum, Brian had audio taped 16 of these discussions using recording equipment that I had supplied.

Brian’s impression of these first classes was also positive, although he noted that the activities seemed to lack connection in the sense that:

the activities themselves seem to be the centre of the lessons while the “purpose” loosely evolves from discussions about them --- rather than clarifying the purpose

5 After school and lunch hour were the only available times for Brian and Amy to meet, since there were no common times during the day where both of them were not teaching.
of the lesson and setting the general direction and selecting particular activities to
support them. (Brian, February 2, journal)

Brian and Amy discussed the concept of a plane that is circling without landing as a
metaphor to help capture the essence of lessons that are full of activities but lack a central
purpose that is trying to be achieved.

There were also a few management problems, typical of the kind of ‘teacher testing’
that many students attempt. Amy recognized that management in the block C class “was a
handful, and as expected, Brian allowed learning ‘mistakes’ to happen --- much appreciated
on my part” (Amy, February 2, journal). She went on to comment that “there’s a lot of
classroom management to be learned from chaos” (Amy, February 2, journal). As Amy had
two different grade 8 science classes to teach (i.e., one in block C and one in block D), she
was able to make some adjustments on the lesson before she taught it to the other class.

As the week went on, the problems in classroom management and lesson planning
were increasing rather than decreasing. On February 3, Amy had become so frustrated with
the block C class that she gave out a class detention. She wondered whether this punitive
action “reflects my frustration or theirs?” (Amy, February 3, journal). Brian, on the other
hand, was not particularly comfortable with the class detention but he recognized that “she
needed to show that there are consequences and that she is not just shooting blanks” (Brian,
February 5, journal). Brian sensed that Amy was feeling uncertain and somewhat
disappointed about how the week had gone and shared his own experiences as a student
teacher where he conveyed that his school advisor had threatened him with a failing report.
This revelation was intended to illustrate to Amy that lots of people experience difficulties
while in the early part of the practicum.
Brian also started taking a more active role in providing more direction to Amy regarding lesson planning where he had:

become somewhat more prescriptive about my “curriculum” as well. We planned the last two lessons together and my suggestions about organization and presentation were rather specific (Brian, February 5, journal)

A short excerpt from the planning component of one of their after school debriefing sessions illustrates the level of specificity in planning that Brian referred to.

Now we’ve also found the mass and the volume of three kinds of matter... Solids, and liquids and gases... Okay... Now let’s talk about different kinds of matter now... Matter, it has mass, it has volume, it comes in three forms... Solids, liquids and gases... Give some examples about that... Show them some ways that states of matter can change from one kind to another... So give an example of changing a solid state into a liquid state... Liquid state into a gas state... Solid state into a gas state... And so on, okay... Get them to share their own experiences about that... Where have they seen examples like this before?... Show them some examples of this... One is taking a Bromine gas tube... It’s a glass tube of bromine gas so it has sort of a rusty red color to it... (Brian, February 5, debrief, p. 9)

In the excerpt Brian was carrying out a ‘think aloud’ in order to let Amy see how he would take a topic, develop a sequence around it, and then find appropriate examples to illustrate the key concepts. In this way, he illustrated a lesson plan where the purpose is clarified before the activities are selected. In addition, this lesson plan provides opportunities to let the students participate in the development of the key concepts.

In addition to using the ‘think aloud’ approach where he illustrated how he would plan a lesson, Brian also used a ‘this is what I’m hearing’ approach where he reacted to Amy’s suggested plans such that:

she described her lesson plan for tomorrow. As she described what she was planning to accomplish, I re-drafted it in step-like procedure form, and tried to clarify the key ideas and conceptual order. (Brian, February 17, journal)

In this way, Brian would highlight the “big picture” in Amy’s lesson as she had conceptualized it, in an effort to get at the key issues of lesson planning in a different way.
He also arranged for Amy to observe an experienced physics teacher so that she could focus on how that teacher developed the concepts in a setting where management was not an issue. Brian believed that observing others at this point would have real value because "awareness is heightened through experience and angst" (Brian, February 10, journal). In the same way that he highlighted to Amy that "you need to draw out a concept a number of times in a number of different ways, particularly abstract ones, in order for young kids to make sense of it" (Brian, February 11, debrief, p. 2), these various strategies were ways that Brian was using to assist Amy with the issues of lesson planning.

In terms of classroom management, Brian pointed out that some of the discipline problems arise when the students either don’t know what to do next or have completed the assigned task. He suggested that Amy monitor the students’ level of engagement by looking around from time to time, and also by raising the tension by reminding them how much time they have left. To illustrate this latter point, Brian acted out the following script as if he was teaching a class.

You’ve got ten minutes... I’m going to want these lab reports in ten minutes...
OK, who needs more time? (Brian, February 5, debrief, p. 2)

Brian and Amy also spent some time discussing ways of creatively re-shuffling the seating plan of the block C students to minimize the off-task disruptiveness of the more difficult students. Brian also encouraged Amy to establish a clear routine to immediately take charge and set the right tone at the beginning of the class, and to really get a handle of the discipline while “making it seem like it’s less of an issue” (Brian, February 11, debrief, p. 10).

Amy recognized the need to improve the planning and implementation of her lessons in light of the escalating problems that were showing up as discipline concerns. She captured this concern in her journal when she wrote:
I don’t quite get it. I have good ideas, but I can’t quite bring them together into a good lesson plan. I might be trying too much, too soon. (Amy, February 3, journal)

Many of Amy’s early lessons were discussion-based, and, although Brian did not discourage this, he was concerned that such a teaching approach would make it “harder for her to set a business-like mood and that will be important for her control” (Brian, February 2, journal). Amy was beginning to recognize that the two issues (i.e., concise lessons and classroom discipline) were interconnected.

Was this what Brian was getting at yesterday? Could he see this coming? Nothing like crashing and burning to learn from. (Amy, February 3, journal)

As Amy tried different strategies to improve her lesson delivery and classroom control, she recognized that the students seemed to be much quieter when they were taking notes as opposed to their liveliness when they were engaged in hands-on activities or open-ended discussions. She was pleased that this more ‘traditional’ type of teaching was having the effect of addressing one of the key problems in her teaching. Brian raised concerns with her that “in being drawn into practice that ‘works’ we can sometimes retreat into a rut” (Brian, February 9, journal). He added in his journal that “caution must be exercised that this does not become the preferred way of introducing new ideas” (Brian, February 9, journal).

The pace of the practicum had gone from two weeks of a relatively relaxed atmosphere (coinciding with January exams and the semester switch) to a fast-paced atmosphere where Amy was planning, teaching, and assessing two grade 8 science classes. Amy recognized this pace in her journal entry:

Wish there was more time to think about Brian’s comments and digest them. The pace seems so fast and furious. (Amy, February 8, journal)
Brian also sensed that part of the problem of planning was related to the fact that Amy was not completely comfortable with the subject matter content. Brian believed that part of effective teaching is to have a good conceptual road map of the “big picture” (Brian, February 10, journal) so that one can weave connections among concepts, develop them coherently, and know where you’re going with them. Thus, he suggested that perhaps Amy should “follow the book” (Brian, February 17, journal) because the content is specified clearly, the sequence is obvious, every kid has one, and long term planning is made concrete. Brian acknowledged that following the book was one of the things he prided himself for not doing and prefaced his journal notes by saying “I also offered some advice that must have been a surprising thing to hear from me” (Brian, February 17, journal).

February 15 is identified as a significant day within the development of Amy’s practicum round. On the Friday afternoon of February 12, while Brian was away at a workshop, Amy got frustrated with the block C class and had them come in after school to pick up a worksheet with a behaviour agreement on it. She stated that she:

checked with a couple of female teachers in the Xeroxing room and they saw no problem with it because their approach is much more to contact home. What will Brian say? (Amy, February 12, journal)

As Brian indicated within his journal after the weekend:

I was surprised to find a copy of a handout that Amy has evidently given her troublesome C Block class. It was a statement about poor behaviour and expectations and was to be taken home for a signature. I was surprised that Amy had not discussed this with me in advance even though we had worked on some planning details right up to 10 minutes before the class. (Brian, February 15, journal)

Brian was concerned about this action because Amy had now alerted the parents of the students in block C that there were some concerns. More important, from Brian’s perspective, he told Amy that “I thought it was almost a statement of defeat on her part”
(Brian, February 15, journal) and that parent contact is one of the "last resorts and only for a select few at that" (Brian, February 15, journal). The Monday unfolded without any follow up to the notice that had been sent home over the weekend, and the students were as poorly behaved as ever. Brian stated in his journal:

So I did what I have rarely done before --- I stepped in and read the "Riot Act" so she could get a clean start to her lesson. To her credit, she re-established her rules of conduct prior to an activity and it held, but she is going to have to make a firm presence and an attitude of cool leadership if she hopes to make this work. (Brian, February 15, journal)

As a consequence of Amy’s ‘unilateral’ decision to send something home to the parents of her block C students, Brian informed her that he wanted advance copies of all notices, worksheets, and tests. In many ways, he didn’t want any more surprises. Brian’s reflection on what was happening is illustrated in the following journal entry:

I'm wondering if I misjudged her level of preparedness at the start and gave her too much responsibility and independence too soon. Ironically, as this practicum is proceeding, I am taking more control rather than less. I know this is hard on Amy. It must be shaking her sense of confidence and efficacy. Now--- how to turn it back over to her. (Brian, February 15, journal)

Later that day in the debriefing session with Amy, Brian told her that he would have liked to have known about it before she issued the behaviour agreement, but "having done that, then make sure you capitalize on it" (Brian, February 15, debrief, p. 1). The following dialogue highlights their brief discussion about his intervention in block C (i.e., the reading of the “riot act”):

Brian: I thought it was necessary because they weren’t taking seriously the expectations that you had spelled out. Tell me how you are feeling about that.

Amy: Great.

Brian: Is that OK?

Amy: That’s great. I’m really still struggling with this. (February 15, debrief, p. 4)
After a lengthy discussion about ways of managing the class by waiting for silence, requiring that the students adhere to the seating plan, and establishing a business-like atmosphere,

Brian initiated the following discussion about how Amy was taking all of this:

Brian: How are you feeling?
Amy: How am I feeling? I'm starting to feel better.
Brian: Are you?
Amy: Yes. I'm definitely concerned about this, but I'm starting to feel better. I could use some indication of what's good.
Brian: Yes. It is a frustrating game especially when you have unco-operative kids.

(February 15, debrief, p. 8)

Brian candidly admitted that “one big issue is... assessing ‘where the student teacher is’ at the beginning... and I misjudged that” (Brian, February 24, interview, p. 1). The issue of context plays a role in how Brian did not adequately assess Amy’s level of preparedness. Basically, since “so much is based on first impressions” (Brian, February 24, interview, p. 5) this judgment was based on what Brian had seen Amy do during the pre-practicum experiences in the Fall. During that time, she mainly taught short segments of lessons for which she had plenty of time to organize and prepare. As well, unlike the grade 8 classes of the extended practicum, the classes she was involved with during the pre-practicum already had established routines and levels of discipline that had been put into place by Brian back in September. Since the classes Amy was teaching in the extended practicum were new, it was up to Amy to establish the routines and levels of discipline. Thus, because of the conditions of her pre-practicum experiences, concerns about Amy's ability level were not apparent at the beginning of the extended practicum.

Holding true to his strategy of dealing with concerns as they were recognized by Amy, Brian spent a great deal of time offering suggestions, directions, and support to her around the issues of lesson planning and classroom management. He also recognized the
need to directly attend to Amy’s level of self-confidence, even though he also knew that
growth in Amy’s lesson planning and classroom management would concomitantly lead to
growth in her confidence as a teacher. These concerns would continue to dominate much of
the agenda throughout the rest of the practicum.

**Struggling Through the Middle Weeks**

The title of this section aptly captures the general tone of these middle weeks of the
practicum as Amy continued trying to understand the issues of lesson planning and delivery
and classroom management. The period can be characterized as a roller coaster ride, where
some days were much better and more upbeat, while other days were quite disappointing.

Brian conveyed to Amy that it seemed as if many of her lessons would move along for the
first 50 minutes (of the 75 minute class), and that the remaining 25 minutes would be spent
dealing with discipline problems. They later referred to this phenomenon as “meltdown”
(Brian, February 26, journal). Amy was quite a reflective student teacher, and she
recognized that she had difficulty translating ideas and suggestions into her lesson plans and
then had even more difficulty presenting the lesson in a fluid way because “even though you
can recognize it, you still can’t do it, you can’t translate it” (Amy, February 24, interview, p.
10). Brian realized that Amy’s difficulty to “think on [her] feet” (Brian, March 13, journal)
was leading to her inability to appropriately react to student questions, ideas, and behaviours.

Amy noted to Brian that hearing feedback about a lesson and how it could have been
better “had limited value since the lessons at that point were old news” (Brian, February 17,
journal). Brian recognized the need for advance planning so that he could have an
opportunity to react to a lesson prior to its delivery. As a result, Amy now attempted to plan
a week in advance and would give Brian a sketch of a more detailed lesson plan three days before the lesson was to be taught. In this way, Brian was taking a more directive role in lesson preparation, in an effort to be proactive in preventing Amy from delivering unclear lessons that, in turn, would lead to continued discipline problems. This was an overt deviation from his preferred reactive approach.

The struggles that Amy was experiencing in promoting the students’ learning was mirrored in Brian’s own struggles in assisting Amy. The following journal entry of Brian’s clearly sets out the complexity of assisting a novice with the task of learning to teach. After watching Amy give the introductory instructions to a laboratory activity, Brian noticed the excessive amount of teacher talk about safety issues, equipment usage, lab conduct, measurement techniques, and lab write up procedures (to name a few).

Rather than evidence of lack of organization on Amy’s part, it raises for me the complexity of the task of organizing for learning! When one thinks about it... it is truly daunting. Where does one begin? All those things must be communicated and communicated clearly, but one can’t stand there and say it all. How does one clearly communicate the notion of communicating with clarity? Certainly it can’t be done by talk just like Amy’s orientation to a lab inquiry with all its nuances. It can’t be covered all through talk! It reminds me of Chinese boxes! (Brian, February 17, journal)

Brian realized that how much Amy has to communicate to the students about the lab is similar to how much he has to communicate to Amy about teaching. His reference to “Chinese boxes,” which appears time and time again throughout the interview and journal data, is indicative of his recognition of the complexity of the supervision context.6

Specifically, the “Chinese boxes” are most evident in situations where the difficulties that Amy is having in the classroom are mirrored in his own difficulties in helping Amy in the

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6 A “Chinese box” is a curio shop item that looks like a box with a lid, and as one removes the lid it reveals a smaller box with a lid, and so on.
In another example from his journal, Brian illustrated his total awareness of the similarities between Amy’s struggles as a teacher and his own struggles as a school advisor.

It is a matter of adjusting her approach to match the entry level of her students. She assumed that they were at a different level than they turned out to be and she has to be more direct. Hey--Chinese boxes time again! that describes my situation with Amy exactly! I also misjudged the degree of directions and support she required and have had to move to a more directive role. (Brian, February 23, journal)

Amy expressed concern about the way the practicum was progressing, and was conscious of the fact that she would eventually teach the earth science class in addition to the two grade-eight science classes she was now teaching.

Amy: I’ve talked to a lot of student teachers who are already teaching 80%, and I feel right now that I’m not ready, that this is not quite under control.7

Brian: No... No... You don’t have to pick that up until four weeks from the end, at the latest.

Amy: Yes. Until I am comfortable I don’t think there is any point. There’s lots to learn. (February 15, debrief, p. 9)

Amy found Brian’s comments somewhat reassuring, although she also got the impression that Brian was getting impatient about her slow progress because “sometimes there is a perception that I could be doing better on some counts than I am” (Amy, February 24, interview, p. 12).

Brian’s efforts to assist Amy in lesson preparation continued to focus on the multiple ways in which he could illustrate the clear flow of ideas. In addition to those strategies already identified (i.e., ‘think aloud,’ ‘this is what I’m hearing,’ ‘follow the book,’ and having Amy observe other science teachers), Brian also began talking out a lesson as it

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7 The practicum handbook states that by the end of the winter practicum a student teacher should be teaching 80% of a regular teaching load. In this school setting, this is approximated by teaching in three classes during the four-period school day.
would unfold in an actual classroom. The following excerpt, is an example of what this 'mental modelling' looked like as it was typically played out in debriefing and planning sessions.

Brian: Okay... Well let's compare that... Let's, let's take four materials and we'll compare their solubilities and we'll see how soluble they are in water... Are they all equally soluble or are they all different?... How would you find out?... Kids, tell me how would you devise a method for me... You know here's two materials... How can I prove if one is more soluble than another?... Okay, now if they talk about that... Say we put some in one test tube and some in another... Does it matter how much?... What are you going to mix them with?... Well a liquid... Well they both, well what if I mixed one with alcohol and one with water?... Would that make a difference?... Well it has to be the same liquid... Oh, yes... Okay, how come?... Well... Okay... And then what?... Do I shake them or not?... Can I shake this one and not this one?... And then what am I looking for?... (So in other words you're sort of building some intuitive sense about a controlled experiment...). A controlled experiment is a... Is a fair test... It's like a race but you know they're running the same race track and they are starting at the same place at the same time... And you know you don’t have one guy running through the woods and the other one's running along a straight track... You want to make it fair... Everything is controlled, everything is the same... Except for one thing... And what is that one thing?... Well, the material... Okay... All right let's do a little solubility comparison... A little race... A fair test... Okay, we'll make everything exactly the same... Okay we'll make it fair... So what are we going to have to keep the same?...

Amy: The amounts...
Brian: The amount of each...
Amy: Liquid... Everything...
Brian: Water... The fact that it is water... That you either shake it or not... That you shake it for the same period of time... That you let it rest for the same period of time... Okay... Now at the end of that how are you going to tell if one thing is more soluble than another?... Okay?...

(February 15, debrief, p. 13)

Three features distinguish 'mental modelling' from a 'think aloud.' First, what is quite clear from the audio tape is that Brian is literally using a 'teacher voice' and speaking as if he was playing this out within a real classroom. Second, in addition to talking out the teacher's role, he also acts out the expected student answer (as I've attempted to highlight in italics). In
fact, towards the end of the excerpt, Amy even begins taking on the role played by the
students that would be in the class. Third, as Brian is acting out what is happening in the
classroom scene, he is also able to ‘step outside’ of the role to tell Amy why he is using this
particular approach. The audio tape clearly shows how Brian shifts back to his normal
conversational voice (which I have indicated within the ((double brackets)) of the excerpt).

In an interview, I asked Brian why he would pretend that he was in a classroom and
literally act things out. Brian acknowledged that “I do that quite deliberately, because you
have to anchor it to something... you know... if you say, ‘try to be more’... and if I would
describe in vague, abstract kinds of terms... it’s useless... it’s useless” (Brian, February 24,
interview, p. 29). Thus, Brian saw this form of modelling as something that allows a student
teacher to see and hear concrete examples of what he is asking them to improve. In this way,
Brian was being directive by providing Amy examples of things that have worked, rather
than expecting her own way of conducting the lesson. Providing a model gives the student
teacher something to try on “like a pair of shoes... to see if it fits” (Brian, February 24,
interview, p. 29).

To Brian, this strategy seemed to be successful because he would often see some of
his ‘mental modelling’ acted out identically in class by Amy. Although such role play
models provided suggested activities and lesson approaches that were available to Amy,
there was also evidence that this strategy was sometimes problematic. As Brian later pointed
out:

I know that when I’m describing something to her in terms of a possible way of
doing it... she hears me saying “This is the way you should do it”... and I rattle it
by her very quickly and she starts to say... “I can’t say all of that... I can’t repeat
that speech, because you’ve given me too much all at once.”
(Brian, April 2, interview, p. 4)
What Brian saw more as suggestions that were meant to be helpful, Amy saw more as directives that she was expected to implement.

Amy captured this complexity by first stating “a persistent advisor is much appreciated!” (Amy, February 18, journal) and that “I have a lot of trust in what he’s doing and in my relationship with him for learning to teach... and if he says this, then this is a good way for me to follow for the time being” (Amy, February 24, interview, p. 4). Later, she added that “sometimes it is frustrating because you start to feel like you’re trying to plan a lesson that he would like and you’re not totally exploring what you might do” (Amy, February 24, interview, p. 4). At times Amy wasn’t comfortable following Brian’s suggestions and felt better sticking with her own ideas, but this decision had the added pressure of increasing her level of anxiety in the classroom because she already knew that Brian wouldn’t have done it this way. She found it hard to tell Brian about her changes because she did want his suggestions, and it was probably her own problem for “taking it to heart too much” (Amy, March 12, interview, p. 10). This double-edged sword was also evident when it came to getting feedback. Amy was appreciative of the amount of feedback she was receiving, but at the same time “it’s more than I can process between lessons” (Amy, February 24, interview, p. 18). Later in the practicum, she would exclaim “I’m advised to death!” (Amy, April 2, journal).

Although Brian encouraged Amy to continue to watch others teach so that she could observe different styles of teaching, Amy felt that she needed to use all of her available time to organize and plan her lessons. Amy was feeling the stress from not getting enough sleep because all of her time was being devoted to lesson planning, lab preparation, and marking

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8 In talking with other student teachers, Amy was aware of the fact that some student teachers were receiving very little feedback from their school advisors.
assignments, entering grades into the computer, and writing interim report card comments. Another result of this limited exposure to other teaching styles was the growing belief that Amy felt Brian wanted her to teach like he did, and that she was being evaluated based on that standard.

An opportunity for Brian to participate in Amy's classroom and to model his teaching for her presented itself on March 9. To start the new unit on energy, Brian suggested that Amy perform a demonstration where she would drop wood splints into melted KClO₄ to illustrate physical and chemical change (i.e., concepts in the last unit) and energy (i.e., the concept of the new unit). In Brian's opinion, such a demonstration would be an excellent transition activity to show the connections between the two units. As Brian stated in his journal:

> On Tuesday morning, Amy was reluctant to try it due to safety concerns (some members of our department are so safety conscious that the message seems to be that chemicals are dangerous and to avoid them!) and she seemed intimidated by the idea. She asked me if I would do it as a guest presentation...so I did it. I tried to model the teaching of lab procedures and safety, questioning, informal checks for understanding, subtle management strategies, voice inflections and body language, concept development, transitions and summations.
> (Brian, March 13, journal)

In effect, Brian used this demonstration to model all of the aspects of teaching where he had been trying to encourage Amy to make improvements.

The safety issue had arisen with an earlier demonstration in late February that involved the creation of a "density cocktail" where a large graduated cylinder was filled with various chemicals (e.g., water, glycerine, propanol, mercury) that eventually form into distinguishable layers. Then, objects of varying densities were added (e.g., moth balls, wax), and they would 'float' on different layers. When the other science teachers became aware of the use of mercury (which is a controlled substance, but not a banned chemical), an
emergency science department meeting was called so that Brian could be reprimanded for using the chemical, even though the mercury in question had been obtained from the school’s chemical storage area.\(^9\) Amy’s reluctance to attempt the melted KClO\(_4\) demonstration was due to her fear of possible repercussions similar to those elicited by the first incident.

Another reason that Brian encouraged Amy to observe other teachers in the school was his belief that this observation was one way of helping her to learn some of the intuitive aspects of teaching. An earlier journal entry highlights the point:

> We talked about the non-descript “otherness” of effective teaching... something other than the technologies of teaching practice espoused in the “Principles of Teaching” course. Such things as wait time, effective use of the overhead, distribution of questions, etc. do not by themselves a good teacher make. We agreed that the tacit skills are gained through: (1) student feedback, and (2) observation of models. (Brian, February 10., journal)

Brian’s reference to the subject matter of the “Principles of Teaching” course highlights his knowledge of the university’s teacher education program. In fact, his familiarity with the course was based on his first-hand experience as an instructor of the course. Brian believed that he could not directly teach Amy to be intuitive, and that this intuitiveness could only be learned if she watched others teach and listened to the students in her own classrooms.

> I am unaware of how to coach her to be more consistent and “with it.” A certain amount of it is a product of practice --- feedback from students in relation to what works and what doesn’t is a powerful conditioning factor and is quite immediate. (Brian, February 9, journal)

Brian believed that, in our teaching, we respond to the positive feedback that we receive about how certain lessons are done and negative feedback about others. If we attend to listening to the pupils, they act almost as an “invisible coach” (Brian, Jun. 24, interview, p.

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\(^9\) As an aside, the science department head of the school was one of Brian’s former student teachers.
Thus, the intuitive is seen as something that “we have to gain... it’s not something that we can be given” (Brian, April 1, debrief, p. 3).

Managing the discipline of the students continued to be a problem as Amy tried different strategies to get behaviour under control such as shouting, issuing individual and class detentions, stopping and waiting for silence, sending students into the hall, and having ‘fireside chats’ with individuals. As time went on, the very fact that Amy had not settled on a consistent method of managing students actually exacerbated the management problems.

Amy: There’s so many ideas, and part of the problem with this class is that every day has been a bit of an experiment. They haven’t had a week with a good routine... and they really need that. That’s going to help, because they are flighty...
Brian: And it’s awkward too... as we keep trying new strategies.
Amy: Yes... and it’s hard for them... on them...
Brian: It’s hard because they don’t know what to expect.
(February 15, debrief, p. 10)

Brian continued to be supportive and encouraged Amy to become more consistent in her classroom management. He also believed that tighter lessons would help to prevent the “meltdown” that typically occurred after 50 minutes. Brian cautioned about “overkill control” (Brian, March 1, debrief, p. 1) and continued to encourage Amy to “say as little as you need, do as little as you have to in order to maintain control... and escalating things when necessary but not unless it’s necessary” (Brian, March 1, debrief, p. 1). He gave this advice because he noticed that Amy seemed to escalate her efforts of control quite quickly and forcefully, which gave her little room to increase control if things got even worse. He also cautioned her about the “mother deaf syndrome” (Brian, March 1, debrief, p. 1) which characterizes how students started tuning Amy out when she began issuing a “sea of reprimands” (Brian, March 5, journal) in order to maintain classroom order.
What was becoming quite evident to Brian was that the combination of reactive classroom management and lack of lesson clarity was having a negative effect on the pupils, even though Amy believed that her discipline strategies “didn’t hurt that class” (Amy, February 24, interview, p. 18). As Brian wrote in his journal:

During our afternoon talk yesterday, we were interrupted by the grade-eight counselor who was relaying a concern expressed by one of our students to him. She was complaining about a lack of direction and clarity in Amy’s lessons that were making it difficult for her to do well. It came at a great time, and coming from a student, I am sure it had an impact. (Brian, March 3, journal)

Brian hoped that this timely information would serve as a catalyst for Amy to realize that she needed to start making some noticeable gains in the identified areas that needed improvements. Unfortunately the very next day her lesson reached “meltdown” and in order to maintain control she gave the students a “20 minute circular tirade” (Brian, March 5, journal) and kept the class back 15 minutes after school to complete her lesson.

After what Amy also called her “worst day yet” (Amy, March 4, journal), Brian was becoming quite unsettled about the lack of growth in the areas of concern in Amy’s teaching. He articulated the main issue of the practicum in the following way:

The dilemma (!) is to manage this event in such a way that: (1) It is meaningful for Amy and it will lead to growth, (2) Actions will evolve that will allow her to recover and succeed, (3) Amy’s dignity and self-concept are preserved and she will maintain her efficacy in spite of the recent situations, and (4) Our relationship is preserved. (Brian, March 6, journal)

In light of Amy’s weaknesses in classroom discipline and lesson planning, and coupled with the concerns being raised by the guidance counselor, Brian’s role as the school advisor was now becoming increasingly similar to some of the hypothetical musings that took place during the first interview where he said:

My number one responsibility is my job as a teacher of students in this school and in this community, and my number one responsibility is to my students.
In addition to being frustrated by Amy’s slow rate of improvement, and by the various problems emerging within the classes, Brian was also becoming a bit uneasy about his responsibility to the students. This unease became quite clear when he asked Amy to write some constructive comments to attach to each student’s interim report card. It was a good learning opportunity for Amy, and:

to be honest, she knows the kids far better than I do... I am still fully responsible for their instruction, evaluation, and for making a diagnosis of their progress and problems, but I am so out of touch with it that it makes me feel nervous.

Fortunately for Amy, Brian, and the students, the upcoming March break would give all of them one week away from each other, and the time would allow both Amy and Brian to take stock of the practicum and start refreshed. Just prior to the March break, Brian, Amy, and Jane (the faculty advisor) met to discuss a midterm report of the quality of Amy’s practicum thus far. All three participants were in consensus about the areas where Amy needed to improve. Amy captured it well by saying:

I know myself what’s gone wrong... I can see these things but I just can’t correct them... and even when I know what to do to correct them... it takes a while to get it into gear sometimes. (Amy, March 12, interview, p. 4).

As well, all participants were quite aware of the fact that when the practicum resumed after the March break, it would be necessary for Amy to add the grade 11 earth science to her teaching load in order to meet the University’s practicum requirements.

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10 Jane made weekly visits throughout the practicum. During these visits she would consult with Brian about how the practicum was progressing and would watch one of Amy’s lessons and subsequently offer her observations about the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson.
Surviving the Final Weeks

Amy was frustrated with the fact that even though Brian was quite helpful in providing suggestions during discussions about her lesson planning, she felt that he often neglected to comment on the lesson plan as she had written it. She believed that part of the reason that this neglect was happening (and why she was letting it happen) was because their debriefing sessions usually began by discussing the previous lesson and then shifted into a discussion about future lessons. Amy recognized that Brian would talk about her day’s lessons, and she would listen, and this conversation would continue as they shifted into planning. Amy felt it would be more helpful to her if she led the planning sessions by saying “this is what I’m going to do... and what do you think?” (Amy, March 12, interview, p. 13).

As a result, both Brian and Amy agreed to schedule planning sessions and feedback sessions on separate days, with the expectation that Brian would take the active role in feedback sessions while Amy would lead the planning sessions.

Brian and Amy met for one of these lesson planning sessions during the March break to discuss the earth science class that Amy would begin teaching the following week. Much of the session involved a sharing of ideas between them, and Brian highlighted to Amy that he knew of certain good resources (i.e., films, audio tape of the Mount St. Helens eruption, volcanic rock samples) that she should consider using. Since Amy had an M.Sc. in geology, teaching the earth science class was welcomed as a context where she was much more comfortable and confident in the subject matter. As a result, and, in stark contrast to the science planning sessions, Amy directed and contributed much more freely when planning the earth science class. The following excerpt highlights a typical interaction.
Amy: So if you talk about rocks and you spend a day...
Brian: Okay... So we’re into materials. We haven’t explored materials... Now we can classify the different kinds of volcanoes because they’re classified on the basis of the material they spit out...
Amy: And a good cross-section... There’s some composite type cross-sections. There’s a whole slew of them. Some are better than others. That could be a hand out that’s added too...
Brian: So we’ll illustrate with some diagrams that you can track down?...
Amy: Yes... This might not be the best one but there’s all sorts of... This is good from the point of view of having dikes and sills on it...
Brian: As well as types of volcanoes this is a good opportunity to put in types of volcanic features... and the features include dikes and sills... I have a good suite of slides to illustrate these...
Amy: Features... Columnar and the sills and that sort of thing...
Brian: I even have a couple of slabs of columnar basalt that have to take out of my rock garden and bring in... Right now they’re... holding up my petunia’s... (laughs)...
Amy: Columnar basalt... cool. The rock joints at angles normal to the lay-out of the rock... I’m not sure I have a... a full understanding of why that happens...
Brian: I’m not sure I do either... (March 18, debrief, pp. 9-10)

The new earth science class was difficult to manage even for Brian, as he admitted that “they are as unco-operative and unmotivated a group I can ever remember facing” (Brian, March 25, journal). For that reason Brian and Amy had agreed that he would maintain a strong presence in the room and would help to clarify concepts as necessary. In this way, he could assist with the classroom management and could also help to keep the ideas in focus and in sequence through his contributions.

The management problems in block C continued to be prevalent after the week-long March break. In another critical series of events, on one particular day “two students were in the hall, one was at the office, and 5 names were on the blackboard” (Brian, March 26, journal). Brian asked Amy to write a full page report on two of the students (i.e., the one she sent to the office, and a second student who skipped his detention) to better inform the vice-
principal about what happened. The writing of the reports took up much of her Thursday evening, as she documented how both students were defiant and disrespectful and basically blamed her for their poor performance. Brian was surprised to hear that the students had been challenging Amy’s ability to teach and stated that it “must have been hard for her to write” (Brian, March 26, journal). In addition, Brian spoke with the mother of the student who skipped the detention, and she was quite upset with the fact that her son was so “desperately bored and unchallenged” (Brian, March 26, journal). As it subsequently transpired, both students were temporarily suspended until the students agreed to an action plan for making improvements.

Amy wondered aloud as to who was really being punished as she “slaved away until 12:30 a.m. writing summations of behaviour as my lesson plans languish” (Amy, March 25, journal). In the aftermath of a late night of work, Amy didn’t have enough time to get her Friday grade 8 science lessons properly prepared, and, as a result, her lessons were quite abrupt. Brian was clearly frustrated with his perception of Amy’s reluctance and ability to plan. He commented that “I don’t understand what beliefs lie beneath her planning decisions” (Brian, March 26, journal) because he could not see the logical sequence in the concepts she was planning to teach. After observing the Friday grade 8 science classes where Amy was introducing the new unit on heat, Brian had reached a high level of exasperation as his journal entry conveys:

Her lesson today almost made me cry. Virtually nothing of what we have exchanged thousands of words on was in evidence. No orientation (to the new unit!), unspecific directions, and unmonitored behaviour management. I feel like giving up. The most curious thing of all is that she is perfectly aware of every shortcoming and is capable of articulating these before I need to point them out. Go figure it. (Brian, March 26, journal)
Brian had reached the point where he had attempted all of the strategies that he knew to help Amy see the "big picture" of a lesson and felt helpless in his efforts to improve her practice. He encouraged her to re-double her efforts in starting the unit by "setting the stage" (Brian, March 26, debrief, p. 3) and suggested that she even call him on the weekend (which she did) to discuss her plans so that they were ready to go for Monday morning. As an afterthought, Brian gave Amy a copy of a video tape that showed himself carrying out an interpretive discussion with one of his classes. He suggested that Amy take a look at it so that she could see an example of what an open-ended discussion could look like as it was played out in the classroom. Unbeknownst to Brian, the latter part of the video tape showed Brian working with another student teacher, Tim. This video tape would eventually become an important turning point in Amy's perceptions of her work with Brian.

Increased tensions began occurring during their discussion sessions as both participants were clearly frustrated with themselves and with each other. Brian and Amy had agreed to discuss lesson planning on Monday and Thursday mornings and lesson feedback after school each day (if possible). Brian's increased concerns about the weak start to the new grade 8 science unit prompted him, one day after school, to ask about how her planning was coming along for upcoming grade 8 science lessons. He stated in his journal that "Amy was resentful that I had asked her about upcoming plans" (Brian, March 26, journal) outside of the schedule to which they had both agreed. On the one hand, it was important to honour their jointly developed schedule to discuss lesson planning, but, on the other hand, Brian needed to feel comfortable that the grade 8 science lessons would be much stronger than the ones he had seen recently. As an alternative, Brian would sometimes provide Amy with some last minute ideas on how to connect parts of her lesson. For Amy, "seeing my lessons
through your eyes is a detriment at some points in time rather than a benefit” (Amy, April 1, debrief, p. 19) because last minute advice confused her and raised doubts about her own lesson just as she was about to go into the room to teach it.

As well, Amy’s confidence with the subject matter in earth science concomitantly gave her increased confidence in her decisions about how to teach the earth science class.

The following debriefing exchange illustrates the increasing number of disagreements about the earth science teaching.

Brian: Maybe another way of asking that question is how can you make them curious about wanting to know?...

Amy: Yes... I was thinking that seeing the difference in the crystals itself is interesting...

Brian: But even before doing that you have to give them a reason for wanting to even do it... How do you make them mildly curious about it?...

Amy: Well originally I had planned to look at the cross-section and say okay... this is... this is... We can identify lava... Ash comes out of here... But what about what comes out of here? And...

Brian: And I dissuaded you from that...

Amy: You dissuaded me from that... So I thought about it and I thought okay let’s see what happens... With the crystals and... and see the difference... and then talk about it... And then look at some rocks... Now we got... squeezed for time...

Brian: Oh, I know...

Amy: So I decided to bring the rocks out anyway and ... I didn’t expect to have... For the students to have so much difficulty in distinguishing in the different crystal sizes...

Brian: It’s... It’s a transition question... It really is... Establishing the relevance... Making them curious...

Amy: But this is a call... And this is experience... And yours is greater than mine... And I agree with you in principle... But I think... That it was a valid thought... I think that this is neat and we can do this thing and then talk about it... (March 27, debrief, pp. 2-3)

Although Brian continued to highlight the importance of creating a sense of relevance for why students would want to learn the material, Amy not only chose to ignore Brian’s warning and do things her own way, but she was also adamant that the curiosity would be in the activity itself. In this context Amy was asserting her own position as the decision-maker.
about what advice she would adhere to, even though she was eventually surprised by the amount of difficulty the students were having. In some ways, she acknowledged the importance of Brian's prior experience but felt that it was just as important for Brian to acknowledge that her way of conducting the class was not inappropriate.

With only three weeks remaining in the winter practicum, the issue of Amy's potential final evaluation could not be ignored, and Brian could clearly see his additional responsibilities to the teaching profession.

If I could see my daughter in a classroom like this, would I be happy? (Brian, April 2, interview, p. 14)

I hate to be an evaluator... but the other part of me says that we can't be careless in the standard that we have for beginning teachers. (Brian, April 2, interview, p. 13)

Even though the issue of evaluation was always something that would need to be considered, the spectre of the looming final report now shifted Amy's perceptions of Brian's role as a guide/support person to his role as a gate-keeper of the profession. After hearing the unified messages from both Jane and Brian that they needed to see her make significant gains in improving her weaknesses, Amy wrote:

What the hell is this?? I have three weeks left in order to improve on EVERYTHING?? Do I do anything well?? (Amy, April 1, journal)

Amy perceived that Brian had shifted from being a 'mentor' to being a 'tormentor' now that a less-than-glowing final evaluation was a real possibility. In addition, Amy was now convinced that "Brian had mentally categorized me and quit being objective by this time" (Amy, April 1, journal). This perception was not helpful for Amy to have because "I do better if people think I can do things... but if I feel like they're shaking their heads... it

11 The term 'tormentor' is borrowed from the title of a journal article by Sudzina and Coolican (1994).
During the weekend Amy’s father advised her to “quit listening to those jokers and design your plan to get through and keep order in the classroom. Do what you have to do. Do what you would do if it were your classroom” (Amy, April 4, journal). Amy decided to move away from demonstrations and labs and focus more on straightforward lessons by “thinking of them as grade 7 students and having 10 pages of worksheets to do” (Amy, April 4, journal). With the possibility of a poor final evaluation, Amy perceived that worksheets would be a safer way to control the “juvenilce behaviour” (Amy, April 4, journal) in the block C grade 8 science class. As she stated, “the pressure is on --- I’m terrified” (Amy, April 4, journal).

As the teacher responsible for Amy’s ‘syllabus of learning to teach,’ Brian’s frustration was captured by the statement “I feel very inadequate” (Brian, March 30, journal). He recognized that Amy’s lessons had become quite worksheet reliant and that this approach satisfied the objective of keeping the students purposefully engaged. He also believed that “it is extremely low level and boring as hell” (Brian, April 6, journal) and worse yet, he recognized these lessons as the “same low risk ultra-traditional strategies that I have railed against my whole career! The irony of this has not escaped me!” (Brian, April 6, journal). He also recognized that the students needed more dynamic strategies because they were bored and inactive, yet at the same time, it would be inappropriate to push Amy in this direction on this because it “may put her in greater jeopardy as the final evaluation approaches” (Brian, April 6, journal). To compound this frustration, he was also having to deal with students who “have asked me fairly often... when are you going to teach us?” (Brian, April 2, interview, p. 16).
Brian went on to state that he had to keep trying to find a way to help Amy improve, and that he was not satisfied with his own performance.

As a teacher don’t I have the responsibility to give the student appropriate learning experiences to overcome the gaps and deficits I have identified? If my student leaves my course with less than a full complement of skills, knowledge, and attitudes then I have not been successful in my instruction. (Brian, April 6, journal)

Brian recognized his dual role, as both the teacher ultimately responsible for the students’ learning in the classroom and as the school advisor responsible for Amy’s learning in the practicum. Brian decided that he would suggest to Amy that they could jointly plan a series of lessons and then do some ‘turn teaching’ such that he would instruct block C first, and she would then do the repeat for the block D class. Then, for the following lesson, they would reverse their order of teaching. In this way he hoped to “isolate the critical elements of the lesson in both planning and debriefing” (Brian, April 6, journal).

One evening at school Brian and Amy spent three hours jointly planning the ideas for the two lessons but decided to teach their lessons independently. In fact, Amy decided not to incorporate any of the ideas from Brian’s actual lesson, so that she could see how her own lesson would unfold. Another added dimension was that both of them would observe and critique each other’s lessons. The following excerpt illustrates a typical sample of how Amy’s critique of Brian’s lesson unfolded.

Amy: Megan did some nonsense and yelled at Carol from the other half of the room and you ignored that as far as I could see... so there was a lot of... This again stated this idea what could we do to test this and you stated it in a lot of different ways...

Brian: I remember when Meagan yelled across at Carol and I drew a breath I was just about to say something and I thought... If I divert this to a management thing right now I’ll have lost my cognitive strand... so I let that one hang... or I tabled it... and if it was going to come up again I decided I was going to address it but I would let this one go because I didn’t think it was worth the interruption...
Amy: At that point...
Brian: At that point in time because I was in middle of developing something and I didn’t want to interrupt myself...
Amy: A conscious choice... Okay (April 13, debrief, p. 3)

Brian used this opportunity to allow Amy to gain some insight into what goes through his mind while he is up at the front of the class. In this instance, he also illustrated his decision making about how he wanted to keep the focus on the lesson rather than shifting the attention to classroom discipline issues. In this way, he was modeling the kind of subtlety in classroom management that he had encouraged Amy to utilize earlier in the practicum.

Because the debriefing conversation took place after both of them had taught their own versions of the lesson, in several other instances, Brian took advantage of opportunities to highlight some of the differences between their two lessons.

Brian: Now... I drew... You notice that I drew the picture instead of using the pictures that you had drawn... What did you think about that?...
Amy: Well... I think... At least as many students used the overhead as used the board...
Brian: Do you know why I did that?...
Amy: Not sure...
Brian: Okay... It felt right at the time... Because as I was drawing it I was setting it up...
Amy: Mentally...
Brian: Here you take the beakers and I drew the beakers... and then you stick a thermometer and I put water in each one of them... and then I put... So it’s one thing at a time... It’s almost a procedural set-up... and then I drew the insulators around each one...
Amy: That’s interesting... Because...
Brian: So... I assembled the pieces rather than showing them the whole picture and getting them to try to figure out what’s in it... Which is harder to do...
Amy: Because my class stumbled there... When I...
Brian: Did they?...
Amy: I got the feeling that... That they don’t know what they are going to do... They don’t know why they are doing that... and that would have been one way of showing them how it’s put together... Because I turned off the overhead and I said okay what are we doing here?... and fished it out of them... and talked about it... But... I never thought of it that way... and if you had drawn it again on the board... Take a beaker... You piecemeal it...
You get the process... So re-drawing it... Allowed you to examine the process with them... (April 13, debrief, pp. 4-5)

By highlighting differences between the two lessons, Brian had hoped that Amy could see and appreciate his rationale for doing what he did. In the end, Amy was able to articulate for herself the very things that Brian had hoped for, but by structuring the conversations this way, he believed it was much more powerful for Amy than if he had just told her.

The preparation, presentation, and discussions surrounding the ‘turn teaching’ lessons were perceived by both of them to be quite valuable experiences. In their discussion about ‘turn teaching’ Amy added:

It’s actually a more positive thing than just hearing about it... you hear about it all term... this is how it should have gone. We talk, talk, talk... but it has a lot of punch seeing it, and seeing how it works. (Amy, April 14, debrief, p. 6)

Both Amy and Brian saw this sequence of lessons to be the most memorable part of the their time together, which helped to end the practicum in a positive and successful way.

In the general sense, the university’s practicum evaluation system was such that the extended practicum was designated as a “pass” or a “fail.” The final report was comprised of a checklist and a written report. The checklist identified a broad range of characteristics (i.e., lesson planning, unit planning, management, communication, skills, etc.) that allowed for designations of “satisfactory” or “needs improvement” (although many people used it more like a continuum by strategically placing their check mark in certain locations within the boxes). The two-page written report provided more detail about the specific strengths and weaknesses of the student teacher within the same characteristics highlighted in the checklist and also allowed the writer to use appropriate superlatives (e.g., weak, poor, good, excellent). Both Brian and Jane completed and submitted separate checklists and written reports.
At the end of the practicum, Amy’s practicum experience was deemed to be a “pass” and her checklists and written reports reflected her growth in, yet continued struggles with, short- and long-term planning, pacing, questioning, and classroom management. She also lacked what Brian referred to in his journal as the:

finesse... that elusive indefinable quality that makes the effort behind the action invisible to the eye. Without finesse, instruction and management don’t look natural. Finesse is intuition. Finesse is the ARTISTRY of teaching!
(Brian, April 20, journal)

Although Amy was interviewed for secondary-school science positions by several local School Districts, in the end she received and accepted a job offer to teach English as a Second Language (ESL) students at an area private school for the following school year.

After the Dust had Settled

Immediately after the conclusion of the extended practicum, Amy returned to the university to take four more months of course work, and Brian returned to teaching his classes for the remainder of the school year. Over the following three months, I interviewed Amy and Brian about their perceptions of the extended practicum now that they were distant enough from it to be able to reflectively look back at it. I begin with highlights of Amy’s comments and conclude with Brian’s perceptions of how the practicum developed, and how it could be improved.

Amy’s perceptions. In my first follow-up interview with Amy, she began by showing me a copy of a letter that she had written to Brian (although she had no intention of

12 Amy was interviewed twice and Brian was interviewed three times.
13 Unless otherwise noted, all quotes from the following paragraphs refer to the June 2 interview with Amy.
giving it to him). Amy found the process of writing the letter helpful in coming to grips with
the uneasiness she felt in the latter part of the practicum. She could not articulate her feelings
during the practicum but “it has taken me how many weeks now to really come to grips with
that” (p. 3). Her uneasiness was caused by her perception that Brian had abandoned her
towards the end of the practicum.

I felt like he lost heart with me... and now I think maybe he was just getting a
little depressed himself with the whole situation he was in...and how it wasn’t
going like what he had anticipated... (p. 2)

Just as significant, Amy believed that although her own teaching wasn’t necessarily
exceptional, it did not warrant Brian’s often gloomy reactions. Thus, during the past few
weeks she had been trying to understand why things were as they were.

Amy had a tremendous amount of respect for Brian, and at times, she felt quite
connected with him such as in the episodes of ‘turn teaching.’ At other times during the final
weeks she felt quite disconnected from him and “at times, I thought he had come to a
conclusion about my abilities and was no longer paying attention or looking for bright spots
in my performance” (Amy, letter). She felt that Brian was great at helping with the big ideas
but found that she got more practical “nuts and bolts” (p. 11) from other teachers in the
science department.

Amy also highlighted the significance of the video tape that Brian had loaned her on
March 26 that depicted Brian’s teaching, but, more important, that showed Brian working
with Tim. (Again, Brian’s intent was for Amy to watch him conduct an interactive
discussion, and he was unaware of the fact that there was anything else on the video tape.)
Some days after Amy had watched the video tape, in a passing conversation Brian had
commented about how much of a “natural and gifted” (Amy, April 25, journal) student
teacher Tim had been. In addition, Amy had commented that Tim was Brian’s clone, and he
agreed that it was spooky how they were so alike. Upon reflection, Amy concluded that the reason she was disappointing Brian, and why she also perceived that he had given up on her, was because she couldn’t live up to Tim’s image. This realization was reinforced by the fact that many of the non-teaching discussions that she and Brian used to have about families, weekend activities, etc. were no longer occurring, and towards the end of the practicum “the worst spells were when that didn’t happen, and I felt disapproval” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 27).

During a conversation with other student teachers Amy brought up the issue of chemical use in the laboratories. She recalled in her letter:

A student teacher from Agincourt blithely said it had not been a problem there. Mercury, I asked? “No problem” was the response. Ah hah! (Amy, letter)

Amy recalled the reaction of the science department to Brian’s use of mercury, and how a meeting was called solely to reinforce the chemical usage policies in the department. She was quite surprised that the same chemical was not considered as problematic in another school within the same School District. It was at this point that she realized that Brian’s own position within the new school was a factor in how her practicum evolved.

Amy also concluded from the video tape that Brian appeared to be much more relaxed and comfortable and believed that Brian’s current teaching was not rising to his own image either. She supported this belief by saying that at the other school (where he had taught for many years) Brian was in a “whole different world... where he had his own space and it ran the way he wanted” (p. 2). Amy added that this position was in stark contrast to Brian’s current situation as a teacher added to the science department just as the school year started. She believed that he was assigned to a tough timetable with some of the worst kids, he did not have his own desk, and he always taught in someone else’s classroom. In fact, in
one classroom Brian would be teaching while the other teacher would sit at his desk and “comment on Brian’s classes or he’d go and talk to students at the back while Brian was teaching” (p. 3).

Amy concluded that Brian “was increasingly worn down throughout the year, by having to shoulder his way into the science department at Southwood... I think my practicum experience became sandwiched in with this situation because what I saw on the video tape was quite different — for both of us” (Amy, letter). She was so convinced that Brian’s own sense of efficacy was a factor within their practicum relationship that she wrote the following in her letter:

I knew exactly what I would like to buy for [Brian]. I’m not sure that I could afford it but... the perfect gift could be purchased at [the local shopping mall]. There’s a shop there, on the main floor, that sells exquisite, tiny, miniature doll furniture. If I had my druthers I would purchase for [Brian] a tiny desk, file cabinet, map, globe, chair and as many tiny teaching accouterments as they had. I would give him, in miniature, what he didn’t have at Southwood --- a working environment of his own. (Amy, letter)

Amy also felt a bit ‘burned’ by the fact that both Brian and Jane always talked about the ideal of having classrooms with actively engaged students, but “at the last [STEPP] meeting they were talking about how these are ideals that you strive for... well... they had me striving for that from day one” (p. 6). She added that she felt a bit upset because “what do you mean you’re going to tell me now that it’s not realistic to start there?” (p. 6). She felt that because no one told her that she was trying to start her teaching at too high a level, “I started running, and then I tripped” (p. 12). Amy stated that at another STEPP meeting Brian had told her that “you’re not what I thought you’d be like” (p. 6). In light of her own perceptions of the video tape, this statement annoyed Amy because she didn’t feel it was her responsibility to live up to Brian’s expectations of what he thought she would be like.
In terms of lesson planning, which was an area of contention throughout the practicum, Amy felt that there was always a tension between what she wanted to try in her lesson and what Brian wanted to see in the lesson. Even in the joint planning sessions for earth science “there were a couple of times there where you could clearly see that he’s got an agenda” (p. 7) so Amy would try to incorporate his directives into her lesson to suit him, but in the end “of course it suited nobody” (p. 7). The end product was a lesson that Amy delivered uncomfortably because she didn’t have a sense of ownership of it, and Brian observed a lesson that didn’t meet his expectations.

In terms of classroom management, Amy admitted that her willingness to accept high-risk teaching without having clarity of purpose probably contributed to some of the management problems with the grade 8 science classes. She also believed that Brian underestimated the difficulty of the management of those students, and “I bet you now that he’s found out that they are a difficult class... and if he knew that back then... maybe he would have had more confidence in me” (p. 11). Amy stated that even one of the guidance counsellors “thought it was ridiculous that they were all in the same class” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 16). Interestingly, since the grade 8 science classes were new at the start of the second semester, it would be difficult to get a sense of how much of the discipline problem was inherent to the class, and how much was due to Amy’s struggles with management strategies. Brian would only find out how difficult the classes were once Amy had left, but, even if the students were difficult to manage, it would now be easy to attribute the management problems to Amy’s influence.

In August, I scheduled a final interview with Amy to ask her some follow-up questions that were raised from her journal entries. A few days before the interview she had
received notice that she had been hired in an ESL teaching position. In many ways, now that much of the education year was behind her, and now that she had upcoming teaching employment, Amy was able to be much more candid about some aspects of her teaching.

When asked about whether she was clear about what Brian wanted to see in her lessons, Amy responded “he knew what he wanted... and I have to conclude that what he wanted wasn’t realistic. I didn’t have it. He always wanted me to get more relevant... unpack those topics” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 10). She expanded her statement by saying that she had not taught science in a long time and lacked many of the necessary examples about concepts that would be motivating to the students. Amy added that until you go through it “I didn’t really know what the relevance of the stuff was” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 10) and he “would have been better off just teaching me” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 10) but at the same time she would never tell Brian this feeling in fear that “he’s going to kick [me] out of the program or something” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 10). Amy also spoke about the issue of “setting the stage” and that her own stage would be slightly different from Brian’s. More important though, “I agreed with him and I could see the value in that... but I didn’t know how to achieve that” (Amy, Aug. 6, interview, p. 12).

Amy believed that a better way to do the practicum would have been to start with more of the ‘turn teaching’ where the student teacher would do segments of classes. She reiterated that this ‘turn teaching’ was the high point of her winter practicum experience. She suggested that it would be better to start with all three classes and to “pick up more of the air time as you go through” (p. 16) rather than picking up more classes as you go through. As a result of this practicum experience, Amy found:

My confidence eroded... supremely... It was really difficult, so I don’t know what to say in the end. Maybe it’s just I’m not the greatest material to work with... I
don’t know... but I don’t think so... I think it was just kind of a tough situation in some ways. (p. 14)

Brian’s perceptions. Brian recognized that, besides the ‘turn teaching’ episode, the latter weeks of the practicum were not particularly pleasant for Amy. In addition, Brian concurred that these weeks were not particularly pleasant for himself either. He was quite frustrated by his own perceived inability to help Amy to improve in the key identified areas, and he also felt that at a certain point he was “simply being ignored” (Brian, June 1, interview, p. 15). In particular, he was discouraged that he had suggested to Amy since the beginning of the practicum to watch as many teachers as possible so that she could see a variety of teaching approaches. For the most part, Amy spent much of her time “squirreled away” (Brian, June 1, interview, p. 16) and doing planning in the back room. She did watch Brian teach on occasion, but these observing episodes diminished as her planning and grading tasks increased. Even in instances where Brian had made arrangements for Amy to watch another teacher, “she didn’t take advantage of that, and I don’t understand why” (Brian, June 1, interview, p. 16).

In my efforts to explore one of the key issues that Amy sensed, I asked Brian about his feelings about being added as a staff member of Southwood just as the school year was already underway. He replied that “I haven’t had a classroom to call home... and that’s unusually unsettling... I didn’t think that it would bug me as much as it did... It does provide the feeling of alienation” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 5). In addition, he added that “I felt a little bit trepidatious at the beginning in taking a student teacher, and having some responsibility for showing her the ropes and introducing her to the school when I was still trying to find my own way around” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 5). When I asked him
about whether he had worked within a comfort zone during the year, Brian stated “I probably didn’t appear at ease because I... I really didn’t feel at ease” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 6).

One significant fact that became evident during these discussions is that the previous school Brian taught at (and where he had been a school advisor for 12 student teachers) was a non-semestered school, while Southwood was a semestered school. As a result, this was the first setting where a course would start after the semester break in January, and he had not already taught the students for half of the school year. Put into different terms, Amy was the first student teacher with whom Brian had worked who was starting her teaching with entirely new classes, even to Brian. Unlike his other student teachers, Amy was not entering a setting where the classroom routines and learning atmosphere had been established.

Brian also provided his rationale for why he reduced the number of debriefing sessions with Amy. “I just didn’t want to talk about what I saw happening, and the way that the thing had not been coordinated, because if I did, it would make her feel really lousy” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 13). He acknowledged that Amy was the kind of person who needed lots of positive nurturing, but “how do you draw attention to that weakness in purposeful ways, and still give lavish amounts of positive reinforcement? I don’t know” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 13). As well, Brian stated that “I never gave up looking... in fact, right to the very end when we were trying out a new strategy, I was looking desperately for some changes in her” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 14) because “you make a commitment, you stick with it, and you’re not going to give up” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 35).

I asked Brian about his facial expressions and ‘gloomy looks’ that Amy had referred to in a previous interview. Brian admitted that Amy was very sensitive to his facial
expressions but believed that “she’s reading far more significance into that than existed” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 15). Early in the practicum, Brian had been quite sick, and Amy interpreted Brian’s lack of enthusiasm as disapproval of what she was doing. As well, Brian would often be frowning at the back of the earth science class but “it wasn’t because of what she was doing... I was really pissed off with the kids... and I thought ‘how dare you treat her like that’” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 16).

Near the end of the practicum, Brian had already started engaging in discussions with both Amy and myself about ways that the winter practicum experience could be altered. He started with the fundamental premise that:

In the 13-weeks there is ample opportunity for student teachers to have experience in bloody well everything from attendance taking and administration... and there are all kinds of issues that come up just in your day to day operation like management, to questioning techniques, to test construction and all that. (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 1)

His initial intention was to use a “checklist in my head of what kinds of things had to be done... and we’ll just whittle away at them as we went” (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 1). He now realized that this “controlled serendipity” approach is not fine for everybody, and “it wasn’t fine for Amy” (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 1). As he later repeated “my mistake was letting her start independently when I should have started in a more directed way” (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 8), and “I blame myself for that... she never should have been in that position” (Brian, June 1, interview, p. 6). A contributing factor to Brian’s heightened sense of Amy’s abilities was because in their discussions “she seemed extremely ‘with it’ and thoughtful, reflective and creative, and willing to try all kinds of interesting things” (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 23).
Brian now believed that it was more important to assess where the student teacher is and to provide the “leadership, guidance, and learning opportunities” (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 1) to accommodate the level at which the student teacher is operating. After all, “I don’t lay out the entire science curriculum to my pupils for them to blunder through and then step in to correct their mistakes, so why would I do that for student teachers?” (Brian, April 9, journal). He added that most school advisors probably do it this way because they assume that the university has prepared the student teachers before the practicum, but Brian’s own experiences as a university instructor made it clear to him that “student [teachers] who are unable to make suitable lesson plans on their first attempt are no better at it on the fifth” (Brian, April 9, journal).

Brian began to articulate a more structured view of how a practicum experience should be conducted so that the classroom would become the place for the student teacher “to learn these skills in realistic settings which are as low risk as possible” (Brian, April 9, journal). He believed that a better way would be to use an approach where a student teacher would gradually be immersed into teaching, perhaps beginning by taking short segments of classes. The initial short mini-lessons would allow the student teacher to focus on improving specific skills, such as questioning or concept development, without being overwhelmed with the task of doing everything. This progression also reduces the chances of making the kind of mistakes early on which are difficult to recover from (as was the case with Amy). In this way, the school advisor would “gradually let go of a class rather than gradually letting go of his teaching assignment” (Brian, April 9, journal).

Such a structure would allow the student teacher to have a gradual start and to teach in controlled settings. As Brian reflected, he realized that Amy started with high-risk
teaching (i.e., open-ended discussions, etc.) before she had mastered the basics. He reasoned that was "what she saw in my teaching style, and that’s what she got from [university] methods, and that’s what she saw as elements of good teaching... so that’s what she tried... but she couldn’t pull it off" (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 10).

Brian summed up his perceptions of working with Amy during the practicum and the inherent difficulties of being a school advisor in the following way:

> It requires an amazing amount of skill and with-it-ness as a coach to guide to the point that the person finds themselves confident. They have to have meaningful experiences that they can draw meaning from because you can’t teach them by telling them. Criticism hurts. If you build up only on the positive without addressing any of the weaknesses, you’re not telling the whole truth. You have to be able to share perceptions... but in doing that sometimes you hurt feelings, and when you hurt feelings you destroy relationships... or at least they affect them in negative ways... and when you affect the relationship then you are affecting the whole coaching role... and the whole thing. It’s such a nest of inconsistencies. (Brian, June 24, interview, p. 32)

**Summary**

This chapter has highlighted some of the salient features of how Brian worked with Amy during the 13-weeks of the winter practicum. It has illustrated how Brian’s work with Amy was guided by his perceptions of his role as a school advisor and how his intentional and unintentional actions affected Amy’s perceptions and teaching abilities. Just as significant, it brings light to the realization that difficult practicum experiences have an effect on both the student teacher and the school advisor. The data have been consciously chosen to highlight typical and recurring issues within the 13-week practicum experience and also to foreshadow certain themes that will be revisited in the analysis in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER 5

The Case of Brenda and Nancy

Introduction

This chapter is a case study of the practicum experiences of Brenda (the school advisor) and Nancy (the student teacher) as they unfolded from the start of the winter practicum until the time that Nancy was moved to a different school. The chapter begins by highlighting Brenda’s perceptions of her role as a school advisor working with a student teacher and is followed by a depiction of how the practicum developed and ultimately deteriorated. It concludes by highlighting some of Brenda’s and Nancy’s reflections about the practicum experience in their attempts to understand why their relationship became untenable. As a testament to their commitment to better understanding this situation, both Brenda and Nancy agreed to participate in follow-up interviews with me because they both felt it would be valuable for others to learn from their practicum situation.

Background

At the time of the study Brenda had been teaching for 19 years, and she recalled working with at least 15 student teachers over the years in both biology and physical education. She was the current science department head and had been an acting vice-principal for one semester a few years earlier. She possessed a B.P.E. and an M.Ed. degree.

Brenda also participated in year one of STEPP because of her high level of respect for the university’s program and for the STEPP project’s principal investigator. During year one of STEPP her student teacher, Dave (who was shared with Eldon, another school advisor),
was re-assigned to a different school after the two-week pre-practicum observation period. Although this prior situation was not the focus of this study, the context of the previous student teacher's shift to a different setting is salient. In that situation, both Brenda and Eldon felt that Dave would not have a successful winter practicum with them due to an uneasiness that they felt about Dave's readiness to successfully take on responsibilities during the two-week orientation period.

Brenda had taught at Harding Secondary School for "a long period of time, and I have the reputation that comes with it" (Brenda, year one interview, p. 7). She was quite familiar with the students, with the school staff, and with the community. She lived in a neighborhood quite close to the school and had been a sports coach in the area for several years. Many students sought her out during out-of-class time because they found her quite approachable to listening to their personal or academic problems. Harding Secondary School had an excellent reputation in the School District as one of the more 'academic' schools. Many of its students went on to post-secondary institutions, and the graduating class typically garnered a fairly large number of the available scholarships.

Nancy possessed a B.Sc. degree in biology and had entered the education program at the university immediately after the completion of her science degree. In a typical pattern, Nancy entered university immediately after completing high school, and thus, she was of a similar age to the majority of her peers in the teacher education program.
Brenda’s Perceptions of Being a School Advisor

During year one of STEPP, I interviewed Brenda about her perceptions of being a school advisor. When asked about her role, Brenda stated that “two words come to my mind... one is responsibility and the other is guidance” (p. 1). She believed that when persons accept a student teacher, they must be prepared to take them on 100%. In addition, she believed that her job was to guide student teachers through the experience and “to look at who they are as an individual and to find a route that is best for them” (p. 1). As a guide, she saw herself in a supportive role, and the student teacher knows that “I’m always there for them in the background” (p. 1). In a later interview Brenda added that “it is a commitment... I don’t walk out, I don’t pan off responsibilities” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 17).

When asked why she agreed to take student teachers, Brenda replied that “I grow when I take one... I look at what I do when I take one... I pick up ideas” (p. 2). She believed that taking on student teachers was a ‘responsibility to the profession’ because she recognized that many people had helped her through the years. She saw herself as the supportive base for a student teacher and looked “to the university advisor to be the gate keeper” (p. 2). Brenda admitted that when working with someone on a daily basis, “I can see when something is not right, and I can see red flags” (p. 2) at which point she alerted the faculty advisor that there was a problem that needed to be addressed. When pressed a bit further, she did agree that this communication was a form of gate keeping. She also recognized that over the years her opinion had often been sought by administrators involved in hiring decisions, and that her reference was often a determining factor as to whether that person would be hired within the School District. As she stated, “people who use me for a

1 All quotes in this section refer to the year one STEPP interview unless noted otherwise.
Brenda believed that “if I accept the responsibility [of taking a student teacher] I have to accept what I’m given and try and nurture them and allow them to grow as best that they can” (p. 3). In fact, she believed that this position was consistent with her personal philosophy with students in the classroom too because “you accept the students as who they are and try to get them to grow the best that they can in the time period that you have them, and maybe carry some of their growth factors with them later on” (p. 3). In a later interview she added that “I work with everyone differently... because I try to work within the context of the personality that I have” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 16).

Brenda also spoke extensively about the “very traumatic time” (p. 4) for both her and Eldon when they requested that Dave be re-assigned to a different school for the winter practicum. She recalled that both of them felt an uneasiness after the two-week orientation practicum and alerted the university that things were not going right. In her view, the university “was very protective” (p. 3) and unsupportive of their concerns, and that the university needed to re-think its approach because:

where is the support system for the school advisor? There seems to be lots of people running around on the other side... but we are volunteers who have entered into this...it is a stress related decision because... I don’t want to muck up someone’s career. (p. 4)

Brenda believed that when she agrees to take on student teachers she feels “a tremendous responsibility to the faculty” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 18) and that such responsibility should be reciprocated. She firmly believed that the university has to accommodate school advisors because “if you get burned too many times... you get burned out” (p. 4).
Brenda added that there has to be open communication between the university and the school advisor and “the tables have to be open and the cards have to be on the table about what the university is expecting” (p. 10). More important, she believed that the university has to “understand the personality of the [school advisors]” (p. 10) to whom they are sending their student teachers. As well, Brenda stated that school advisors have to realize that they aren’t going to get “the golden boy or the golden girl all the time” (p. 10). She added that the university has to do more in communicating the education program to the school advisors so that she knows “what I should be stressing in terms of support” (p. 11).

When discussing the strengths of a student teacher, Brenda believed that a student teacher needed strong foundations in knowledge, and in control and management. In order to help them evolve and develop, Brenda stated that “I don’t go and open up my full filing cabinet and say search through what you want” (p. 5). Instead, she was always willing to respond to a student teacher’s ideas if approached with them. She provided guidance in the form of guidelines and organization and encouraged student teachers to “watch me... watch others... even in other departments” (p. 6).

I asked Brenda to discuss how she perceived her role as a school advisor by visualizing the practicum as segmented into three parts (i.e., an early part, middle part, and final month). Brenda visualized her role in the early part of a practicum as providing “guidance, structure, and support” (p. 7) with a focus on a student teacher’s lesson plans and long-term goals. In addition, she believed that she should be there to “talk about the thought processes, how to get through the material, what to do, and what is appropriate for that age group” (p. 7). She would often be around for all classes that the student teacher taught, and
she would sit down, take some notes, help with handouts, and just visually be there as a support system for the student teacher.

In the middle part of the practicum, she stated that “once I feel that the parameters are there... I retreat... I retreat on purpose because... especially for the junior grades, I find that my absence from the room let’s them see what reality is” (p. 7). Brenda reiterated that this retreat would occur once the student teacher knew the students well enough (and vice versa) and “if they are not too stressed out getting [lesson plans] to me on time” (p. 7). She believed that if she was present in the classroom, the students would not act out because she had a reputation in the school that could be summed up as “don’t mess with me sweetheart or you are dead... in other words, the boundaries are known” (p. 8).

Brenda believed that if things were really going well in the middle part of the practicum, then the final part of the practicum was used for development. More specifically, the student teacher could use the setting as an opportunity to try higher-risk teaching and really start to “fly” (p. 9). She felt that her classroom and her way of working with student teachers was a “really good experience... and I don’t know if they appreciate it” (p. 9).

I asked Brenda about the dual role of being both a support person to a student teacher, yet also being an evaluator of that student teacher. She responded that “drawing the line between pass/fail is easy... the tough part of the evaluation is the picky words that you write on the written form” (p. 9). This task was seen as arduous because of the difficulty in balancing the positives and negatives in the report, especially if the student teacher had travelled a path where “the road is rough, and the road is long” (p. 10). She was looking forward to having a positive practicum experience with Nancy, which would also help to
recapture the positive features of working with student teachers that were missing in her last experience.

The Winter Practicum

Nancy’s first exposure to Brenda came in the fall during the pre-practicum observation period. In this two-week orientation, in addition to observing lessons in a variety of subject areas, Nancy spent a fair amount of time observing teaching in both Brenda’s biology classes and Chelsea’s math classes. This schedule was instituted because it had been determined that in the upcoming winter practicum, Nancy would immediately begin working with Chelsea in her math classes and would add Brenda’s new science classes a few weeks later at the semester break. This arrangement was decided in consultation with the faculty advisor, Jane, who was also assigned to Brian and Amy at Southwood Secondary School. Due to administrative decisions related to Jane’s teaching load, Jane was no longer be the faculty advisor for the winter practicum, and a new faculty advisor, Alvin, had been assigned.

In addition to teaching three math lessons, during the latter part of the pre-practicum observation period, Nancy prepared and taught one biology lesson dealing with DNA. She “spent a tremendous amount of time preparing for it” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 1) and gathered many interesting materials for that class. In Brenda’s opinion, the materials were “way above the kids’ conceptual standards” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 1), and she saw this problem as typical because most beginning student teachers often have higher expectations of students’ abilities than they should. Brenda had asked Nancy to prepare the lesson to cover the basics of DNA and the general structures of DNA, but Nancy took the

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2 As part of the school timetable, the grade 10 science classes switched from a physical science teacher to a biological science teacher at the semester break.
students into genetic research and had them do “a writing assignment, a reading assignment, and tried to do a role play activity in one hour” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 1). Again, this overplanning was not a concern to Brenda because trying to cover too much material was also another characteristic that she typically saw exhibited by beginning student teachers.

When asked about how she thought the class went, Nancy told Brenda that she “thought they got it all” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 2). Brenda had a different impression based on her own judgment and based on clues from the students because “my kids were coming in to me after the lesson and saying ‘help... what was she talking about?’” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 2). The next day Brenda asked the class to fill out a little evaluation sheet to provide some helpful feedback to the student teacher about what they learned from the class.

So I gave the sheets to her after I’d pre-read them all, and removed one or two that I didn’t think were suitable, and gave them to her and said... “I want you to look at this to understand how the kids are thinking.” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 2)

Nancy was initially “devastated” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 2) by the comments but later admitted that she had learned things from them. Brenda was pleased and responded that it was important in that Nancy gained a better understanding of the students’ abilities. At the end of the pre-practicum observation practicum, Brenda conveyed her conversation with Chelsea where they both recognized that:

we have a young innocent bubble working with us that hasn’t got a full touch of reality... of students and the real stresses of teaching... (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 2)
The following subsections chronicle account of the winter practicum through what I have categorized as four major phases: (a) starting on the wrong foot, (b) the rough road of teaching, (c) the end of the line, and (d) understanding the experience.

**Starting on the Wrong Foot**

Nancy arrived at the school on January 18 and immediately began participating in two of Chelsea’s math classes. Since Nancy would not be working with Brenda’s two science 10 classes until the semester break (i.e., February 1), Brenda felt it was best to maintain a low profile during the first week. She informed Nancy that towards the end of the week they needed to meet so that Brenda could see Nancy’s “projected lesson plans for the first part of the biology unit” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 3). These projected lesson plans were based on a lesson time-line that Brenda had given Nancy during the first week of January. During the pre-practicum observation period Brenda had instructed Nancy to come back in December so they could map out a time-line of the sequence and duration of science concepts that Nancy would be teaching in February.

Brenda’s belief that Nancy did not have a firm grasp of the realities of teaching was reinforced by four separate events that occurred before Nancy had even taught in her science class. The first incident involved Nancy’s efforts to arrange a meeting with Brenda to discuss the anticipated lesson time-lines, and the remaining three incidents involved Nancy’s failure to live up to her responsibilities as a teacher. Taken separately, they were recognized as somewhat understandable misunderstandings, but, taken together, it was clear that Nancy had not made a favourable first impression during the winter practicum.
In the first incident, Nancy began calling and leaving messages for Brenda during the last week before Christmas in order to ask about her lesson time-line for February. Brenda was a bit surprised that Nancy didn’t realize that this would be a hectic week, and she was also a bit puzzled by the phone messages because most people “leave a first name and a last name” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 3). In any case, Brenda was unable to get these lesson time-lines to Nancy before Christmas.

During the first week in January, Nancy called on the Friday afternoon to tell Brenda that she was “coming in Monday morning at 8:15 to pick up her stuff, and if it is inconvenient, to call her back” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 4). Unfortunately, Brenda began her teaching at 8:30, and this arrangement would leave little time to actually discuss the lesson time-lines. As a result, Brenda decided to write out a 21-hour sequence of projected topics and how long to spend on each topic and left it for Nancy to pick up. Even though they would not have time to discuss the lesson time-lines, Brenda rationalized that:

> I’ve given her the topics and the time-lines, she has a degree in science, she is a biologist, and she should be able to generate the activities.

(Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 4)

In any case, based on the circumstances surrounding the lesson time-lines, it was clear to Brenda that Nancy did not understand the schedules that teachers work within.

Brenda believed that the practicum is almost like being “on a probationary time-line... that you’re there to show yourself the best you can show yourself” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 5) and, to date, Nancy was definitely not performing well. Brenda was a bit surprised that the first day, Nancy arrived to the school at 8:20, just 10 minutes before classes started. During the fall pre-practicum observation period, Nancy helped Chelsea every morning of the week (except Wednesday) with extra math tutorials, and it was assumed that
since she was beginning her winter practicum in math, Nancy should be there for these help sessions. Brenda added that when Chelsea reminded Nancy of this expectation, she did not appear on the Tuesday morning because "her excuse was that she had slept in and she was running late" (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 6).

The morning help sessions did sort themselves out by Thursday. By the middle of the week, Nancy had also volunteered to help Chelsea coach the bantam girls' basketball team, which also had a scheduled game on the Friday of her first week in the school. On the Friday, Chelsea was ill, and Nancy also did not show up for the game. Brenda stated "even though she hadn't really started with the team yet... you know how things work in a school, and someone else ended up covering the game and all that" (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 6). The next week, Brenda stated that Nancy had told Chelsea that "I didn't go to the game because I realized that you were sick and I would have just mucked things up" (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 6). In Brenda's opinion, Nancy should have been there for the basketball game because "that is what commitment is" (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 6).

The final incident occurred during Nancy's second week in the school when she missed a science department meeting. Brenda was quite upset, especially because the other science student teachers were present, and her first agenda item (as the department head) was to welcome the student teachers. Once the meeting ended, Brenda stated that Nancy arrived and exclaimed "Oh, I missed the science department meeting!" (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 7). Brenda wrote in her journal notes that "student teachers must be aware of all responsibilities of teachers and work ethic... I am disappointed" (Brenda, January 27, journal). When pressed by me as to whether these expectations were clear, Brenda replied "I
think she really doesn’t quite understand silent expectations because it was on the staff room bulletin board” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 7). She went on to say that Nancy had asked Chelsea and found out that there was no math meeting schedule, but “just because one is not working doesn’t mean that the other is not working” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 7). This incident reinforced in Brenda’s mind that, with Nancy, “the maturity level is missing” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 7).

When reflecting back on the four incidents, Brenda stated that the solution was to “be just dead set more obvious... I have to say... you’re expected to be here and here and here” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 8). She also felt that using her own personality as a reference point, these were serious incidents because of her perception of the practicum as a probationary period.

I am very self-driven... I’m very self-disciplined... that’s what I pride myself on... I look back and say... if I was ever late during the practicum, I would have just rolled over and died... if I had ever forgotten to do that extra piece of something, I would just fall apart. (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 8)

Brenda stated that the latter three incidents (i.e., missing meetings and commitments) had never been a concern with any of the other student teachers she had worked with. Brenda also sensed that these incidents did not seem to be causing Nancy much distress because she would be apologetic, yet she would also be quite cheerful. Thus, Brenda’s perception was that Nancy was someone who really did not understand what it meant to be a teacher, although, at this point, Nancy had not even begun teaching in any of Brenda’s classes.

Prior to the start of her science teaching, Nancy was interviewed on February 1 about her perceptions of how things were going thus far. Nancy told me about missing the science

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3 The school timetable is structured so that the first hour of Wednesday is scheduled as professional time. This is also why Chelsea’s extra help sessions in math do not occur on Wednesdays.

4 All quotes from the following paragraphs refer to the February 1 interview with Nancy.
department meeting and stated that “I was shocked, I totally didn’t know” (p. 2) about the meeting, but she definitely got the impression from Brenda that she should have been there. She highlighted the fact that at the university they said “now is the time to experiment, now is the time to screw things up... but when you get out on the practicum, you don’t feel that now is the time to screw things up” (p. 21). I refrained from probing into the other incidents that had recently occurred.

When discussing the lesson from the pre-practicum observation, Nancy realized that the selected article dealing with DNA “was too difficult for them” (p. 10) although she had suspected it might be “a little difficult” (p. 10). Nancy had asked her cousin (who was in grade 12) to read it, and her cousin had said that she used to do that in grade 10. It had not even occurred to Nancy that “she could be lying somewhat just to say that she’s bright” (p. 10). That being said, Nancy admitted that during the pre-practicum observation period she found that:

I was just not at their level... I didn’t even know where it was... I didn’t have the slightest. Like now, [in math] I’m getting an idea of where they are at... but in science, I still don’t know. (p. 10)

Nancy believed that “the best way for me to learn is to just learn by my own mistakes as opposed to learning by other people’s mistakes” (p. 3). At the same time, though, Nancy realized that many of her lesson plans were too long, and “it would be nice to know what to take out and what to leave in” (p. 3). Then again, “if she corrects my lesson plans all the time before I do them... then I’m going to be consistently dependent on her checking my lessons” (p. 6). Nancy stated that, at the conclusion of the pre-practicum observation period, she asked Brenda for a lesson time-line because “I wasn’t sure what she wanted me to cover” (p. 3).
When asked about starting the science classes, Nancy expressed some worry about “control of the class and that sort of thing” (p. 6) but she liked the idea of starting with a “brand new class... even though I’m hesitant about doing it... because that’s what I’m going to be faced with if I get a job” (p. 7). Within the practicum, Nancy hoped that Brenda would be able to:

feel out and see what you’re feeling... they’re almost like a parent... like if you’ve had a really bad day and things just didn’t go well, I think it’s nice to have an advisor that says “I realize that you had a really bad day, things have gone really poorly” rather than saying “it’s terrible, you don’t know what you are doing. What are you doing?” (p. 16)

In addition, Nancy was hopeful that her school advisors “should be able to talk to you and just say things, and just make a student teacher realize that they know that you’re human” (p. 16).

Nancy believed that some of the characteristics that school advisors look for in student teachers included hard work, good organization, a positive attitude, a reflective attitude, and consideration of the feedback they are receiving. She expanded on the notion of a reflective attitude by saying that it is important to “think about how I would build on the lesson to make it better before considering what the school advisor thought” (p. 18). As for consideration of feedback, Nancy believed that feedback meant “doing some of what was suggested, but the points that you don’t take which are suggested, there should be a good reason why you’re not taking them” (p. 18). Nancy believed that not feeling comfortable instituting a suggestion or deciding that the suggestion was inappropriate would be acceptable reasons for ignoring suggestions.
The Rough Road of Teaching

On the Friday before Nancy was to begin the teaching of two science 10 classes, she and Brenda discussed Nancy’s anticipated lesson plans for the first unit. Since Nancy had mainly been working with Chelsea in math since the start of the practicum, Nancy and Brenda had not conversed much previously. When I asked Brenda to clarify whether she expected the student teacher to have an entire unit planned, she replied that they should have:

at least something that you can call a story from A-Z, even though it may not be a good story yet... or it’s too long or too short. A good story always gets multiple revisions. That’s also working under the expectation that Jane said that the kids were pre-working on their first unit. (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 11)

Thus, Brenda’s expectation of what Nancy should be capable of was based on what was conveyed to her by Jane, the previous faculty advisor. In fact, “Nancy had known since October that her first unit would be the beginning of grade 10 biology... so any time you open the book, it’s the microscope... so it wasn’t anything strange” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 11).

Brenda’s assessment of Nancy’s unit plan was that she seemed to have gathered lots of material that was all paper clipped together to indicate what would be appropriate for each lesson. Brenda sensed that there were lots of lab materials “from lab courses that she had taken... because you can recognize them if you’ve done any lab work at all” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 11). Brenda was impressed with the stack of material but sensed that Nancy had little knowledge and skill in using these materials to achieve clear goals for particular lessons. She then told Nancy that “you’ve got tons of activities here, but no lesson plans” but added that “I was really being supportive, I was kind, I tried to pick my words gently, I worked through encouragement... I really did... because she was uptight” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 12).
In an effort to illustrate to Nancy what a unit plan looked like so that she had some sort of model to aim for, Brenda did the following:

I went to my files, and I had a student teacher one year who was over-conscientious, I mean, she pre-typed any question that a kid could ask her on any topic she was doing, and itemized it... and I pulled out the binder that I had kept... because it is sort of like a bible of grade 11 biology... and she had objectives all lined up for each... and I said “Nancy, this isn’t how much I expect you to do... but this is what you need to do... the activities chosen here reflect what you’re trying to get done for the day”... and then I put it back up on the bookcase... but I just wanted her to see one. (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 12)

She explained to Nancy that a teacher needs clear goals for a lesson and a clear idea of how to reach those goals. Brenda stated that “she was sort of looking at me... wondering how important these things were,” so Brenda reaffirmed the importance by telling Nancy that “if you don’t have a lesson plan for a class, then you will not be teaching that class” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 13).

They agreed to meet again on Monday, and it was clear to Brenda that Nancy had done a “tremendous amount of work over the weekend... and taken my suggestions on setting lesson objectives, and looking at the core things, and picking activities to go with them” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 14). Brenda was a bit concerned that Nancy was attempting to cover too much in the first lesson (i.e., introductions, lab safety, instructions on microscope use, two activities, a reading assignment, and some questions to work on) even though it was an hour long class. She then instructed Nancy that, for all subsequent lesson plans, she needed to clearly indicate how many minutes she thought would be needed to achieve the goals in each part of a lesson.

As well, Brenda asked Nancy a series of questions that alluded to classroom management issues such as: (a) how long will activities take?, (b) how will handouts be

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5 Each science 10 class had two 60-minute classes and one 40-minute class each week.
distributed?, (c) how will equipment be distributed? (d) how will homework be assigned?,
and (e) how will homework be collected the next day? Brenda believed that it was best to let
Nancy teach her lesson the way she had planned it so “I didn’t go through her plans and red-
mark all over the place and say ditch that... I was trying to say that what you’ve got is good...
now, how can we make it good in the classroom by your organization” (Brenda, January 29,
interview, p. 15). Thus, Brenda’s questions were intended to encourage Nancy to articulate
what her approach to classroom management would be, and, in the process, this approach
would also highlight any management issues that Nancy had not thought about.

Arranging meeting times for planning and debriefing was often difficult because of
the logistics of working with two school advisors in two different subject areas. In addition
to meeting with Brenda, Nancy also needed to do the same with Chelsea. This difficulty was
compounded by the fact that Brenda and Chelsea each taught five other classes in addition to
the ones that Nancy was teaching, and that Nancy was involved in the morning math help
sessions. Brenda and Nancy arranged to have most of their debriefing sessions after school,
and the first of these sessions occurred on the day of Nancy’s first science lesson.

Brenda’s discussions about Nancy’s first lesson focused on deviations from the lesson
that had been discussed the previous day. Early in the session the following interaction took
place:

Brenda: OK, what did I tell you last week that you have to have to me before you
start a lesson?
Nancy: Oh... some plans...
Brenda: That’s right... I have to have a lesson plan in my hands well ahead of
time... I looked for you this morning... I can’t know what is going on
even if we pre-discussed it unless I see it, okay? And there may have
been a couple of things I could have helped you with.6
Nancy: OK. (February 1, debrief, p. 1)

6 Bold facing is added to convey an “emphasis” on certain words that was evident on the audio tapes.
Brenda was not happy with the fact that Nancy had not met an expectation about having to submit lesson plans before she taught the lesson. Further questioning then focused on Brenda’s concerns that the lesson plan that Nancy did give her just before the class did not correspond to what Nancy did in the class.

Brenda: You talk here about roll call...
Nancy: Yeah.
Brenda: Which you didn’t do...
Nancy: Yeah. (February 1, debrief, p. 2)

Brenda continued to ask Nancy to verify statements that were in her lesson plan, and then compare the plan to what she actually did in the class. Just as significant, Brenda used this as an occasion to remind Nancy how some of these problems could have been avoided had she submitted a lesson plan early enough.

Brenda: (reading from the lesson plan) “While I do the roll call one student will hand out the sheets with the rules, safety, and microscopes”... That was during roll call...
Nancy: Right...
Brenda: What you did is you had two students handing out the sheets when you were going over your classroom rules.
Nancy: Right.
Brenda: Were the kids paying attention to you... or were they paying attention to the kids handing out the sheets?
Nancy: To the students handing out the sheets.
Brenda: That’s right... I would have said fine, yeah, during roll call. That’s good, and we talked about that before...
Nancy: Yeah.
Brenda: But if what you’re saying is important, you need it quiet.
Nancy: Yeah. (February 1, debrief, pp. 2-3)

The same pattern continued throughout the debriefing session, where Brenda would present statements and ask for Nancy’s verification. As a result, Nancy’s statements throughout the debriefing session amounted to single word answers to confirm or disconfirm Brenda’s statements. Brenda highlighted other important features of Nancy’s lessons, such as the need for demonstrating the safety equipment and the need for Nancy to effectively close a lesson.
She also pointed out some minor issues, such as the clarity of overhead transparencies and the need for students to put their stools onto the benches after the last class of the day.

As the debriefing session came to a close, Brenda asked Nancy to articulate what she had learned from the discussion:

Brenda: OK, so now how will you change it for tomorrow.
Nancy: I will do roll call at the very beginning.
Brenda: OK.
Nancy: Instead of having somebody handing out the package, I will put them on the desks before class.
Brenda: OK. (February 1, debrief, p. 9)

Nancy re-emphasized many of the points that Brenda had raised. In fact, many of Nancy’s journal entries mirror this repetition as well:

The main points which I tried to work on were the ones I received from Brenda. For example, last day my lesson plan was not only not in sequential order, but was also missing key points with some ambiguity (Nancy, February 3, journal).

The process of clarifying the changes to be made in the lesson was seen as important because the next day, Nancy would teach the other class of science 10 students and repeat this lesson. At the end of the session, Brenda asked Nancy to submit a revised lesson plan the next morning (i.e., Tuesday) and also asked her to submit her intended lesson plans for Wednesday’s classes. The practice of submitting revised lessons for the repeat class continued throughout the practicum.

Nancy continued to struggle through the first weeks of biology teaching as she tried to get a handle on pacing, clarity, and classroom management. Her journal entries illustrate the roller coaster ride of her teaching:

Brenda pointed out to me how confused the students would be when they later read through the lab, and I agree. (Nancy, February 4, journal)

The lesson itself was definitely dull, but the timing worked out well, and they achieved the planned objectives. (Nancy, February 5, journal)
Section 6 was a bomb! This class is somewhat controlling me, or more like just a couple students. (Nancy, February 5, journal)

I found that the presentations regarding the poster were simply a waste of time. (Nancy, February 11, journal)

Nancy continued submitting daily lesson plans to Brenda, although, in many instances, there was little time for Brenda to pre-read them and make suggestions. Brenda highlighted the realistic time constraints in the following way:

The lesson plan was handed to me at 8:10... I taught four classes and had appointments. I reviewed the lesson at 2:10 as class was being taught. (Brenda, February 8, journal)

Brenda was becoming increasingly frustrated with the “minute to minute, day by day” (Brenda, February 8, journal) approach to Nancy’s lesson preparation and the apparent lack of evidence of long-term planning. She was concerned about spelling errors on handouts and lack of clarity of instructions where, for example, Nancy’s verbal instructions for a lab activity did not correspond with the written instructions on the handouts. As well, Brenda was concerned that Nancy was trying to get too much done too quickly, and the students were unable to follow. An extreme case of this haste occurred when Nancy spent 34 minutes introducing a lab and then gave the students four minutes to do the lab (because she had forgotten that this period was their 40-minute block). This increased level of frustration in the students was showing itself because “we are starting to see some behavioural problems” (Brenda, February 8, journal). Brenda believed that Nancy was working quite hard, but she seemed to be “spinning in circles” (Brenda, February 8, journal). Unfortunately, they had little available time to sort out these concerns.
Brenda and Nancy’s February 8 debriefing session highlighted some of these key points about classroom management and lesson planning. In the following excerpt, Brenda discussed the effectiveness of Nancy’s classroom management strategies:

Brenda: How many times do you think you told them to be quiet?
Nancy: About five times.
Brenda: Maybe ten.
Nancy: Yes.
Brenda: Is your behaviour modification working if you have to repeat the same statement over and over again?
Nancy: No. I don’t know how to switch over and have them all quiet. I don’t know...
Brenda: So you have to say in your own heart... they aren’t listening to me... why aren’t they listening to me, why am I having to repeat the same thing.

(February 8, debrief, pp. 1-2)

Brenda attempted to focus Nancy on thinking about why the students were misbehaving and how she was contributing to the continued problem. Coincidentally, Brenda later stated “if your parents are continually nagging at you about the same thing, it doesn’t change your behaviour” (Brenda, February 8, debrief, p. 2), which parallels Brian’s comments to Amy about the “mother deaf syndrome.” At the conclusion of the session, Brenda told Nancy that they should meet weekly for the sole purpose of discussing long-term planning. She also made it clear to Nancy that “if I had to rate you right now in terms of planning it would be very low... but it’s not due to lack of activities, it’s due to correspondence of objectives and the actual time-line that you have set” (Brenda, February 8, debrief, p. 5).

The following week saw few improvements and more setbacks. Brenda and Nancy were still not communicating with each other very well, and the only time “something gets initiated is if I initiate the conversation” (Brenda, February 15, journal). The long-term planning session did not materialize because Brenda intentionally left the scheduling in Nancy’s hands to see if she would take some initiative in communicating. Brenda was quite
frustrated because she felt “I’m inputting and criticizing a lot... and that the only way that things improve is on my time demand” (Brenda, February 11, journal). Brenda felt this way because it seemed that Nancy was very good at acting on the critique of lessons but often had little to offer about how she personally would have done things differently.

Brenda reinforced her belief that Nancy “is immature in some ways, needs a lot of guidance, and needs a lot of support” (Brenda, February 15, journal). Furthermore, Brenda seemed unable to “get across to her the time demands and stresses of the job” (Brenda, February 11, journal) and highlighted an incident where Nancy was tutoring a student in the interior office of the classroom and realized, 15 minutes late, that she was supposed to be teaching a class. Brenda candidly stated that Nancy’s abilities were “not where they should be after three weeks in the school” (Brenda, February 11, journal). Brenda summed up by saying:

I have to say to myself that this is being done on a volunteer basis... I know I have a professional responsibility but I can’t do it step by step, “under the wing,” maintaining day by day struggles. When you leave to go out into the big world there’s nobody there for you and if you don’t have the skills to survive, you’re not going to make it. (Brenda, February 15, journal)

Nancy’s impressions of the previous week confirmed some of Brenda’s perceptions about how the winter practicum had been unfolding. She stated that “last week was terrible! I just felt that nothing was going well. My teaching stinks, and I feel like I have no control — but when I’m teaching, I feel like I do have some control” (Nancy, February 15, journal). Her comments point to her frustration with how she feels powerless in dealing with the events of the practicum that occur outside of the classroom. Nancy admitted that she always felt pressed for time and “never seem to give the students enough time to complete their tasks” (Nancy, February 15, journal). She believed that this pressure was due to her
perception of the need to adhere to the time-line. She agreed with Brenda that “I should be looking for completion of tasks, but I don’t seem to” (Nancy, February 15, journal).

Nancy agreed that she spent little time during the week actually talking with Brenda, but “I do feel intimidated by her because I feel that I will never be able to reach up to her expectations” (Nancy, February 15, journal). In addition, she also felt unsure about “when I can ask her to talk, and what I can talk to her about” (Nancy, February 15, journal) and this insecurity added to her confusion and subsequent avoidance of interactions with Brenda. Nancy was unsure about whether her excuses were reasonable or not, so her strategy was to “not say anything, and just agree that I did not and have not fulfilled my responsibilities” (Nancy, February 15, journal).

In light of the expectations that were placed on her, Nancy believed that the university “did not prepare us for all those expectations” (Nancy, February 15, journal), such as the need to prepare unit overviews, to have lesson plans submitted one day in advance, to deal with classroom behaviour, to reflect on past lessons, to make corrections for future lessons, and to adapt teaching for students with exceptionalities. She agreed that such expectations were fair, but “it is so difficult when they are all piled on at once” (Nancy, February 15, journal).

In an effort to get both of her science 10 classes to the same place (in preparation for exam marks needed for the upcoming grading period), Nancy decided that one class needed to be sped up. As a result, and to Brenda’s dismay, she “tried to do in forty minutes what the other class did in two-and-a-half hours” (Brenda, February 18, debrief, p. 4). In addition, Nancy assigned the class a homework task, a review sheet (even though this class had not received the review notes), and a lab write-up that were all due on the same day. Brenda
discussed this issue with Nancy and asked her to think about making alterations. On the day the assignments were due, Nancy wrote that Brenda “was amazed that I had left the homework to be handed in at the beginning of class. However, looking at my tight time frame, I found it my only feasible solution” (Nancy, February 22, journal). Nancy continued:

I don’t know what to do with science but it just doesn’t feel like things are improving, and I have been there for three weeks. At this point in time, I feel as though the only way to get through is to be a dull transmissive teacher, so I can simply try to pass the practicum. (Nancy, February 22, journal)

The End of the Line

On February 23, Brenda and Nancy had finally scheduled a long-term planning session. They started the session by discussing Nancy’s previous lesson dealing with mitosis and how her approach had been somewhat confusing. As her introductory lesson to mitosis, Nancy wanted the students to take a sheet with the scrambled steps of mitosis on it, and to then put the steps into their “prediction” of the correct order and then to compare their prediction with the textbook. Brenda thought this was a creative idea but was concerned that this approach was being used as an introduction to mitosis rather than as a review. Brenda was trying to help Nancy recognize that when several students ask the same question it should be an indicator that something was unclear in the instructions.

Brenda: Well you had an opportunity... the kids were confused, they couldn’t see the tactic you were doing.
Nancy: Right.
Brenda: At any time did you feel the urge to stop and say ‘hey, let’s take a chance to talk this through...’
Nancy: Yes, I wanted to but then I think... it just triggered what I was just thinking... I made the same mistakes that I did last time where I thought to myself I could correct it with each as opposed to noticing, one pair asked me... a second pair asked me... I think I should start taking that as
cues... I didn’t think of that yesterday... but now reflecting on it I realize that I should have actually thought, hey... one group, two groups, three groups... let’s get everybody together on this.

(February 23, debrief, p. 4)

In previous lessons, when students seemed to be asking the same question, Nancy decided to go around to help each student individually. Brenda had discussed this procedure as an indicator that something needs to be clarified for the lesson to meet its objectives, and that teachers don’t often have the time to explain the same point to each student individually. In this instance, Nancy recognized that it was a similar situation and used the same strategy as before, but she now realized that it may be more fruitful to stop the class and explain the concept once to everyone.

Brenda raised concerns about what the students had understood from the lesson because she spoke with a student in the class who is “usually at about 98% and he couldn’t put anything on paper... he couldn’t even get a single step... so that tells you something...” (Brenda, February 23, debrief, p. 7). Nancy was surprised by the lack of success of the sequencing activity but had spoken with her former high school biology teacher about it at a recent professional development day. As Nancy stated:

He said mitosis... well you know what you should do is go [through] the steps because it is something very difficult for the students to understand. So I walked away from talking to him... thinking... well, I think that they can understand it and I wanted to try my sequencing. (Nancy, February 23, debrief, p. 7)

This event represents an instance where supportive suggestions of others were ignored.

The lack of communication and Nancy’s perception that she needed to stick to the time-line led to a fairly large confrontation dealing with mitosis. Brenda’s suggested time-line for mitosis was three full lessons, while Nancy decided that she would cut this schedule down to one lesson. Nancy realized that mitosis was a difficult concept, but she was
concerned that she was getting behind relative to the time-line. There was an upcoming exam that she assumed (incorrectly) had to cover mitosis, and she made assumptions about the depth and specificity of the mitosis lessons. The following excerpt highlights these implicit assumptions:

Brenda: Do your kids in your class know what a centromere is, or a centriole?
Nancy: No...
Brenda: Do they know what a spindle is?
Nancy: No...
Brenda: Because that is the level of complexity that they have to know the task at...
Nancy: Oh... but it’s not to that level in their textbook.
Brenda: That’s right.
Nancy: OK.
Brenda: But when did you discuss the level you want it to go at?
Nancy: With you... no...
Brenda: That’s right. (February 23, debrief, p. 15)

On February 24, Brenda and Chelsea informed Nancy that she would be receiving an “interim report” that is used by the university to indicate that serious problems are occurring. This conversation among Chelsea, Brenda, Alvin (the winter term faculty advisor), and Nancy that was scheduled for March 1 was initially set to discuss specific concerns and specific suggestions to address the concerns within a specified time frame. This action would be consistent with the accepted protocols for interim reports. As it turned out, the interim report meeting deviated from accepted protocols and ended up being an affirmation by Brenda and Chelsea that Nancy could not continue the practicum with them.

Nancy found the morning to be quite stressful as she prepared herself for what she referred to as “Nancy bashing hour... or two” (Nancy, March 4, journal). She found that Brenda’s comments did not come as any surprise, and she agreed that “we had a

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7 Although I do not have specific data, past experience suggests to me that less than 5% of student teachers receive interim reports.
communication problem (or lack of)” (Nancy, March 4, journal). She also wanted Brenda to know that she was a great person and was thankful for her efforts. Nancy also recognized how difficult a decision it was for Brenda and Chelsea to request that the practicum be terminated.

On a personal level, Nancy shared the following:

I am very upset that things have turned out the way they have. I am ashamed, and feel like I have failed. I realize that it was a communication problem, but I do feel that I have dismally failed! I am scared of the future because I do not know what is in store for me. (Nancy, March 4, journal).

Later, she stated that she had learned a lot and gained more confidence in her abilities. As well, Nancy believed that if she were given another chance she would “not simply begin all over again” (Nancy, March 4, journal) because, based on the experience with Brenda and Chelsea, she would have to do things differently. Specifically, Nancy stated that she would take more ownership of her practicum and be more assertive and confident rather than “simply trying to please my school advisor” (Nancy, March 4, journal). As well, she believed that she would make much more of an effort to communicate with her school advisors and to “have more of a working relationship” (Nancy, March 4, journal) with them.

Based on the recommendations of Brenda, Chelsea, and Alvin, Nancy was provided another location to continue with her practicum. The new setting involved teaching with three different school advisors, and working with the faculty advisor who was already working with other student teachers in that school (Brentwood). Brenda, Chelsea, and Alvin recommended that Nancy complete an additional two to four weeks of practicum. As it
turned out, Nancy successfully completed the practicum in the new setting within the existing time frame, and the university decided that additional weeks were not necessary.  

Brenda spoke extensively about her own perceptions of what she called “the longest week of my teaching career” (p. 1) that left her physically and emotionally drained. On Monday, just two days before the interim report meeting, Brenda stood outside of Nancy’s classroom and “behaviourally I have never seen that group of kids be so bad or so rude in my whole life” (p. 1) and that Nancy had “just absolutely lost control of the class” (p. 1). She then phoned Alvin; and, by the end of the conversation, “we knew where we were going” (p. 2) and that Alvin would contact the appropriate person at the university. In preparation for the interim report meeting, Brenda spent 4½ hours writing the report in order to be thorough and fair. Emotionally, Brenda stated that “this whole decision-making process is very difficult” (p. 2) and that she “felt like just a jerk inside” (p. 2) because she knew where this practicum was going.

The interim report meeting started by having Chelsea report about her concerns with Nancy’s performance, and was followed by Brenda sharing copies of her own report. Alvin had also asked Nancy to have a prepared report, but she had only written down a few things about her strengths and weaknesses and the differences that she perceived between her math teaching and science teaching. Nancy believed that she could work on these issues one at a time as long as she had planning time and a pre- and post-conference for each lesson. There was broad consensus about the areas of concern, and both Brenda and Chelsea felt that

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8 In light of Nancy’s practicum experiences at Harding, I felt that it was best that I did not explore the idea of continuing the same sort of rigorous data collection at Brentwood. I deemed it more important that she concentrate her efforts solely on having a successful practicum experience.

9 Brenda found it much more convenient to maintain an audio-tape journal. The following quotes are from the March 5 transcript, that is quite long. Journal entries are denoted with page numbers.
Nancy's required demands on their time were unrealistic. At that point, Brenda stated at the meeting "I haven't got anything left to give. I'm at an endpoint. I'm at the end of a big cement wall here. I've tried, and that's it" (p. 3) at which point Chelsea echoed the same response. Brenda then stated that "my heart just went to Nancy because she hadn't realized at that point that's what we were saying" (p. 4) but at the same time "I didn't think she quite realized how much stress we've been under through the whole process, and how hard it's been on us" (p. 4).

Brenda stated that she then left the meeting "feeling like the biggest heel in the whole world" and went with Chelsea to the staff room to allow Alvin and Nancy some time to discuss things privately. Brenda then taught a class, that she eventually dismissed 25 minutes early because she had "just run out of steam" (p. 5). She then went to the back room where Nancy had been the whole time, and they had a short chat. Brenda added that "I hope that Nancy understands that the decision we came to isn't out of hate, it's more out of caring" (p. 5).

Brenda stated that she spent the remainder of the day teaching her lessons, speaking with the other student teachers so that they "understood that it wasn't a witch-hunt" (p. 5) and speaking with other science teachers and the principal to inform them about what had occurred. Brenda also found the next day quite stressful as she had to teach the classes that Nancy had been working with and had to explain to the students what had happened.

They understood, but it was still very hard to stand in front of a group of kids and explain, in simple terms, the process --- no details --- so that they do understand that Nancy is an important person. And a lot of them had done one-on-one work with her. And some of the girls were very attached to her. And so it's a really hard thing to balance that out. (p. 6)
By the end of the week, Brenda believed that “as I look back on the kids and the classes’ reactions, it was the right move. It was the right time. It couldn’t have gone any longer” (p. 7) although “that makes me feel OK inside, but it still doesn’t take away the trauma of what’s gone on” (p. 8).

Brenda also had some strong feelings about the role of the university throughout the whole process. After the decision was made to end Nancy’s practicum on March 1, she never did receive any contact with a representative from the university. In fact, the only information that she found out about what decisions were made, where Nancy was later placed and how Nancy was doing, was either through me or from conversations with other student teachers in the school. Brenda realized that the university had all sorts of support mechanisms for the student teacher, but “the people who are left behind are also having to go through things and pick up the pieces” (p. 7).

Especially in light of the previous year’s experiences with Dave, Brenda expressed anger at how the university treats school advisors when things go poorly.

Really you’re just basically dropped. Once the decision is made, bang, you’re gone, we’re not going to communicate with you anymore, that’s it, you’re toast... like you’re only good for us when we can use you, but when we can’t use you, we don’t want to communicate with you. (p. 9)

Even more bluntly, Brenda added:

It’s like I’ve been divorced. It’s like nobody wants to communicate with you. It’s finished. (p. 9)

Brenda summarized this thread by stating that if the university wants to be serious about partnerships where there is sharing and working together, then the institution also needs to communicate with people even when things do not work well.
Understanding the Experience

After Nancy’s extended practicum was terminated, I interviewed both Brenda and Nancy on two more occasions. The first set of interviews were conducted in the weeks immediately after the decision to end the practicum was made. The second set of interviews were conducted approximately three months later. I begin with highlights of Nancy’s comments and conclude with Brenda’s perceptions of how the winter practicum unfolded.

Nancy’s perceptions. Nancy reflected on the practicum experience and realized that some of her own personal tendencies probably contributed to the lack of communication with Brenda. First, she admitted that if she disagreed with something, she would point out her disagreement, but “if they persist, I back down” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 1). She found it difficult to disagree with Brenda because “if it becomes a confronting situation, I’ll back down because I know I’m being evaluated” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 24). As a result, whenever Nancy did voice opposition, “if I find that they get defensive, that I’m opposing their judgment, then I just shut up” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 2). Due to a lack of social communication to develop a personal relationship (outside of the student teacher/school advisor context), all of “my interactions with her just stressed the fact that she was the evaluator” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 2).

Nancy highlighted the fact that she had very little interaction with Brenda during the two-week pre-observation period since she spent most of her time observing many different classrooms. Nancy also noticed that when things weren’t going well during the winter practicum “I started to think this isn’t a coaching session for me to improve, this is a session where they are evaluating me” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p.3). She had felt intimidated by
Brenda, and, at times, Nancy sensed “her whole attitude towards us meeting was very degrading on my part” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 3). A particularly memorable incident that Nancy shared had to do with her plan to read out the quiz marks (since she had seen Chelsea use the same approach). Brenda disagreed with the approach and also asked the Learning Assistance Teacher who happened to be in the room about whether it was a good idea. Nancy recalled that “it made me feel very small” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 4).

Nancy also felt an ambiguity about what she would do if it was her own classroom as opposed to what she should do if it was Brenda’s classroom. From the following statement, Nancy was not clear about whether to view herself as a teacher or as a guest in someone else’s classroom:

But it was her class. It’s not my class. Despite the fact that it is my practicum, it’s not my class. Well, it is my class. (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 11).

This ambiguity extended into situations where Nancy would ask Brenda for advice. She would approach Brenda with a series of options and the reasons for each choice, but Brenda would respond “You’re the teacher. I’m not going to be there when you’re teaching. So what would you do?” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 12). As a result, Nancy was frustrated because she sensed that Brenda “would not disagree or agree with any of them. You do whatever you want. And it was almost like... do it... and if you do the wrong one, I’ll let you know” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 12).

Nancy felt that when it came to some decisions about the classroom she needed to check with Brenda because these were Brenda’s classes. Nancy also knew that Brenda would probably tell her to make the decision herself. As a result, Nancy was often quite confused by what she should do, as illustrated in the following:
And then I felt like, No, I’m going to make a decision. I’m just going to do it the way I do it. No, but it’s not my class; it’s her class whether she told me... the way I do it. No, but it’s my class. No, it’s her class. No, it’s, you know. Hold on. But if I ask her, she’s just going to say I’m the teacher, I’m going to have to make the decisions. But if I don’t ask her and I do it totally wrong, then she’s going to wring me out for doing it totally wrong. (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 16)

This confusion would get exacerbated by other situations where, for example, Nancy wanted to penalize late assignments by one mark per day, and “Brenda said... ‘no, it’s 20% per day because that’s the way I do it and I’m taking over this class when you leave’” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 21).

Nancy admitted that, with the lack of communication and the constant feeling of being evaluated, she would become ‘extraordinarily tense’ whenever Brenda would enter the room to the point where “I wasn’t remembering what I was supposed to be remembering” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 16). The only time she did talk with Brenda was during debriefing sessions about lessons, and “I felt that every time I walked away from a debriefing, it felt like I wasn’t doing anything right” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p.44).

Nancy found the whole idea of debriefing sessions to be somewhat cryptic because one day she would get a list of things to work on, and “the next time we did a debriefing we never referred to the points on the previous evaluation” (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 44). As a result, it was not clear to Nancy whether she had improved on the other issues or whether Brenda had forgotten to put them down.

Does it mean that the points that were on this one and aren’t on this one... does that mean that I corrected them? Or does that mean that these ones are more important than these ones, and so forget about these ones and worry about these ones? Or does it mean that these ones are on top of these ones, and we have to remember all of them? (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 45)
Thus, for Nancy, it would have been much more helpful to have a sense of continuity in the nature of the key points that she needed to be working on and a sense that things were improving in those areas of concern.

Nancy commented on some of the differences that she sensed between Harding Secondary School and her later placement at Brentwood Secondary School. She stated that she immediately felt like a teacher because “they talked to me like I was a teacher” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 3) and didn’t feel like they were evaluating her right from the start. Nancy believed that the support and collegiality that she sensed at Brentwood made her feel much more competent and confident as a teacher. She sensed that her school advisors were there to help her and offered her complete access to their lesson plans and resources, while at Harding she was never quite sure about what she could use.

The school advisors at Brentwood were also “willing to hear why I was doing what I was doing” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 3). Nancy stated that she never did get to know Brenda on a comfortable level and “didn’t think she had confidence in me” so, as a result, did not share her mistakes with Brenda. She was so conscious of Brenda’s evaluations that “everything I did I always thought of her reaction” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 3). Nancy felt more relaxed and less rushed in her teaching at Brentwood because she sensed that keeping to a time-line was not as important at Brentwood as it was in her work with Brenda.

Nancy also sensed that the school advisors at Brentwood were much more available to her because they immediately gave her their home phone numbers. As well, two of her school advisors often worked quite late at the school, thus allowing for more informal conversations. On the other hand, Brenda’s responsibilities as a mother of two young children restricted her availability to Nancy, and in most cases she “felt like I have to ask for
an appointment” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 14) and was imposing on Brenda’s time. She also felt that the demands on her lunch hour at Brentwood were much less than at Harding, which allowed her more time to eat lunch and socialize with other staff members. As Nancy stated “at Harding I always felt like I was seeing the students everywhere” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 17).

The amount of available time also seemed to have implications for the nature of debriefing conferences. Specifically, if time was limited such that conversations were short, then the school advisor would often focus on things to improve, at the expense of highlighting some of the positive features of the lesson. As a result, Nancy often felt that Brenda only talked about “what I was doing wrong” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 64), whereas at Brentwood, she often received positive comments that gave her “that reassurance of confidence” (Nancy, May 26, interview, p. 65).

Overall, Nancy recognized that both Harding and Brentwood had many positive and negative features, although more of the negative features seemed to be predominant at Harding. Admittedly, Nancy’s own perceptions of being a guest in someone else’s classroom contributed to many of the problems at Harding. In the end, Nancy was given the second chance at Brentwood, and she reaped the benefits that come with “doing things differently” (Nancy, March 4, journal) by having a successful and rewarding experience in the second part of the winter practicum.

Brenda’s perceptions. Looking back at the practicum Brenda felt that, in the end, she and Chelsea had made the right decision about terminating the practicum. She believed that “it couldn’t have been dragged out any longer, so... it was almost for her that it was the best
thing in our minds professionally to do” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 3). When I asked her about whether it was strictly an issue of Nancy needing a large time commitment compared with other student teachers, Brenda stated that:

I will bend over backwards. I will flip triple flips. I will somersault for somebody who says, I need some help right here. I’ll sit down, I’ll do anything. The other clue is for somebody who starts to see stages of opening up. You start to see stages of... someone who’s listening and trying to work on things. That’s when the promise looks really good. That’s when you dig deep. Where we were hitting the last 3 weeks were a lot of big cement rocks. Things weren’t progressing well.

(Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 5)

But Brenda realized that Nancy would not communicate with her, and she also realized that “Nancy would freeze when I came around, and that’s really obvious” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 7). In fact, Brenda highlighted one instance where both she and Nancy were sitting in the back room doing some marking, and in over a three hour period “not once did she turn to say anything to me... and it was just unreal” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 7).

Perhaps the most telling incident, and a precipitant for realizing that this setting would no longer work, was when Brenda entered the room to watch Nancy teach and “she went beet red in the face, her shoulders tensed, and she started babbling at the front of the room and making mistakes all over the place” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 13). At that point, Brenda realized that Nancy could not possibly be successful if she continued in her classes because “I couldn’t even come to my room without creating this aura of stress” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 13). She realized that the learning curve would continue to decline in this setting, and “in respect to her as a person, let’s not extend the torture” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 14).

Brenda stated that she often found debriefing sessions difficult because Nancy would strictly be writing things down and agreeing with Brenda’s comments. In fact, even during
the interim report, Brenda was bothered by the fact that Nancy “agreed 100% with everything that was written” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 30) because “you can’t do that in a school... you cannot operate under that scenario... it just doesn’t work” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 31). She felt that Nancy did not:

have the ability to step back and look at things and say, you know, “I really had trouble with those kids today. Those guys in the corner. I was thinking of maybe trying this. What do you think?” That never came out.

(Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 11)

This inability on Nancy’s part altered the perception of Brenda’s own role such that Brenda felt like she was only there to critique and “you’re only seen as a feedback tool... you’re only seen as a monitor” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 12). Brenda would find Nancy’s lesson plans on her desk in the morning, and would become a “paper machine that read, evaluated, and handed it back” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 20).

Brenda expressed frustration with the lack of growth in getting Nancy to process her materials into lesson plans. She had exhausted her repertoire of strategies because:

we tried to sit down and we tried to talk... but then you get to the point where how many more ways do I have to work through to get what I want? And is it anger that you want. Well, if it’s anger that you want, and anger is going to get me results, then that’s what I’m going to have to use.

(Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 10)

Thus, the combination of poor communication between them and the lack of growth contributed to increasing the stresses of an already tenuous working relationship.

Brenda shared the fact that students were also coming up to her in the hall and telling her that “it’s not working... we can’t connect... things aren’t happening” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 14) and were asking if they could attend the science 10 class that she was still teaching. Brenda also alluded to “befuddled conversations” (Brenda, June 18, interview, p. 39) with a variety of parents in the community about how the student teacher was doing. She
also said that the content mistakes in the teaching of mitosis and the subsequent student
misbehaviour were the proverbial straws that broke the camel’s back. Even though she was
concerned for Nancy’s growth as a teacher, she was also concerned about the students’
growth too, and in the end “I couldn’t sacrifice those kids any longer for her growth”
(Brenda, June 18, interview, p. 38).

In the final interview, Brenda and I returned to the interview that we had done
regarding her perceptions of being a school advisor. I asked her about the issues of
responsibility and guidance, to which she replied “I don’t think with Nancy that I was ever
able to make the steps to guidance” (Brenda, June 18, interview, p. 7) because Brenda felt
that she always had to be the instructor. Brenda felt that she could not move out of this mode
because there was little evidence in Nancy’s growth that would allow her to step back from
being so direct.

We explored the issue of expectations and what assumptions she had about the
student teachers before they arrived for the winter practicum. Brenda expected that student
teachers should arrive “with an understanding of a lesson plan, and the structure of a lesson
plan... not the ability to execute it” (Brenda, June 18, interview, p. 10). She recalled that
Nancy simply brought a binder of materials that she had collected and had put the materials
into sections that denoted activities for each lesson.

Brenda continued to express her frustration with the university’s approach to working
with school advisors. She stated that in many ways her classroom is her home, and “I
welcomed her into my home, made sure that she had everything she needed... provided her a
desk and a quiet space... to make her at ease” (Brenda, June 18, interview, p. 43). She
believed that the university also needed to understand the winter practicum from the school advisor’s perspective:

We worked, we talked, we conferenced, we did everything. All of the sudden... it’s like the university treated us like nothing. In other words, we’ll use you in the school, we’ll take your expertise, we want your time, we want your energy.
(Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 2)

In the end, Brenda was saying that, at the very least, it would have been appropriate to get a phone call from someone at the university as “simply a recognition of services rendered... and that takes you a long way in a professional group” (Brenda, March 11, interview, p. 3). One year earlier Brenda stated that “if you get burned too many times... you get burned out” (Brenda, year one interview, p. 4), and, in light of the difficulties she had faced with her last two student teachers, it should come as no surprise that Brenda is no longer involved with the university’s teacher education program.

**Summary**

This chapter has highlighted some of the salient features of how Brenda worked with Nancy during their time together at Harding Secondary School in the winter practicum. It has illustrated how the initial inability to establish a personal and professional working relationship triggered a series of reactions that eventually made the relationship intolerable and untenable. To the credit of both participants, their agreement to continue with my research under these circumstances is a testament to their mutual desire that something of value can be learned by others. This case clearly illustrates the emotional toll that difficult practicum experiences have on both the student teacher and the school advisor. The data have been selected to illustrate typical and recurring themes within the practicum experience that will be revisited in the analysis in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER 6

Conceptualizing the Cases from a Curriculum Perspective

Introduction

This chapter draws upon the two case studies presented in Chapters 4 and 5 and examines them using the curriculum perspective of learning to teach that was developed in Chapter 3. The first part of the chapter highlights some of the dynamics in the interplay between the two levels of the curriculum framework. More specifically, I examine some of the parallels and tensions between how the school advisors attended to both the student teachers’ practicum learning and the students’ classroom learning. I also explore instances where the school advisors recognized such parallels and tensions.

The second part of the chapter utilizes the two case studies to develop a sketch of some key elements of what the school advisors deemed as important to attend to in their work with the student teachers (i.e., level two of the curriculum framework). These key elements evolved out of my focus on the commonplaces of curriculum as they relate to the three questions of curriculum implementation, and serve to directly address the second research question “How do teachers enact their roles as school advisors, and what are the foci of the school advisors’ work with student teachers?” The foundations for answering the remaining research questions of “How do teachers perceive their roles as school advisors?” and “How do student teachers perceive the role of the school advisors?” were established in the presentation of the case studies in preceding chapters. The pertinent discussion sections of this chapter will add further elaboration.
Parallels and Tensions Between the Two Levels of Curriculum

Conceptualizing the practicum as two levels of curriculum affords us the view that school advisors attend to the student teachers' learning in addition to their regular responsibility for the students' classroom learning. From a curriculum perspective, the school advisors' views of teaching and learning are evident in what they are encouraging their student teachers to strive for, and in how they work with the student teachers. Parallels between these views would indicate a consistent philosophy of teaching and learning and some degree of recognition that working with a student teacher entails enacting a curriculum of learning to teach. In addition, the tensions between the two levels of curriculum would indicate areas where there was divergence and the factors that inform such divergences. An exploration of the parallels and tensions between the two levels of curriculum as experienced in the cases of Brenda and Brian follows.

Brenda's Case

In Brenda and Nancy's situation, the lack of communication affected the quantity and quality of verbal interactions. The limited data prevent me from making any definitive claims. The data do suggest that Brenda had high expectations of the students in her class, and, in fact, this expectation was a consistent ethos present in the larger context. Specifically, the school itself took pride in the fact that a majority of its students went on to post-secondary schooling. Nancy observed that Harding students were much more demanding of her time than Brentwood students and often took up much of her lunch hour with extra help.
Brenda clearly saw herself as a professional in her work, both with the classroom students and with Nancy. She gave 100% in her role as a department head, coach, and community member, and this commitment applied to the added responsibility of her role as a school advisor. Brenda had high expectations of herself and took pride in the fact that people could depend on her. High expectations of professionalism were placed on Nancy, and, as the case shows, these expectations became a source of tension and contributed to the breakdown in communication.

Brenda believed that guidance is an important part of working with a student teacher, to “look at who they are as an individual and to find the best route for them” (Brenda, year one STEPP, p. 1). She believed that she needed to accept the student teachers and to help them grow as best they can. This philosophy was consistent with her own view of working with students (i.e., level one of the curriculum framework) where “you accept the students as who they are and try to get them to grow the best they can in the period of time that you have them” (Brenda, year one STEPP, p. 3). In both cases, such guidance and support can only occur in a context where there is open communication and a perception of initiative on the part of the student or student teacher.

Unfortunately, in Brenda’s view, Nancy did not start on the right foot, and, due to the exigencies of her responsibilities in math, Nancy had little time to spend with Brenda during the early period of the practicum. As part if this professional expectation, Brenda was looking for Nancy to initiate conversations so she could provide some support, but even in the case where Brenda suggested that they meet for long-term planning sessions, Nancy never initiated efforts to schedule them. Due to lack of communication and what she felt was less-than-adequate growth, Brenda felt that the needs of her students (i.e., level one of the
curriculum framework) could not be sacrificed any longer in the service of Nancy’s needs as a student teacher (i.e., level two of the curriculum framework).

Although the following issues centre around the student teacher rather than the school advisor, three additional parallels between the two levels of curriculum warrant attention. First, in the same way that Nancy was often unclear to the students about her expectations for what was due for homework, Nancy also believed that Brenda’s expectations of her had been unclear because they were unspoken and assumed. Second, Brenda was concerned that Nancy was attempting to cover too much information too quickly, which was having the effect of overwhelming the students. This information overload is mirrored in Nancy’s feeling of being overwhelmed because she perceived that Brenda was pushing her to keep to the time-line and to make improvements at too fast a rate.

Third, in the final interview with Nancy, we returned to what she had written in a fall-course reflective exercise about her perceptions of good teaching and good learning.

Good learning involves comfort of students in their learning environment, cooperation with the instructor (i.e., does not give up), positive feedback, and constructive criticism. (May 26, interview, p. 26)

Although these were Nancy’s views of good teaching and learning within the context of her own teaching of students (i.e., level one of the curriculum framework), the statements also serve as a concise summary of what she perceived was missing from her own role as a student teacher working with a school advisor (i.e., level two of the curriculum framework).

**Brian’s Case**

Brian’s experiences as a school advisor, science consultant, university supervisor, and university-course instructor attuned him to being reflective in his practice as a teacher and
school advisor. As mentioned in the case, Brian was intrigued by my research perspective of conceptualizing the practicum as a curriculum of learning to teach and engaged with the idea in his reflective journal.

Brian's prior experience as a graduate student exposed him to the science education research that explores the implications of a constructivist view of learning (although his experience in the teacher education program at the university may have led him to recognize that constructivism did not characterize how the program was run). This view of learning had already guided Brian's own classroom practice for years. His recognition of the futility of the 'teaching is telling' philosophy applied to his espoused classroom practice with students and to his intended work with Amy.

Brian's preference for a more reactive approach in his work with Amy was consistent with his belief that teaching is not effective without a context where the learner internalizes the need to know something. The sense of urgency created by a perceived need is much more fruitful to explore than in a situation where Brian presents suggestions before Amy even recognizes that something needs to be altered. This approach has parallels with the constructivist-based classroom teaching approach of conceptual change teaching (see Posner, Strike, Hewson, & Gertzog, 1982). Within conceptual change teaching, it is intended that, through carefully planned activities, pupils recognize that their current understanding of a particular science concept is limited, and thus they may be more receptive to considering alternatives forwarded by the teacher. In fact, the video tape that he asked Amy to watch was an example of Brian modelling such a teaching strategy.

Early in the practicum when Brian watched Amy giving the students a myriad of necessary and important pre-lab instructions, he realized the daunting task inherent to
learning how to teach students with clarity and purpose. More importantly, he realized that all of the nuances of these instructions could not possibly be “covered all through talk!” (Brian, February 17, journal). Brian saw the obvious parallel to his own work with Amy. His reference to “Chinese boxes” is indicative of his recognition of and understanding that he is attending to the two levels of curriculum simultaneously. In the same way that teachers cannot tell students everything about a lab, school advisors cannot possibly tell student teachers everything about teaching.

The “Chinese boxes” analogy was most prevalent when Brian recognized that Amy’s difficulties with the students mirrored his own difficulties in his work with her. For example, Amy misjudged the students’ ability level in the same way that Brian misjudged Amy’s ability level, and the remedy to both contexts was the teacher’s need to provide more structure. Brian advised Amy that she needed to draw out a concept a number of times in a number of different ways in order to enhance the chances that the students could make sense of it. This technique parallels his own work with Amy in that he used a variety of strategies (e.g., ‘think aloud,’ ‘mental modelling,’ and ‘turn teaching’) to assist her in being able to better plan her lessons. As well, Brian’s insistence that Amy needed to help the students see the big picture of the subject matter mirrors his own need to help Amy see the big picture of teaching.

In many ways, the “Chinese boxes” that Brian constantly refers to are quite similar to Schön’s (1987) coaching model of “Hall of Mirrors” in that the school advisor’s interactions with the student teacher model the desired interaction that he wants the student teacher to enact with her students. There are instances “when coaching resembles the interpersonal practice to be learned” (p. 297). Brian devoted a considerable amount of time in interviews
and in his reflective journal entries to examining the process of his work with Amy. In the same way that he encouraged Amy to attend to her students such that they acted as an “invisible coach,” Brian engaged in discussions with Amy with the intent of improving his mentoring practices.

As Brian reflected on how the practicum was progressing, he expressed some concern that Amy had retreated to a traditional approach of having the students fill-in-the-blanks to take notes. He recognized that Amy had much better classroom control in these situations but worried that this practice would become her preferred way of teaching. Ironically, he feared that she would settle into the kind of teaching that he had spent his entire career rallying against. Amy was achieving a desired (and necessary) result in her own teaching, at the expense of Brian’s desired result in the students’ learning.

To assist Amy in preparing more concise and clear lessons that moved the students from simple concepts to more complex ones, Brian advised her to “follow the book” (Brian, February 17, journal) and to imagine the students are soldiers who respond only to clear and direct orders. “So there is my dilemma... as a dyed in the wool constructivist... let’s pretend that [kids] can’t think” (Brian, May 21, interview, p. 11). He reflected that “it horrifies me to hear this advice uttered by these constructivist lips!” (Brian, February 23, journal) and it is “a contradiction that I am struggling to comprehend and rationalize” (Brian, February 23, journal). These examples serve to highlight how Brian’s advice to Amy (aimed to improve her practice) were direct contradictions to his own beliefs about teaching and learning but were deemed necessary in assisting Amy’s growth. In fact, his commentary in his reflective journal admitted that “I offered some advice that must have been a surprising thing to hear from me” (Brian, February 17, journal).
As Brian further reflected on his own views of teaching and learning, he began to recognize a contradiction in his reactive approach with Amy. Early in his journal, Brian commented on the flawed concept of “discovery learning” because “it assumed that all students were capable of sorting out all the mysteries of science from exposure to critical events and phenomena” (Brian, February 2, journal). Towards the end of the practicum, he realized the flaw in using a reactive approach and recognized that he had assumed that Amy could sort out all the mysteries of science teaching by having the responsibility to plan and conduct her own lessons. The contradiction was that “I don’t lay out the entire science curriculum to my pupils for them to blunder through and then step in to correct their mistakes, so why would I do that for student teachers?” (Brian, April 9, journal). He realized that he needed to re-evaluate the assumption that university course work prior to the practicum adequately prepares student teachers to immediately take on all the responsibilities of teaching. Brian began to realize that he needed to be much more conscious and attentive to the student teacher’s needs and be able to design a curriculum to attend to those needs.

During data analysis, I noted a few additional parallels between the two levels of curriculum. First, the trend of Amy’s lessons fizzling out about 3/4 of the way through parallels how the problems of the practicum seemed to escalate about 3/4 of the way through (which coincidentally was the approximate time where the issue of the final evaluation was introduced). Second, Amy’s inability to get the pupils more involved in taking on more of the conceptual load of a lesson mirrors Brian’s inability to reduce Amy’s dependence on him for direction in lesson preparation. Third, Brian observed that Amy’s pupils started tuning her out when she constantly talked to them about their behaviour, in the same way that Amy started tuning out Brian when he constantly talked to her about lesson planning. Finally,
Brian understood and valued the curriculum of learning to teach but was frustrated by his inability to successfully implement it, in the same way that Amy understood and could articulate the importance of clarity and pace in the delivery of lessons but was frustrated by her inability to successfully implement them.

Drawing attention to the parallels and inconsistencies within the two levels of curriculum is helpful for two reasons. First, such examples bring attention to the curricular nature of the learning to teach process. The identification of parallels between a student teacher's difficulties with implementing a curriculum for the students and a school advisor's difficulties with implementing a curriculum for the student teachers can serve as a context for discussion. In addition to finding comfort in realizing the similar frustrations inherent to all teaching, there is the potential that discussions between the school advisor and student teacher about one context can help in the resolution of the problems in both contexts. Second, the inconsistencies in how school advisors work with student teachers and students can serve as an opportunity for the school advisor to reflect on the supervision process. It also provides a context for the school advisor to share his or her rationale for doing so, thus revealing the teacher thinking that educators engage in.

**Summary**

The examination of the parallels and tensions between the two levels of curriculum served to highlight instances where the school advisors' views of teaching and learning with students were consistent with their views of teaching and learning with student teachers. Insights into how a school advisor works with students were gleaned from the nature of the suggestions they were encouraging the student teachers to enact in their teaching. Since the
school advisors were ultimately responsible for the students’ learning (i.e., level one of the curriculum framework), their suggestions for improvement were intended to produce a desired form of teaching that was more in line with the teaching and learning to which the students were more accustomed.

Tensions between the two levels of curriculum provided additional insights since they highlighted instances where the school advisors were aware of how their work with the student teachers was markedly different from their work with students. Brian’s recognition of these inconsistencies as the practicum progressed catalyzed him to re-think his entire approach to working with a student teacher. Additional similarities between the two levels of curriculum were identified to reinforce the value of conceptualizing the student teachers’ practica as a curriculum of learning to teach because the complimentary instances from the classroom teaching of students are indeed curricular issues.

**Conceptualizing the Curriculum of the Practicum**

This section of the chapter draws on the two case studies to highlight some of the significant features of the school advisors’ work with the student teachers and to begin the process of conceptualizing a curriculum of learning to teach. The analysis focuses primarily on the work that Brian and Brenda did with Amy and Nancy respectively, rather than on elements of the knowledge base of teaching highlighted by Shulman (1987), for example. I draw on salient aspects of each case study (as well as on other data not previously reported) to highlight certain elements of these two school advisors’ work with student teachers. The end product of this process is a collection of the school advisors’ strategies that were used within certain thematic areas of a curriculum of learning to teach.
Revisiting the Three Questions of Curriculum Implementation

The data analysis was focused around the three questions of curriculum implementation as I applied them to the context of the school advisors' work with the student teachers (i.e., level two of the curriculum framework). The three questions of curriculum implementation are:

1. What is the pedagogical objective that the school advisors are trying to convey to the student teachers?
2. How are the school advisors getting at the pedagogical objective with the student teachers?
3. How do the school advisors know when the student teachers can understand and perform the tasks associated with the pedagogical objective?

More specifically, the answer to the first question was determined by revisiting the cases in Chapters 4 and 5 with the purpose of identifying the pedagogical objectives that the school advisors were trying to convey to the student teachers. These pedagogical objectives were prevalent in the interactions between the school advisors and the student teachers. In many instances the pedagogical objectives remained the same, but the school advisors used different strategies to assist the student teachers in understanding and performing the tasks associated with the pedagogical objectives. The various strategies common to a pedagogical objective were then grouped together and treated as a thematic area. Creating the need to know within a lesson and implementing smooth transitions within lessons are two examples of pedagogical objectives that were then grouped within the thematic area of lesson planning.

The outcome of this process of analysis provided the answer to the second question. Finally, the means the school advisors used to recognize that the student teachers were able to understand and perform the tasks associated with the thematic areas characterized the answer to the third question.
The first two questions were addressed by focusing attention entirely on the interactions between the school advisor and the student teacher (i.e., level two of the curriculum framework), although the themes of these interactions likely emerged from the school advisor's assessment of the student teacher's actual in-class teaching. The answer to the third question proved to be more elusive for two major reasons. First, because I limited my analysis to themes already established, the unit of analysis remained at a fairly broad level. For example, one of the major themes in Amy's case was lesson planning, and Brian focused his attention on helping her with the more discrete components of lesson planning, such as defining objectives clearly, linking the topic to students' interest and experience, allocating time to activities in accordance with objectives, and indicating transition procedures. In the case study, their discussions about lesson planning usually touched on many of these components and did not exclusively attend to any single discrete component. In addition, the issue of lesson planning was a constant topic of their conversations for the duration of the practicum. Thus, evidence for resolution of lesson planning components was difficult for me to determine, although, at the fairly broad level, it was clear that the issue of Amy's ability to plan lessons was not resolved.

The second reason why the answer to the third question proved to be elusive was because the evidence that the student teacher was able to understand and perform the task had to be examined at both levels of the curriculum framework. Using the same example as above, Brian recognized that Amy understood the importance of indicating transition procedures in her lesson plans through their discussions in both planning and debriefing sessions (i.e., level two). The evidence that Amy was still unable to carry out appropriate transition procedures was determined through Brian's observations of her classroom teaching
(i.e., level one). Brian’s increasing frustration as the practicum unfolded was due to the fact that on issues such as lesson planning, it was clear to both of them that Amy understood what needed to occur but was unable to secure those ends on a consistent basis in her classroom practice. For the two reasons that I have identified, there is little evidence in the cases that Brian or Brenda felt comfortable enough with their respective student teachers’ classroom abilities to see the student teachers as having become sufficiently competent in the particular area. On the contrary, there is ample evidence that the major issues that the school advisors identified at the outset of their work with the student teachers were continuing issues throughout the winter practicum.

The Pedagogical Objectives as Thematic Areas

In many ways, the school advisors ‘managed’ all aspects of the student teachers’ and students’ curricula, although the latter was attended to indirectly through the school advisors’ work with the student teachers. I use the term ‘managed’ in the same way that Cuban (1992) talked about the need to manage dilemmas. He defined a dilemma as “a conflict-filled situation that requires choices because competing, highly prized values cannot be fully satisfied” (p. 6), and, because of this, dilemmas are ‘managed’ rather than ‘solved.’ I find that the concept of managing dilemmas accurately depicts the decisions that school advisors are faced with when working with the student teachers and students in the learning of their respective curricula.

Following the process of identifying the various pedagogical objectives in the two case studies, I categorized the various strategies associated with attaining the pedagogical objectives into the following thematic areas that the school advisors attended to in their work
with the student teachers. These thematic areas are related to: (a) the student teachers’
learning, (b) the working relationship, (c) experiences outside of the classroom, (d) lesson
planning, and (e) classroom management. The school advisors’ goal is to manage the student
teachers’ learning while ensuring that the classroom students are receiving purposeful
instruction. In addition, the school advisors’ strategies to provide understanding in one area
must not jeopardize the student teacher’s growth in other areas.

Linking the thematic areas back to the four commonplaces of curriculum that form
the basis of the curriculum framework, the first two themes (i.e., areas a and b) primarily
focus on the ‘teacher/learner’ relationship, the third theme (i.e., area c) provides explicit
attention to the school ‘milieu,’ and the remaining areas (i.e., areas d and e) can be
characterized as the key elements of ‘subject matter.’

In something as complex as learning to teach, any attempt to create mutually
exclusive categories for analyzing phenomena will be problematic. Issues predominant in
one category are obviously affected by, and, in turn, affect other categories. For example, the
issue of lesson planning is inextricably linked to how the lessons unfold in the classroom, and
successful implementation of conceptually clear lessons impacts on the likelihood of student
misbehaviour (and thus, the need for the school advisor to focus on classroom management).

The remainder of this chapter presents my analysis of the case studies using the first
two questions of curriculum implementation. I begin each section by identifying the
particular thematic area. Then, I highlight the strategies that the school advisors used to help
the student teachers address issues associated with the thematic area. Following this
attention to the first two questions of curriculum implementation, I highlight some interesting
issues that arose from my understanding of the two case studies that are germane to the
thematic area. As explained earlier, I do not intend focusing attention on the third question of curriculum implementation because the issues inherent to the thematic issues were not resolved during the winter practicum.

The Student Teachers' Learning

The issue of the student teachers' learning encompasses a range of school advisor concerns. This section highlights how the school advisors perceived their roles in working with student teachers and articulates some concerns about the basis on which they made earlier judgments about the student teachers' abilities.

Both school advisors spoke of the importance of treating each student teacher as an individual rather than having a single approach that they used with all student teachers. An implication of taking such an approach is the importance of making an early and accurate initial diagnosis of the student teacher's abilities in order that the school advisor can provide the necessary support, and structure appropriate learning opportunities to accommodate the student teacher's development. What becomes obvious from both case studies is the significance of the early impressions that the school advisors had of the student teachers. As the case studies illustrate, these impressions were established fairly quickly and were based on limited and sometimes wrong information about the student teachers' classroom teaching abilities.

Based on the fall two-week practicum, Brian made an initial assessment of Amy's abilities that proved to be too optimistic. As the winter practicum unfolded, Brian realized he had misjudged Amy's abilities, and he then shifted from his preferred "reactive" approach to a more "proactive" approach in his work with Amy. Based upon early observations of
Nancy’s conduct in the school setting, Brenda made an initial appraisal that Nancy did not fully understand the responsibilities and commitments necessary to become a successful teacher and adopted an explicit step-by-step approach with her. As well, because both Amy and Nancy had undergraduate science degrees, their school advisors assumed that their respective student teachers had subject matter competence.

Three forms of evidence contributed to my claim that the school advisors based these decisions on a restricted knowledge of the student teachers’ abilities. First, both school advisors had limited opportunity to observe the student teachers in classroom settings. Prior to the start of her first class in February, Amy had only taught a few short segments within some lessons during the fall pre-practicum observation period. Nancy taught only one lesson to Brenda’s biology class during this pre-practicum observation period. School advisors can also indirectly get a sense of student teachers’ abilities through their conversations about teaching. Brian and Amy conversed extensively about their personal views about science teaching, whereas, by their own admission, Nancy and Brenda had little occasion to talk with each other prior to Nancy’s work with the two science 10 classes in the winter practicum.

Second, there needs to be some consideration of the context in which such observations of the student teachers’ classroom teaching occurred. Specifically, the only lessons that the school advisors had seen the student teachers work in occurred during the November pre-practicum observation period. These classes had been taught by the school advisors for three months already, and, by then, the students would have been quite familiar with the school advisors’ expectations and classroom style. In many ways, this is a fairly ‘safe’ environment for a student teacher to engage in a few lessons as a ‘guest,’ and always under the watchful eye of the school advisor.
This environment is in stark contrast to the context of the new classes the student teachers would be teaching after the semester break, where the students were unfamiliar with the school advisor and the student teacher. In this setting, the student teacher had the responsibility for “setting the tone” of the class, for establishing the expectations, and for creating the learning environment for the course. An analogy of a novice pilot flying an airplane captures the contrast between the two different contexts. The novice pilot ‘taking the controls’ of a plane for a short period of time while the plane is at cruising altitude is much different from a pilot performing all of the necessary functions to get a plane successfully into the air. In addition, the knowledge and skills of an experienced pilot are much more extensive than a novice who has had four months of ground school.

Third, another important facet of understanding student teachers’ abilities is to have some sense of what they should be capable of doing at the start of the winter practicum. This knowledge would be based on the course content to which they had been exposed in the fall university courses. In a discussion about this issue, Nancy stated:

in addition to getting at what it means to work with a student teacher... there is also your definition of what a student teacher is. (Nancy, March 5, interview, p. 36)

Brian had previous experience working in the university context that provided him with some sense of the fall courses. However, it was not until late in the winter practicum that he recalled that just because student teachers were exposed to the aspects of teaching (such as lesson planning) in university courses that did not necessarily mean they were now capable of implementing those practices successfully.

In Brenda’s case, she did not “even know what courses these guys are taking” (Brenda, year one interview, p. 11). As a result, Brenda’s information about what occurred at
the university came strictly from the faculty advisor (who may not be aware of course content), from student teachers, and “from my own experiences at the university” (Brenda, year one interview, p. 11). Based upon her years of working with student teachers, Brenda expected that they knew how to prepare lesson and unit plans and how to construct good exams. Nancy’s difficulties in living up to these expectations reinforced Brenda’s early perceptions about Nancy’s lack of understanding of the realities and stresses of teaching. Nancy’s surprise at being expected to already know how to prepare lessons and exams resulted in her concerns that the university did not adequately prepare her for the winter practicum.

The Working Relationship

The working relationship normally does not receive much attention in studies of the practicum experience, although the issue of establishing relationships with students is obviously a feature of good teaching. Within the highly stressful and evaluative nature of the practicum setting, both school advisors were aware of the importance of the student teachers’ self-confidence as teachers. The school advisors were also aware that the nature of the practicum experience and their own role in offering feedback could affect the student teachers’ self-confidence.

Within this section of the chapter, I identify four ways in which one (and sometimes both) of the school advisors consciously attended to the student teachers’ self-esteem and

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1 All school advisors received a copy of the practicum handbook which generally described the university’s teacher education program, but did not articulate specifics of what typically was covered in the science methods course, for example.
2 In fact, the student teachers learned about assessment instruments in a summer course that occurred after the winter practicum.
self-confidence. This section concludes by highlighting some of the factors that may strain the delicate school advisor/student teacher relationship.

Strategies to enhance self-esteem. The first strategy was to maintain a relationship with the student teacher separate from the context of the practicum. Brian believed that one way of attending to the issue of self-confidence was to establish a ‘personal’ relationship with Amy by sharing stories about their backgrounds, families, and daily domestic events. These conversations helped to establish a mutual trust and respect between them as people ‘assigned’ to each other in what has been characterized as “a thirteen-week blind date” (Bowman, 1991, p. 61). Having a personal rapport outside of the evaluative and critique-filled school advisor/student teacher relationship was an attempt to make distinctions between Amy as a person and Amy as a student teacher.

Brenda and Nancy were not able to establish this rapport in part because the logistics of Nancy’s practicum schedule and Brenda’s personal and professional schedule did not provide opportunities for regular conversation early in the practicum. They had little communication with each other during the pre-practicum observation period in the fall, and this pattern continued during the first few weeks of the winter practicum. The focus of their interpersonal dynamic was predominantly that of Brenda telling Nancy what needed to be improved.

The second strategy for enhancing self-esteem was for the school advisor to be conscious of both the nature and timing of feedback. In terms of the nature of feedback, Brian was aware of the need to have a balance of positive and constructive comments. In addition to highlighting positive features of Amy’s abilities, Brian also saw the need to keep
his feedback to a minimum and to focus only on the most important issues. Brian consciously decided not to comment on every single lesson Amy taught because he believed that too much feedback would be overwhelming. Brenda also attempted to balance her feedback by picking her words carefully and offering encouragement.

In terms of timing of feedback, both student teachers told their school advisors that they had difficulty in hearing about lessons immediately after they had been taught. As a result, whenever possible, both Brian and Brenda adjusted the timing of feedback so the feedback session would occur at the end of the day or at the start of the next day.

After particularly problematic lessons, both school advisors would intentionally delay giving their feedback to the student teachers for a day or more. This 'delayed feedback' strategy would allow the school advisors an opportunity to 'cool down' from their own feelings about what they were seeing and would also allow the student teachers some time to distance themselves from the events. The added time between the poor lesson and the debriefing session allowed for the emotions generated during the lesson to dissipate so that the school advisor and student teacher could have a more productive discussion about the lesson.

A third strategy the school advisors used was to share their own 'war stories' of being student teachers. The student teachers were often surprised that their school advisors, whom they saw as excellent teachers, actually experienced hardships in their own process of learning to teach. This realization indirectly had the effect of bolstering the student teachers’ confidence as what they were experiencing was not unique. In addition, Brian also shared with Amy the fact that he did not really learn the content of the science courses until he was teaching them.
The fourth strategy, which was implemented by Brian but not by Brenda was to monitor how the student teacher was feeling and how the school advisor could be more helpful. Brian often asked Amy how she was feeling about her teaching, about the practicum, and about his efforts to be supportive. Late in the winter practicum, during a debriefing session, Brian explicitly asked Amy how he could have been more helpful. As the following dialogue indicates, Brian is interested in hearing from Amy how he could have been more supportive.

Brian: What if we had done that earlier?
Amy: Well, if we talk about how you could change the school advisor roles, I think that at the beginning, piecemeal would have been really useful.
Brian: You mean looking at specific pieces of the lesson rather than the whole lesson... Okay. So it would have been more useful if I had structured your learning experiences more deliberately.
Amy: Well, the way we ended up doing it was kind of a ‘five alarm fire’ way. We worked on whatever had the biggest fire, so there’s a great deal of anxiety. (April 13, debrief, pp. 15-16)

In this exchange, Brian was interested in considering how he could have improved his own work as a school advisor. This exchange also foreshadows some of Brian’s ultimate changes in the way he thought about his work with student teachers by considering a more structured “proactive” approach rather than his preferred “reactive” strategy of “controlled serendipity.”

These four strategies served as the primary basis that the school advisors used to attend to the student teachers’ sense of efficacy as beginning teachers living through the tensions of being in a highly stressful and evaluative context. From the case studies it was clear that Nancy and Amy both appreciated receiving this kind of support. Even though the school advisors were conscious of the student teachers’ levels of stress and anxiety, their efforts did not alleviate all the potential tensions evident in the working relationship. There were always ‘threats to the working relationship’ that materialized.
Threats to the working relationship. First, as was clear in Amy’s situation, a student teacher can be quite sensitive to a school advisor’s moods and actions. Amy was quite conscious of Brian’s facial expressions as he sat at the back of the room observing her lessons. Unfortunately she misinterpreted his body language as a ‘barometer of her teaching’ such that on days where Brian was quite ill (and thus, quite expressionless), Amy felt that he was not pleased with her teaching. In another example, Amy saw anger on Brian’s face and took it quite personally as a statement about her lesson, even though Brian later stated that his anger was at the students for treating Amy so disrespectfully. Finally, the video tape of Brian’s teaching, which also had Tim’s teaching on it proved to be a serious threat to Amy’s relationship with Brian because of her perception of not living up to his expectations of good teaching. These examples highlight the constant and delicate sense of efficacy that is an issue even when school advisors are conscious of the student teachers’ self-esteem levels.

In Brenda and Nancy’s case, due to exigencies of the winter practicum scheduling, they did not establish a ‘personal’ relationship, and, thus, all of their interactions were within the context of what Nancy needed to improve. Without the personal relationship, certain events caused Nancy to feel quite intimidated by Brenda, and their relationship devolved into a paper-pushing process of critique. Brenda’s requests about Nancy’s feelings were ‘blocked’ by Nancy because she didn’t sense any value in sharing additional weaknesses with Brenda that would only re-confirm Brenda’s poor opinion of her. Their relationship deteriorated to the point where Nancy would tense up when Brenda entered the room.

Second, when certain areas of the student teacher’s teaching do not seem to be improving after interventions, these ongoing problems become a source of angst for the
school advisor and put a strain on the relationship between the student teacher and the school advisor. In Nancy’s case, her attempts to “please her advisor” by accepting all critique without question frustrated Brenda because she perceived that Nancy was unable to implement any changes to her lessons without external direction. Amy’s difficulties in classroom management and “setting the stage” in her lesson plans were ongoing problems that frustrated Brian. His frustration was both with the apparent ineffectiveness of the “thousands of words” exchanged on these issues and with his own inability to find a way to assist Amy in her learning.

The student teachers became quite frustrated with the school advisors’ insistence on continuing to point out weaknesses in areas that were not improving. In effect, the very feedback and critique that the student teachers found to be supportive and helpful at the beginning of the practicum became constant reminders that they were not making the desired improvements. The student teachers’ need for closure and a sense of progress during the practicum is critical. As well, both Amy and Nancy were fearful of receiving unsatisfactory final reports that would preclude them from being granted a teaching certificate. They also worried that a negative final report would limit their job prospects.

Third, the nature of the winter practicum was such that there was an emphasis on support functions in the early part of the practicum and a shift in emphasis to evaluative functions as the time to write final reports approached. The university’s teacher education program required school advisors to write final reports. Once the student teachers began to perceive more emphasis being placed on evaluation, especially when they were having on-

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3 The university required the final reports as part of its evidence before it recommended to the teachers’ professional organization that the student teacher be granted a teaching certificate.

4 School District hiring policies recommended that student teachers submit copies of final practicum reports even though such final reports were written for the university.
going difficulties that were not showing signs of improvement, the strain on the working relationship increased. Both Nancy and Amy felt that their school advisors had certain negative impressions of them that were unlikely to change.

The school advisors’ evaluations were influenced by what they saw happening in the student teachers’ classrooms, as well as by concerns about the student teachers’ performance being raised by students, other teachers, and parents. Brian stated that “standing on the outside sort of makes me uneasy, and I’m not managing that well” (Brian, March 12, interview, p. 24). He was also concerned about his own abilities as a school advisor because “it’s important for my own self-concept because I’d like to be able to think that what I’m doing is worthwhile, and it’s helping. I mean, there’s a rack of doubt” (Brian, March 12, interview, p. 25). Brenda was quite concerned about her own role as a school advisor because of her last two experiences with student teachers. Brenda experienced extreme stress in ultimately making the decision that Nancy’s practicum experience was not working and that a change of venue needed to occur.

Fourth, communication problems threatened the working relationship. Brenda was under the impression that the student teachers came to the winter practicum with an understanding of lesson and unit planning, and exam development. In her eyes, the university had not been clear about what knowledge the student teachers typically possessed, nor was the university clear about the expectations for student teachers by the end of the practicum. She also felt that the university did little to inform the school advisors about the teacher education program. In the absence of clear communication from the university, the
school advisors ultimately made assumptions (that were sometimes erroneous) about the
issues raised above.\textsuperscript{5}

The university communicated to the student teachers certain ideas pertaining to the
winter practicum, and both arrived at their respective practica with fairly clear ideas and
expectations about it. Nancy believed that the winter practicum was a place to make
mistakes and to learn from them. She quickly realized that her understanding was not
congruent with her school advisor’s. Amy entered the practicum with the expectation that
she would teach in constructivist fashion but modified her approach to better handle
classroom management. As a result, she felt that she was trying to run before she had learned
to walk.

The need for clear communication is important for all human interaction, but given
the evaluative nature of the practicum, miscommunications between the school advisor and
the student teacher can be particularly problematic. For example, in one of the planning
sessions, Brian ‘suggested’ to Amy that the upcoming lesson would be an appropriate place
to have some sort of an assessment such as a quiz. The lesson proceeded the next day and
did not contain such a quiz. In an interview, Brian clarified to me that, in fact, he actually
wanted the class to have a quiz but did not want to appear too ‘directive.’ Thus, Brian’s
actual suggestion was intended to be regarded as a direction. In a later interview with Amy,
she revealed that she took Brian’s “suggestion” at face value. In a second example, Nancy
articulated her frustration with receiving feedback each day, but never really knowing if

\textsuperscript{5} My reference to “university” is not intended to mean the faculty advisor, because faculty advisors do attempt
to convey relevant information of which they are aware. Unfortunately, faculty advisors do not necessarily
have access to all of the issues I’ve raised. Just as important, faculty advisors do not necessarily work with the
same school advisors each year, so it is likely that the school advisor had received mixed messages from the
“university” over the years.
issues from the previous day had been resolved. She would have preferred more continuity in terms of returning to on-going issues until such issues were no longer deemed as problematic. Unfortunately, she did not feel comfortable about communicating this feeling to Brenda. Later, Nancy would assume that if an issue like classroom management was not mentioned in a debriefing session, then she had improved in that area.

Miscommunications surrounding implicit expectations can influence a school advisors' final report of a student teacher in the guise of a phrase such as "does not take suggestions well." Misunderstandings are possible when a school advisor puts forward all statements in the form of suggestions even though some of them are actually directives. On the other hand, Nancy took all suggestions at face value and tried to implement them, but this action resulted in Brenda becoming frustrated with Nancy's inability to work independently. As well, several of Nancy's early incidents that started things off on the wrong foot were the result of Nancy making decisions that did not pick up on the implicit expectations that Brenda assumed to be obvious.

The goal of the winter practicum is the development of student teachers into beginning professionals who can take on a teaching position once they complete the teacher education program. Thus, as the practicum develops, student teachers should slowly assume more independence in their teaching and should be encouraged to make more of the decisions about their teaching. This progression would mean that student teachers would consider all suggestions and implement only those that they deemed as appropriate. Thus, it should not be surprising if the student teacher 'ignores' more of the school advisor's suggestions as the practicum progresses, even though these actions could be unsettling to a school advisor.
This section on managing the working relationship focused on the ways in which the school advisors attended to the student teachers' efficacy and how various factors were constant threats to maintaining a positive atmosphere that encouraged the student teachers' growth as teachers. The length of this section has been indicative of its importance as a central thematic area that influences and is influenced by all other aspects of the school advisors' work with the student teachers.

**Experiences Outside of the Classroom**

Learning to teach can be conceptualized as learning the social practices, local knowledge, rituals, practices, and vocabulary that are commonly shared within a community of practitioners (Hennessy, 1993). Both school advisors recognized the need to expose the student teachers to the vast array of roles and responsibilities associated with being members of the teaching profession. In addition to the 'in-class' experiences of working with groups of students for extended periods of time, they also encouraged the student teachers to participate in 'out-of-class' experiences.

As a starting point, Brian and Brenda both made sure that Amy and Nancy felt like they were staff members of the school, including arranging for the student teachers to have room keys, a mailbox in the office, a desk to work at, and so on. In addition, they made sure that the student teachers were included in department meetings, staff meetings, and professional development activities. Both student teachers were also encouraged to participate in extra-curricular functions to become more involved in the total school culture.

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6 Locally developed professional development activities occurred in the school and at the District Office. In Amy's case, she also attended a full-day workshop put on by the local mining association.
Amy assisted in coaching the track and field team, while Nancy was involved in coaching basketball and in supervising dances.

Brian also provided Amy with opportunities to perform many of the tasks associated with teaching students, such as maintaining the class attendance, entering the marks into the computer program, writing report card comments, attending parent-teacher interviews, and calling parents. These additional duties of a teacher were provided as they presented themselves. When the need arose, Brian would provide support so that Amy could successfully complete the task.

For example, during an interview, Brian mentioned that he provided Amy with the opportunity to make phone contact with a parent. He saw this as a “wonderful opportunity and it is something that you have to be able to do... and something that you should learn” (Brian, March 12, interview, p. 2), but at a pragmatic level he was also candid in saying that “she knows the kids better than I do, and I wouldn’t be able to say a heck of a lot” (Brian, March 12, interview, p. 12). In preparation for the phone call:

I sat down with her and talked about what the possible concern might be, and I’ve given her some suggestions... sort of a leg up on how to handle that... and something that she should be prepared to answer. (Brian, March 12, interview, p. 2)

In addition to some of the conscious and explicit ways in which the school advisors introduced the student teachers to the school culture, there were also ‘accidental’ ways in which the student teachers saw how a school operated. In one case, Amy realized what happened to students once she sent them to the office to see the vice-principal. She wrote up the ‘incidents’ in question and forwarded these to the vice-principal so that he understood the situation before he met with the students. As it turned out, she was ‘surprised’ that, as a
result of their inappropriate behaviour, the students were suspended from school for one week.

Nancy learned quite quickly that people are depending on you once you agree to assist in coaching a school team. When Chelsea was ill and unable to be at the basketball tournament, Nancy’s decision not to attend resulted in another staff member having to take responsibility for the event. Brenda conveyed to Nancy, “people in teaching have to know that they can rely on you 100% because that is what makes a good staff” (Brenda, January 29, interview, p. 8).

Amy was quite conscious of the science department culture and how Brian was treated as the ‘new’ person even though he had been employed within the School District for 17 years. For example, he was given an awkward timetable with many of the courses with more difficult students, he was not assigned to a classroom to call his own (and thus, taught his lessons in the classrooms of others), and he was ultimately provided a desk in a laboratory preparation area used by all members of the department.

Both Amy and Nancy became aware of the differences between schools, and how each school seemed to have its own unique culture. Through conversations with other student teachers, Amy realized that science departments reacted differently to the use of dangerous chemicals. Nancy’s experiences in two different schools provided her with an opportunity to compare the different school cultures. The most obvious difference that Nancy noticed was that the amount of time she worked with students outside of class time (e.g., before school, lunch time, after school, and during the periods in which she did not teach) was much greater at Harding than at Brentwood. In fact, Nancy stated that at
Brentwood she often ate a leisurely lunch with other staff members, whereas, at Harding, she ate lunch quickly while waiting for students to arrive for extra help.

**Lesson Planning**

This thematic area focuses on the issues of lesson planning that occur prior to their implementation in the classroom setting. Within this iterative process, these issues are also based on the successes and difficulties identified in prior lessons, with the intent of making improvements to subsequent lessons. The school advisors dealt with many aspects of lesson planning such as clarity of objectives, “setting the stage” (i.e., creating the need to know in the students), logical sequencing and pacing of concepts, transitions or links between concepts, clarity of concepts, questions for students, and closure of lessons.

In an attempt to provide Amy with access to his thinking about managing ideas, Brian used a variety of strategies to highlight the intricacies of lesson planning. In addition to encouraging Amy to observe other science teachers to get a feel for how others manage ideas in lessons, Brian also used many other strategies: ‘think alouds,’ ‘this is what I’m hearing,’ ‘follow the book,’ ‘mental modelling,’ and ‘turn teaching.’ Brian also used a variety of metaphors to describe the management of ideas such as “circling without landing,” “setting the stage,” a lesson is like a “three act play,” and lessons are like “chapters in a book” in terms of how they are all connected to tell a bigger story.

The purpose of using such strategies was to make his own thinking about how to manage ideas quite explicit to Amy, and, by doing so, he was hopeful that she could incorporate some of these elements into how she thought about managing ideas. Brian’s attention to the strategies of ‘think alouds’ and ‘mental modelling’ was his way of providing
Amy with a feel for what a lesson could look like, with the intent of assisting Amy with how to carry this procedure out in her classroom teaching. His use of metaphors seemed to be a way of getting a feel for why the issues of managing ideas were important ones. Through these strategies, Brian was able to determine that Amy understood the importance of the issues involved in managing ideas. It was also clear to Brian that Amy had difficulty in how to plan for and carry out these issues within her classroom lessons.

Amy had difficulty with carrying out the planning and enacting of lessons with appropriate attention to the management of ideas, even with the support of the plethora of strategies that Brian utilized. Because her communication with Brenda devolved into a paper-pushing exercise, Nancy had even less success. Nancy only had access to Brenda’s written corrections to her submitted lesson plans. Thus, Nancy could see what Brenda wanted changed but had no access to the thinking behind Brenda’s changes. What should have been an opportunity to talk about how a teacher needs to think about managing ideas became an exercise of making the corrections on the edited lesson plans. In effect, the lack of verbal communication with Brenda deprived Nancy of the critical thinking behind both why the issues inherent to managing ideas were important and how to incorporate such issues into her lesson plans. From Brenda’s perspective, she was frustrated with Nancy’s inability to make any improvements outside of those things that had been corrected on her lesson plans because, in effect, lesson improvement was a function of editing.

Debriefing sessions were the only context for face-to-face conversations about Nancy’s lessons, and, in the absence of on-going discussions regarding lesson planning, such sessions usually focused on the deviations from the intended lessons. In contrast to Brian’s understanding of Amy’s lesson planning difficulties as one of performance rather than
understanding, the limited nature of conversations with Nancy left Brenda with the
impression that her student teacher's lesson planning difficulties entailed shortcomings in
both understanding and performance.

Five significant issues were prevalent when I examined the two case studies as they
attend to the issues of ideas in lessons. First, both Amy and Nancy shared two difficulties
when it came to lesson planning. Both of them had initial tendencies to select activities and
then build a lesson plan around those activities, rather than to identify their objectives and
then select appropriate activities to support those objectives. Their lessons contained
interesting activities, but the lessons also lacked a clarity in what objectives were being
achieved. Amy and Nancy also had difficulties in creating long-term plans that conveyed a
logical development to the "big picture" of a unit. Clarity of a unit is dependent upon the
creation of a logical sequence of the key objectives to be met, so it follows that difficulties
with lesson planning would be magnified at the unit planning level.

Second, in both case studies, the student teachers were extremely stressed during the
practicum in their attempts to make improvements in all facets of their teaching. Both spent
an enormous amount of time outside of classroom teaching performing activities such as
marking, preparing lessons, collecting resources, and creating worksheets and activities.
Within the class, in addition to "setting the tone" with new classes, both were attempting to
make improvements in voice, movement, pacing, discipline, concept delivery, and general
classroom management. On numerous occasions, Amy and Nancy mentioned the difficulty
in having to work on improving everything simultaneously and would have preferred
focusing on issues one at a time. They often spoke of the fact that they had so much to think
about while engaged in the act of teaching that they would often get flustered in the class
because they could not remember everything that they wanted to do. Hollingsworth (1989) believed that more control of the practicum experience could “limit the cognitive overload and improve learning if preservice teachers were not required to think about all the aspects of teaching at once” (p. 186).

Third, Brian’s constant use of different metaphors to talk to Amy about the intricacies of lesson planning and classroom management is suggestive of the difficulties inherent to talking about the tasks of teaching. More specifically, metaphors seem to be used because the teaching profession lacks an adequate vocabulary and language to adequately convey a sense of what teaching entails. In addition, experienced teachers are seldom required to articulate the reasoning behind their teaching activities, and, in any case, such teaching activities are often done so ‘naturally’ that experienced teachers are often unaware of the reasoning that guided their actions. Thus, metaphors serve the role of being useful images that help teachers convey the implicit aspects of teaching to someone learning how to teach, although metaphors can also be difficult to interpret if the comparison being made is only proximate.

Fourth, Amy viewed a lesson plan as something personal in the sense that she had to have a ‘feel’ of ownership of a lesson before she was comfortable teaching it. She did not appreciate getting unsolicited ideas from Brian just prior to her teaching of the lesson because such ideas would detract her from her own planned lesson, which in turn would cause her to falter. Many of Brian’s strategies encouraged Amy to take his suggestions and to make personal sense of them, in the hope that lesson planning and delivery would improve.
Although Amy did not often watch Brian's teaching, many of Brian's strategies were conscious attempts to describe and demonstrate his own understanding of his teaching with the hope that Amy would construct her own sense of where her teaching needed to improve. These strategies were similar to Schön's (1987) coaching model of "follow me," which is characterized by situations where the advisor tells and demonstrates, and where the student listens and imitates. Such situations are focused on the school advisor's sense of the difficulties that the student teacher seems to be having. The student teacher's subsequent classroom teaching is an indicator of the sense that the student teacher has made out of the school advisor's "show and tell."

What became evident from the case of Amy was her difficulties with the "follow me" coaching model because she felt that she could not keep all the ideas in her head when she was teaching. As well, she often felt quite distant from Brian's representation because she was intimidated by his teaching style and the extensive experience base from which he had to draw. In addition, her difficulties in enacting Brian's suggested scripts would, in turn, affect her sense of effectiveness while teaching her lessons. Even in the 'turn teaching' situation where Brian and Amy jointly planned, but individually taught the same concepts to two different classes, Amy made conscious decisions to reduce Brian's influence in her own lessons as a way of ensuring some form of ownership of them.

Fifth, as the practicum progressed and both Amy and Nancy were not improving their teaching at a rate with which Brian and Brenda were comfortable, tensions led to divergent views of understanding of the experience. Schön (1987) characterized the concept of "learning binds" as situations where the lack of shared understanding (or willingness to entertain the prospect) leads to resistant and defensive stances by both participants that
results in a situation where it is impossible for either to break through to a mutual understanding. Both Amy and Nancy experienced loss of control, competence, and confidence which produced a sense of vulnerability and consequent defensiveness.

Brian could not understand why Amy was reluctant to plan appropriate lessons that attended to issues raised in countless debriefing sessions, and Brenda could not understand Nancy’s dependence on detailed feedback on each lesson with little evidence of incremental improvement. Amy reached the conclusion that Brian had ‘pigeon-holed’ her and that she would never become the student teacher he envisioned, while Nancy internalized that she would never meet Brenda’s expectations to the point of being uncomfortable in her presence.

Schön believed that unbinding is dependent on creating a context where the advisor and the student teacher are able and willing to openly discuss issues to reach shared understandings. He continued by stating that if the instructor maintains unilateral control of the dialogue and the student resists, then unbinding is unlikely. Important to the context of student teaching is that student teachers always know that school advisors are in control since they can ultimately decide the student teachers’ fates through the final practicum evaluation. In both cases, the student teachers perceived the risk of total honesty as being too great a chance to take. Thus, Amy could not share with Brian that she had no idea how to put some of his suggestions into practice, and Nancy could not challenge Brenda about whether Brenda’s expectations were reasonable. In fact, the reluctance to openly discuss such issues contributed to, and exacerbated the effects of, the learning binds themselves.
Classroom Management

Classroom discipline was a problem for both Nancy and Amy. The main strategy used by the school advisors to improve the classroom management was to encourage the student teachers to be firm and consistent, yet not to make management an overt focus in the classroom. Brian insisted that Amy wait for attention before starting and gradually increase her level of intervention so that ‘due process’ would occur. That is, the students would be warned in advance that certain actions would have certain consequences associated with them, and these consequences were perceived by the students as being reasonable. Brenda believed that many of Nancy’s difficulties in managing students could be improved with more attention to timing and pacing issues within solid lesson plans to reduce the number of situations where students would be rushed or confused by ambiguous or erroneous information.

Three issues related to the management of students are significant. First, both school advisors attempted to convey to their student teachers the inter-relationships between clear, purposeful lessons and student behaviour. Many of their comments about student behaviour centred around what the student teachers were doing (or not doing) that was causing the students to act inappropriately. Both school advisors wanted their student teachers to realize that the quality of the planned lesson was a factor in keeping students on task and that difficulties often arose when the students became frustrated by lack of clarity in purpose or instruction. Brian highlighted that Amy’s lessons ran out of steam about 3/4 of the way through the class and that was typically when “meltdown” would occur. Brenda highlighted that Nancy’s lessons were often rushed, lacked clarity of instruction, and contained subject matter errors.
Brian encouraged Amy to attend to feedback that the students were giving while a lesson is going on and to pay attention to signals that the students were on-task or getting uneasy. He believed that, in this way, the students in the classroom can act as an “invisible coach” because teaching is a “self-corrective exercise” (Brian, March 26, debrief, p. 13) once the teacher attends to how students are perceiving the lesson as it unfolds. This is similar to Schön’s (1983) concept of “backtalk,” where the experience itself has a way of informing one’s on-the-spot sense of how one should proceed. In a more overt way, during the pre-practicum observation in the fall, Brenda collected written feedback of the students’ perceptions of Nancy’s lesson in order to provide Nancy with a better sense of the students’ abilities and a more realistic view of the effectiveness of her teaching.

Second, both Brian and Brenda focused attention on what their respective student teachers were doing (or not doing) to effectively correct student misbehaviour once it had materialized. They challenged Amy and Nancy to question whether their classroom management strategies were reasonable and/or effective. Both student teachers were alerted to the negative consequences of the “mother deaf syndrome” where the students just tune you out as time goes on. Brian encouraged Amy to explore a variety of management strategies that would achieve the desired results and also be perceived by the students as being fair. He also intervened at one point to read the “riot act” to a class, with the hope of providing Amy with a fresh start with a class that she had been teaching for some weeks. Ironically, lack of a consistent management strategy and intervention by a school advisor (which sends a message about who is really in charge) were factors that contributed to the continued problems Amy had with classroom management.
The third important issue pertaining to the management of students centres around the incongruities inherent to differences between these school advisors and their respective student teachers. The school advisors had more effective and extensive repertoires of classroom management strategies. Their efforts to encourage the student teachers to utilize such strategies was problematic for reasons pertaining to experience, personality, and gender.

With experience comes confidence in managing students. The student teachers had difficulty in addressing classroom discipline as a discrete skill that was not intertwined with the myriad of other tasks they were trying to learn. The student teachers also lacked the classroom presence and 'reputation' that their school advisors were afforded. In addition, both Amy and Nancy could be characterized as having 'soft' voices that strained and rose in pitch when they spoke more forcefully. Their vocal delivery was in stark contrast to the 'teacher voices' and confidence with which their school advisors managed students.

At the surface level, these observations highlight the differences between novices and veterans. Experience and personality play a role in how well student teachers are capable of incorporating the suggested management strategies. More specifically, the management strategies that school advisors suggest are more than just a skill that a student teacher can learn, because they are dependent on these other factors. For example, acts, such as raising one’s voice to gain students’ attention or standing and waiting for silence, were not as effective for Amy and Nancy as they were for Brian and Brenda, even though the strategies themselves were identical.

Brian’s suggested management strategies (which he used) did not necessarily translate well when Amy attempted to use them. For example, Amy recognized that she was not able to “successfully ‘roar’ at the class” (Amy, April 25, journal). As well, Amy’s
strategy of involving the parents was something that Brian saw only as a last resort, even though Amy stated that the female teachers with whom she had spoken felt it was quite an appropriate strategy. Gender may play a role in the kinds of effective classroom management strategies that can be employed. To compensate for gender differences and personality differences, both school advisors encouraged the student teachers to seek out teachers with similar dispositions as their own, to see how those teachers managed their classrooms.

**Summary**

This section of the chapter explored the two case studies by utilizing the conceptual framework to look at the school advisor/student teacher relationship from a curriculum perspective. An examination of the pedagogical objectives that the school advisors were attempting to convey to the student teachers resulted in the identification of five thematic areas. The specific ways in which the school advisors addressed their objectives in each area, and salient issues related to each thematic area were identified. Multiple dimensions add to the complexity of managing the various aspects of the student teacher’s curriculum of learning to teach. The quality of the relationship between the school advisors and student teachers was challenged when the student teachers did not make adequate improvements in their understanding and performance in the pedagogical issues pertinent to the thematic areas.
CHAPTER 7
Conclusions and Implications for Practice and Research

Introduction

The challenge of this study has been to gain an understanding of school advisors, and how they conceive of and enact their work with student teachers. Data analysis has been informed by taking the stance that learning to teach can be viewed as a curriculum, and that two distinct levels of curriculum concurrently unfold as the practicum progresses. Such a curriculum perspective is helpful in understanding the complexities of the practicum setting, and how school advisors manage the learning of both the students and the student teachers. As such, this study has focused on the experiences of two school advisors, Brian and Brenda, in their work with Amy and Nancy respectively. This chapter begins by reviewing the findings of the study in light of the research questions. It then focuses on the conclusions, discussion, and on the implications for practice and further research.

Answering the Research Questions

The research was guided by three research questions, and for the most part, answers to these three questions have already been presented in the case studies of Chapters 4 and 5, and in the analysis in Chapter 6. The three research questions articulated for this study were:

• How do teachers perceive their roles as school advisors?
• How do teachers enact their roles as school advisors, and what are the foci of the school advisors’ work with student teachers?
• How do student teachers perceive the role of the school advisors?

The answers to these research questions also serve as a summary of the salient findings from this study.
The first research question asked "How do teachers perceive their roles as school advisors?" in order to examine what it means to have the responsibility of working with a student teacher. Brian initially saw himself as a role model who assisted Amy in seeing the "big picture." He defined his approach as a "controlled serendipity" which was characterized by waiting until issues arose and then taking a reactive stance. He believed that it was fruitless to address issues before they emerged in practice. He saw his role as supporting Amy's efforts as she learned how to teach, and that one of his greatest strengths as a school advisor was his ability to articulate features about his own practice. Brian believed that each student teacher is different and that the same approach cannot be used with all individuals. Although there was room for the student teacher to make mistakes, Brian recognized that his primary responsibility was to the students in his classes.

As the practicum progressed, Brian began to question his particular approach in working with Amy, and realized that he needed to make adjustments in his supervisory approach. By the end of the practicum, Brian was convinced that with future student teachers he needed to completely reconceptualize his mode of supervision.

Brenda summed up her view of being a school advisor in two words — responsibility and guidance. She believed in giving 100% commitment to the task of working with a student teacher in order to guide them through the experience. Taking a student teacher was also a responsibility to the profession because she recognized that many teachers had helped her during her early professional development. Although she saw herself as the supportive base for a student teacher, she also recognized her role in being a factor in hiring decisions when asked for a reference. She, like Brian, also saw each student teacher as unique and that her role was to find a route that was best for each of them. As a result, Brenda believed that
she worked with each student teacher differently. Brenda accepted the fact that there was extra time associated with taking on a student teacher, but she believed that the university also needed to devote more time, specifically in communicating with her. As a school advisor she felt a tremendous sense of responsibility to the faculty, and believed that such responsibility should be reciprocated.

The second research question “How do teachers enact their roles as school advisors, and what are the foci of the school advisors’ work with student teachers?” explored the ways in which Brian and Brenda carried out the day-to-day responsibilities of supporting Amy and Nancy in the process of learning to teach.

By asking questions about curriculum implementation and focusing on the pedagogical objectives that Brian and Brenda were trying to enact with the student teachers, I was able to identify the foci of the school advisors’ efforts. This also allowed me to focus on the strategies that Brian and Brenda used to get at these pedagogical objectives. The identified pedagogical objectives, in turn, were categorized into broader thematic areas that school advisors attempted to ‘manage.’ Five thematic areas were identified and focused on: (a) the student teachers’ learning, (b) the working relationship, (c) experiences outside of the classroom, (d) lesson planning, and (e) classroom management.

Regarding their student teachers’ learning as important, Brian and Brenda both spoke of the importance of treating each student teacher as an individual rather than having a single approach that they used with all student teachers. The implication of taking such an approach was the importance of making an early and accurate diagnosis of the student teachers’ abilities. Brian’s initial assessment of Amy was a bit too optimistic, while Brenda’s initial assessment of Nancy was that she did not fully understand the responsibilities and
commitments necessary to be a successful teacher. It is clear that first impressions matter, and have an impact on how the practicum unfolds. What is important to note is that these initial assessments of the student teachers' abilities were based on introductory phone calls and a few observations of teaching that occurred in very controlled situations, and on assumptions about the student teachers' level of preparation at the university prior to their arrival at the winter practicum.

The working relationship is a thematic area that highlights the importance of the school advisors' overt attention to ways of enhancing the student teachers' self-esteem. There was recognition of the importance of creating a relationship in which the school advisors could support the student teachers through this stressful period of time. In order to enhance self-esteem the school advisors tried to establish personal relationships with the student teachers, limited their feedback to major issues, delayed providing feedback after particularly difficult lessons, shared stories of their own student teaching experiences, and monitored how the student teachers were feeling.

My study also revealed that there are constant threats to the working relationship and that such threats could erode (and in one case, destroy) the ability of the school advisors to interact with the student teachers in constructive and supportive ways. The threats to the working relationship included negative non-verbal behaviour, lack of time to develop a 'personal' component of the relationship, slow improvement in the student teachers' efforts to address ongoing problems in their teaching, lack of clarity of communication, and the evaluative nature of the practicum.

Managing experiences outside of the classroom focused on the school advisors' perceived role in helping the student teachers to see the vast array of roles and
responsibilities associated with being members of the teaching profession. Both Brian and Brenda provided their student teachers with a work space, room keys, and necessary photocopier codes, and made sure that they were included in department meetings, staff meetings, parents’ night, and other professional development activities. They also encouraged Amy and Nancy to assist with extra-curricular activities. Through the experience of being in a school for an extended period of time, the student teachers also learned aspects of the school culture on their own. For example, Amy realized the ‘pecking order’ of how a department treats a new staff member, and Nancy learned that each school (including the staff and the students) can be very different.

Typically, issues of lesson planning and delivery are dominant concerns for student teachers. The significant contribution of this study is that specific ways in which the school advisors assisted the student teachers in managing ideas were identified. Aspects of lesson planning dealt with during school advisor/student teacher conversation included clarity of objectives, creating the need to know, logical sequencing and pacing, transitions, clarity of concepts, questions for students, and closure of lessons. Strategies that the school advisors used to assist the student teachers with planning issues included ‘think alouds,’ ‘this is what I’m hearing,’ ‘mental modeling,’ and ‘turn teaching.’ In addition, the school advisors utilized metaphors such as depicting lessons as a “three act play” or like “chapters in a book” to illustrate the concept of planning and the bigger story that each lesson plays within a unit.

It became clear that strategies based strictly on providing advice to student teachers were not a panacea to their problems with lesson planning. There was a recognized difference between student teachers’ understanding of the importance of the features of lesson planning, and their ability to actually enact it. In addition, this aspect of teaching was
but one component of the myriad of issues that the student teachers were trying to attend to in the classroom, and they had difficulty focusing on everything at once. Ill-timed or excessive advice from the school advisors affected the student teachers' sense of ownership of the lesson, and led to "learning binds" that were difficult to alleviate.

In the area of classroom management, the school advisors supported their student teachers by encouraging them to explore strategies that were firm, fair, and consistent. They encouraged the student teachers to attend to the cues that the students themselves were sending about how they were perceiving the lesson. As well, both Brian and Brenda tried to convey to the student teachers the relationship between clear, well-paced lessons, and fewer management problems. At times, they assisted with classroom management while the student teacher was teaching, and in rare cases, would read the 'riot act' to the students and re-assert control. Both school advisors recognized that each teacher manages students within a range of strategies that compliment their personality, and thus, encouraged Amy and Nancy to go and watch teachers who had similar dispositions to their own.

The final research question "How do student teachers perceive the role of the school advisors?" brings attention to how the school advisors' intentions are perceived by the people they are trying to assist. Amy and Nancy both spoke highly of their school advisors' abilities in teaching, and like most student teachers, were amazed that experienced teachers can make teaching look so graceful. Initially, both student teachers were appreciative of the feedback they received from their school advisors and found it most helpful.

As the practicum progressed, and as improvements in their teaching practice were slow, the very things they found as helpful were later perceived as being detrimental to their teaching abilities and to their self-esteem. In Nancy's case, her inability to meet Brenda's
expectations, and their total inability to communicate on a personal level made her feel extremely stressed by the untenable situation. In Amy’s case, she became frustrated with only hearing about what she was doing wrong or that she was making little improvement in certain facets of her teaching. Both student teachers felt that the school advisors had settled on impressions of them that could not be changed.

The student teachers also perceived the practicum as a situation where they were powerless. Regardless of whether they agreed with their school advisors, Amy and Nancy recognized there was little to be gained by challenging their school advisors’ comments, directives, or assumptions. As a result, Nancy assumed a passive role of accepting and agreeing with all of Brenda’s comments, while Amy chose to tune Brian out. Initial receptiveness gave way to later reluctance. The need to receive a successful practicum report outweighed the benefits of being honest with their respective school advisors. In the end, both student teachers continued to respect their school advisors’ ability to teach, but were disappointed in how both of their practica ended on a negative note.

Conclusions

There are several generalizations that can be made from the qualitative case studies presented in this study. Firestone (1993) suggested that sample-to-population extrapolation, analytic generalization, and case-to-case transfer are three forms of generalizing from qualitative research data. I do not purport to use these two case studies to generalize to the population, because I do not claim that these case studies are representative of what happens in all practicum settings. In fact, doing so would be quite dangerous (Biddle & Anderson, 1986).
Analytic generalization is an attempt to make links between cases and theories, and in this thesis I have clearly utilized the same conceptual framework with two disparate cases. The intent of this study was to produce two rich case studies of how school advisors perceive and enact their roles in working with student teachers. The conceptual framework utilized a curriculum perspective that has its foundations in Schwab’s (1969) conception of the practical. Although not initially intended, the case of Brian and Amy offers two analytic generalizations about Schön’s (1987) coaching models. First, Amy experienced great difficulties in the “follow me” coaching model because she did not feel she had ownership of the lesson. She often felt quite distant from Brian’s representation because she was intimidated by his expertise in teaching. These findings suggest that there are barriers to the effective use of the “follow me” coaching model. Second, after countless interventions by Brian, Amy still had difficulty in making improvements to her lesson plans. This situation eventually led to a “learning bind” that was present throughout the latter part of the practicum because, as discovered much later, Amy did not feel that she could admit to Brian that she really did not have any idea of how to put some of his suggestions into practice. The evaluative nature of the practicum setting makes “unbinding” quite difficult.

Case-to-case transfer happens when readers can recognize essential similarities to cases of interest to them, and where rich descriptions allow the reader to assess the applicability of the study’s conclusions to their own situation (Firestone, 1993). I believe that I have provided two rich case studies for such purposes.

Important conclusions about this study can be made regarding the utility of the conceptual framework itself. The conceptual framework took the stance that learning to teach could be viewed from a curriculum perspective, and as such, the issues within the
practicum could be seen as curriculum issues. Analysis of two very different cases was enhanced by looking for the pedagogical objectives that the school advisors were trying to convey to their student teachers, and brought attention to the particular strategies that the school advisors used to achieve the pedagogical strategies. In addition, the four commonplaces of curriculum allowed me to realize that many aspects of the student teaching context fall outside of the simplistic assumption that school advisors assist student teachers in learning to teach. In fact, three of the five thematic areas suggest that issues of the student teachers’ self-esteem are quite important, and that learning about the milieu of schools is attended to overtly.

The conceptual framework also developed the idea that two levels of curriculum are operating within the practicum setting, and that the school advisor attends to both levels of curriculum. Illustrative examples in Chapter 6 highlight areas where Brian’s views of teaching and learning with students were similar to his views of teaching and learning with Amy, and these examples suggest that Brian’s view of teaching and learning is consistent across both contexts. Brian’s articulation of “Chinese boxes” is indicative of his own realization of the parallels between the two levels of curriculum. As well, Brian recognized tensions in situations where his advice to Amy was in total contradiction to his beliefs about good teaching. What appears to be an inconsistency in Brian’s views about teaching, is actually a conscious decision to help Amy improve her teaching abilities. In summary, the conceptual framework of depicting the school advisor’s role in the practicum as two levels of curriculum was quite fruitful in understanding the complexities inherent to the practicum setting.
Important conclusions can be made from the case studies themselves since they contribute to a literature where few studies have examined lengthy practicum settings, with a focus on the school advisor, using these data collection methods. The case of Brenda and Nancy presented a rare instance of a practicum setting where the school advisor/student teacher relationship deteriorated to the point where it could not continue. In addition to the findings highlighted in the answers to the research questions, the results of this study show that there are many complexities inherent to the role of the school advisor, and that school advisors are emotionally affected by their work with student teachers.

It is too simplistic to suggest that there are good school advisors and poor school advisors, because in both of these case studies, the school advisors had worked successfully with dozens of student teachers. If anything, it points to the uniqueness of each school advisor/student teacher relationship, and the need to question taken-for-granted assumptions about the role of the school advisor. These case studies clearly illustrate that a great deal of complexity lies just below the surface of taken-for-granted assumptions about the school advisors’ views, intentions, and actions in helping student teachers learn to teach.

Much of the literature on school advisors points to the need for them to have a better understanding of the university-based component of the teacher education program so they can assist the student teacher in meshing theory with practice. Brenda’s case highlights the need for the university to be more open and honest in communicating with her, both about the nature of the university program and about the quality of her work with student teachers. But such actions by the university should not be seen as a panacea to making the practicum run smoothly. Brian’s wealth of background experiences and familiarity with the university
program suggest that he was the ideal person to work with a student teacher, yet difficulties within his context did arise.

**Discussion**

My research contributes to the growing number of studies that explore the role of the school advisor and the school advisor/student teacher relationship that evolves as the practicum progresses. As stated in Chapter Two, few studies have examined the role of the school advisor in lengthy practicum experiences using these data collection methods. The findings of my research are consistent with and different from findings in the literature discussed in Chapter Two.

In relation to the supervision literature, there is little evidence of pre-conferencing but there is ample evidence of observation and post-conferencing. Brenda’s focus on three or four main points for improvement is consistent with Goldhammer’s (1969) emphasis on reducing the number of factors that the student teacher is trying to remediate simultaneously. Blumberg’s (1974) depiction of the “cold war” where there is an atmosphere of low trust and defensiveness resonates with the relationship that Brenda and Nancy shared. Brian’s shift to a more directive supervisory approach with Amy coincides with his recognition that she had difficulty in making improvements in her teaching. Brian’s directive approach is consistent with Glickman’s (1990) prescribed supervisory approach for student teachers operating at a low level of abstraction and a low level of concern.

In relation to the literature on school advisors, the negative practicum experiences in this study confirm Doyle’s (1990) assertion. Brian’s work with Amy clearly illustrated problems in Copas’ (1984) assertions about effective and ineffective supervisory behaviours.
Specifically, Copas' model does not account for instances where Brian's suggestions for improvement were helpful to Amy early in the practicum but the same suggestions were detrimental later in the practicum. Brenda's concerns about the lack of appropriate communication with the university supports the claims reported in Applegate and Lasley (1982) and Cole and Sorrill (1992). The sense of failure and frustration when student teachers do not make adequate progress (Duquette, 1994) was consistent with the feelings expressed by both Brian and Brenda. Finally, Sudzina and Coolican's (1994) assertion that unarticulated expectations can lead to a deterioration of the working relationship was realized early on in the case of Brenda and Nancy.

The results of this study were consistent with many of the findings reported in the survey-based literature on school advisors. In fact, this study goes beyond the numerical values assigned to concepts such as "guiding behaviours," "planning and delivery," and "personal support" by providing concrete descriptive examples of what such concepts entail.

**Implications for Practice**

The most obvious conclusion from this study is that the school advisors and student teachers benefited from having an increased understanding of the complexities of the practicum setting, even though the practica ended on less-than-ideal terms. In the absence of formal courses where school advisors and student teachers receive training about the supervision process, engaging in discussions about the process of supervision using the familiar language of curriculum can help participants to enhance their own practicum contexts. In the same way that good teachers should reflect on the quality of their classroom instruction, good school advisors should reflect on the quality of the student teachers'
practicum experiences. The ability to establish and maintain a working relationship appears to be an important characteristic of school advisors that may be considered as a selection criterion.

School advisors should closely examine the basis on which they make early judgements about the ability levels of student teachers, and should be especially cautious of making firm assessments during the two-week fall orientation. As was reported in the case studies, teaching one or two short segments of lessons in an established classroom is very different than starting instruction with a new class in a new semester.

Universities need to examine the systems they have in place to support student teachers and school advisors. They need to recognize that not just the student teachers are adversely affected by bad practicum experiences. Universities also need to examine their own assumptions about what sort of partnership they want to sustain with school advisors.

If teacher education programs acknowledge that student teachers learn at different rates, an examination of the principles of the teacher education program should be undertaken to determine the degree of flexibility that is available in terms of the teaching load that student teachers are required to have. Is it reasonable to assume that all student teachers should take on added teaching responsibilities in a pre-determined fashion? As well, if the teacher education program advocates that student teachers should be gradually immersed into the practicum setting, there needs to be an examination of what constitutes an appropriate teaching load at the start of the practicum. One suggestion discussed in this study was that student teachers begin work with several classes from the beginning of the practicum and gradually take on more of the teaching within these classes, rather than adding entire classes of instruction in an incremental fashion.
Implications for Further Research

Perhaps what has been most poignantly illustrated is a need for more study of school advisors’ practices in their work with student teachers to gain a better understanding of the factors and structures that enhance and constrain the quality of the student teaching experience. Brian clearly engaged in the broad idea of viewing the practicum as a place where school advisors enact a curriculum of learning to teach. Further research of this concept would be helpful to see whether additional thematic areas or particular teaching strategies within existing thematic areas would become evident. As well, future research could produce informative case studies that include all members of the triad (i.e., the school advisor, the faculty advisor, and the student teacher).

Research on practicum contexts where school advisors receive preparation in thinking about the practicum from a curriculum perspective could reveal productive ways they work with student teachers. The conceptual framework of this study has the potential to be a powerful tool in improving the quality of the student teaching experience, because unlike many of the clinical supervision models, the language of curriculum has a familiarity to teachers both in terms of what they should understand, and what they should do. A curriculum perspective also brings attention to the process of working with student teachers.

As this area of research begins to mature, future studies should examine the fruitfulness of various theoretical frameworks that can extend and enrich our understanding of the role of the school advisor and the relationships that are sustained during the practicum. Reflective practice has been a useful framework for understanding the ways in which student teachers can improve their practice, but further studies could focus on factors that enhance or constrain student teachers’ development. Lave’s (1988) text on situated cognition and Lave
and Wenger's (1991) work on situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation seem to provide useful theories that can compliment a view that curriculum decisions are practical acts. Also useful is Schöns (1983) argument that knowledge-in-action is a legitimate form of knowledge, and the derivative view that experience itself has an authority (Munby & Russell, 1994). Such work could enhance the explanatory and predictive power of our understanding of the relationships between school advisors and student teachers as they are immersed in the practicum setting.
References


