

“THEY’RE SO LITTLE AND YET THEY’RE BEING EXPECTED TO KNOW SO MUCH” A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER’S NARRATIVE OF TEACHING IN AN ACCOUNTABILITY ERA

By Chloé S. Bolyard

Missouri State University

William Pinar (2012) referred to the current climate in education as one of school *deform* in which teachers have no formal control over the curriculum due to accountability policies. Driven by mandates to help students achieve a certain score on standardized assessments, curriculum is narrowed, causing “historical amnesia, political passivity, and cultural standardization” (Pinar, 2012, p. 17). Pinar (2012) argued that not only is school *deform* “abusive to children and unjust to teachers,” but it is also “disastrous for democracy” (p. 221). When curriculum is scripted and aligned to standardized test material, academic freedom is greatly constrained. Pinar (2012) expressed concern that outcomes-oriented policies censor what is taught, limiting the ability to discuss and debate civic ideals.

Numerous researchers have supported Pinar’s (2012) critique, finding that accountability policies in general, and *No Child Left Behind (NLCB)* (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2002) and *Race to the Top* (USDOE, 2009) in particular, have resulted in an amalgam of unintended outcomes for teachers. These include unethical teacher behavior (Ravitch, 2011); narrowed curriculum and teaching to the test (Berryhill, Linney, & Fromewick, 2009; Noddings, 2007; Ravitch, 2011; Tienken & Orlich, 2013); lower teacher self-efficacy (Berryhill et al., 2009; Noddings, 2007; Tienken & Orlich, 2013); fear and anxiety (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012; Ravitch, 2011); published test scores (Ravitch, 2011); depersonalization of teachers (McNeil, 2000); and litigation (Amrein-Beardsley & Collins, 2012).

Starting my elementary teaching career between two policies calling for greater accountability, *No Child Left Behind* (USDOE, 2002) and *Race to the Top* (USDOE, 2009), I understand how these policies de-professionalize teachers by questioning and/or dismissing altogether their specialized skills and knowledge. I set out at the beginning of this study to fill a gap in the accountability literature by exploring a specific sample of the teacher population—veteran elementary teachers. I was drawn to veteran teacher perspectives due to the longevity of their time in the profession, and I was drawn to elementary teachers due to their prolonged engagement with the same group of students and their role in setting the tone for students’ overall schooling experience. The central question guiding the present study was: *How do veteran elementary school teachers narrate what it means to be a teacher in the current reform era?*

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I envisage teacher identity as an interactive, multidimensional construct, influenced by the history of the profession (along with their personal history in the profession), teachers’ livelihoods or daily experiences, the policy environment in which they teach, and the future of the profession. To gain understanding about how teachers self-identify, I adopted Pinar’s (1976) autobiographical curriculum theory, *currere*, situated within an interpretivist discourse (Quantz, 2014) of research in general, and Deweyan pragmatism in particular (Benton & Craib, 2010; Biesta & Burbules, 2004).

Bolyard, C. (2019). "They're so little and yet they're being expected to know so much" A kindergarten teacher's narrative of teaching in an accountability era. *Currere Exchange Journal*, 3(1), 31-41.

As a means of storying teacher experiences, I framed teachers' narratives by using *currere*, a "sketch of subjectivity-structured temporality" (Pinar, 2012, p. 5). *Currere* involves four moments: revisiting past experiences ("the regressive"), anticipating the future ("the progressive"), understanding the past and the future together ("the analytic"), and mobilizing for action based on this understanding ("the synthetical").

METHOD

To illuminate veteran elementary school teachers' experiences, this study employed narrative research methods. Narrative research provides unique insights when attempting to uncover stories of individuals' experiences (Creswell, 2013), by providing a frame through which individuals make sense of their lives (Leavy, 2008). Qualitative study intends to "elucidate the particular," rather than enable generalization (Creswell, 2013, p. 157). In the larger study, of which this narrative is a part, I used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2013) to seek veteran elementary teachers in grades kindergarten through fifth with 15 or more years of experience. Once gaining access to the research sites, I spent time with the participants to gather their stories through interviews and classroom observation. Through the narrative method, I restoried the data (Leavy, 2008) using Pinar's (2012) four lenses of *currere*: the regressive, the progressive, the analytical, and the synthetical.

Presented in this article is Katie Sprunger's¹ narrative. At the time of this study, Katie was a 19-year veteran elementary teacher at Potter Elementary,² an Ohio school founded on a progressive philosophy of education that values a non-graded approach to schooling, shared leadership, parent involvement, student ownership, and critical thinking. She had taught kindergarten for 11 years at Potter, some of which included both kindergarten *and* first grade in a multi-aged classroom.³

FINDINGS

Katie's tenure as a kindergarten teacher has allowed her to witness the myriad ways various policies have trickled down to even the youngest students in America's public schools (Hatch, 2002; Kagan & Kauerz, 2007). In this respect, her narrative provides unique insights into the changing world of kindergarten under policies calling for heightened accountability through high-stakes testing.

REGRESSIVE MOMENT

Katie's reflections on those aspects of her past that have contributed to her identity as a teacher included a discussion of her recruitment to teaching (Lortie, 1975), training, and early teaching experiences. Reflections on these topics illuminate turning points in her career that she sees as directly impacting her evolving identity as a teacher (i.e., moving states, buildings, and grade levels). Finally, she considers the past in light of her present experiences, identifying changes to teaching kindergarten, which have included a greater emphasis on academics and external mandates affecting her time management. These topics serve as the organizational framework for Katie's regressive moment.

ANSWERING THE CALL TO TEACH. Katie aspired to become a teacher, whether she realized it or not, from a young age. She remembers playing school as a child, assuming the role of the teacher. Katie recalls the teachers who left an indelible mark on her perception of the kind of teacher she hoped to emulate, her third-grade teacher, who showed an interest in students' lives beyond academics, and her cooperating teacher during student teaching, whom Katie admired for her dedication to teaching,

“fun, exciting, and bubbly” demeanor, and engaging presence in students’ lives.

Based on my time observing in Katie’s kindergarten classroom, one does not have to spend much time in her room to identify the parallels between her practices and those she described from her school and student teaching experiences. Over her years at Potter, she has latched on to the school’s student-centered philosophy, found a home in a building that matches her familial style of teaching, and has taken a proactive approach to addressing student behavior and learning.

IN THE REARVIEW MIRROR: CHANGES TO TEACHING KINDERGARTEN. Decisions made by central office administrators in Katie’s district have resulted in changes to the way she is expected to teach kindergarten. Whereas kindergarteners were once expected to spend their first year of elementary school learning the routines and procedures of school life, practicing using scissors and glue, and developing their social skills, recent changes have increasingly emphasized academics. Once viewed as staples in the kindergarten classroom, practices such as centers, thematic units, and learning through play are nearly nonexistent. Katie laments the transition away from imaginative play through kitchen time and block time toward more paper-pencil activities, with the recent focus on content over other necessary skills. She attributes this trend to legislative decisions that prioritize data-driven decision-making.

According to Katie, these higher expectations come at the expense of what she still views as worthwhile skills. For instance, the shift in focus limits her ability to teach students how to hold a pencil, follow procedures and rules, share, and get along with others. Artistic crafts that students once enjoyed are now frowned upon by her superiors who prefer measurable objectives, homogenizing students’ school experiences. Katie explains, “The expectation is for all kindergarten classrooms within the district to be on the same content unit and the same lesson at the same time.” Likewise, the turn toward prescriptive curriculum constrains her ability to incorporate student choice. Even snack time takes time and energy away from more academic tasks.

In recent years, personnel at the district level have taken a more top-down approach to school governance and decision-making, mandating the way teachers in Katie’s district organize their daily schedules, while drastically limiting collaborative planning time. Whereas Katie and her colleagues once received days off during the week to plan collaboratively, now the expectation is, “You’ll figure...out on your own time [how] to plan and meet with your [colleagues].” Teacher-based-team (TBT) meetings have replaced collaborative meetings of the past during which teachers once planned and prepared creative and thematic units. Instead, TBT meetings focus on data analysis and data-informed decision-making.

PROGRESSIVE MOMENT

Katie’s progressive moment reveals additional changes that she has experienced while teaching kindergarten and how these changes influence her predictions for the future. In an effort to reflect on her future, she spent quite a bit of time talking about the present. Her present experiences contribute to what I refer to as Katie’s uncertain persistence as a veteran kindergarten teacher. She questions the feasibility of remaining in the career for an additional 15 to 20 years, drawing on examples from her present to support her thoughts. Outside mandates, surveillance, testing, and a changing school culture exacerbate the uncertainty she feels about staying in teaching through retirement. Despite her rather pessimistic outlook, she finds herself unable to imagine

working in any other profession: "What else would I do? I love teaching, and I can't imagine doing anything else." She remains hopeful for the future by reminding herself of the job's rewards and recent improvements while finding ways to stay true to her philosophy of education.

Katie's regressive moment revealed the importance of the relational piece to her decision to become an elementary teacher. However, many aspects of her present divert time and attention away from the reason she chose the profession in the first place, causing her to question whether or not this job is still the right choice for her. Recent mandates enacted by district personnel have frustrated and overwhelmed her: "I wish I could just teach my students without all of the extra demands that continue to be put upon us." District decisions that exercise control over teachers' schedules, meetings, and curriculum have undermined her sense of autonomy.

To ensure compliance with district mandates, a number of surveillance practices have been established, further exacerbating Katie's uncertainties about the future. The district requires teachers to post a schedule, meeting certain requirements, outside of their classroom doors and then report data weekly to the principal and district. The practice of unscheduled walk-throughs results in a culture of fear and mistrust: "I feel like I'm being questioned, or I'm being judged.... The trust isn't there." District personnel assess her compliance with the district's adopted curriculum through snapshot classroom visits. For instance, during one walk-through, students were playing with Play Doh, but the evaluator, unfamiliar with that part of the curriculum guide, scored her low on her evaluation. Such practices result in Katie feeling that her district leadership is trying to catch her doing something wrong. She tries to understand the motivation behind their walk-throughs: "I think they've got pressure from the outside, along with our test scores."

Changes to the frequency and kind of tests administered in kindergarten contribute to Katie's pessimistic outlook for the future: "Everything comes back to test scores." Her discussion of changes to assessment provides numerous insights about testing at the beginning of elementary school. Katie feels an "enormous, lonely responsibility" to help students reach mastery. Her students' performance on the tests is factored into her evaluation as a teacher. In order to "get my A," as she calls it, her students must meet the district's proficiency rating. However, this rating is difficult to achieve due to students' challenging behaviors, Potter's "F" rating as a school, and the online end-of-year assessment that is administered in March, even though the school year ends a few months later. Exacerbating the obligation she feels to perform well, trickle-down effects from the Third Grade Guarantee (TGG) have raised expectations for students in grades prior to third grade. Under the TGG, Ohio requires third graders to meet a certain proficiency score in reading prior to being promoted to fourth grade. Those scoring less than proficient will be retained. Katie questions the merit of placing these high expectations on kindergarteners: "They're so little, and yet they're being expected to know so much. This is their first real school experience."

Reflecting on her progressive moment, Katie thinks about the prospective teachers joining the career in the future. Given her reflections, she would advise new teachers to consider whether the job, given its recent changes, aligns with their ambitions. She predicts that it will be difficult to find people who want to pursue a job in teaching if present conditions do not improve. Katie hopes education will improve by bringing back the artistic components of the curriculum students enjoy, having more parental involvement, and receiving more time to plan and develop relationships with teacher colleagues.

ANALYTICAL MOMENT

While Katie's present experiences as a veteran kindergarten teacher framed the way she reflected during her regressive and progressive moments, this third *currere* moment shifts its focus away from the past and future by zooming in on the present (Pinar, 1976). As each moment builds upon her new insights gleaned during the previous moments, Katie's analytical reflections revealed the various roles she associates with teaching kindergarten today. To further understand the complexities inherent to her present experiences (Schubert, Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002), Katie considers the interrelations of the past, present, and future (Pinar, 1976).

PRESENT REALITIES. To Katie, being a teacher entails more than imparting knowledge: "Teaching is more than just being a teacher." Instead, the title of teacher includes numerous roles related to working with students and responding to recent calls to use data to inform instructional decisions. Katie feels that, when it comes to student behaviors, she works as both a psychologist and a counselor to identify and problem-solve approaches for addressing student behaviors. To illustrate her point, she detailed the morning's events that transpired the day of our third interview:

This morning, I had one that was screaming with mom at the door, and mom was looking at me like, "What do I do?" And so, she said, "He wouldn't get on the bus, and he's screaming and yelling, and so the bus driver is saying he can't stay on the bus. So, here I am, but he's still screaming and yelling, and he's telling me he doesn't want to come to school.

Katie probes the mother for information, but the mother responds, "I can't get anything out of him." Meanwhile, a different student's father waits to change his son's conference time. Katie manages to assure the mother that she will take care of her son while simultaneously rescheduling a conference with the father and ushering the screaming student back into the room after he snuck into the hallway. While these events unfold, her classroom of 27 kindergarteners waits on breakfast that has yet to arrive.

Along with the many hats Katie wears when dealing with students and parents, another role she assumes is that of a data analyst. She discusses her Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) in writing this year, her students' average beginning-of-year scores, and the requirement to show growth. She wonders how to help them grow enough, while questioning whether or not she is teaching to the test. Since the transition away from proficiency and toward growth models, she notes the change in teacher attitudes about the beginning-of-year score—lower beginning-of-year scores allow for more growth. The district's expectation that teachers use data to inform instruction affects Katie's perception of her teacher identity: "I feel like I'm more of an analytical person, not really a teacher." Simultaneously, Katie sympathizes with the district's implementation of increased accountability measures while questioning the validity of said measures:

I get it. They have to hold us accountable. They need to see growth. They need to see the progress, but to tie it to teachers?... You need to have some accountability or something that shows growth from grade to grade, but then you do have those instances where they work their buns off and they still don't get it.

INTERRELATIONS OF THE PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE. In order to understand more deeply the intricacies of her present, Katie considers the impact of the future on the present, the past on the future, and the way her present is evident in her past and future. Katie's personal future impacts her present as she acknowledges the financial obligation of paying for her children's college necessitating her persistence as a teacher. This requires her to cope with and adapt to recent changes to her job: "Teaching is what it is, and I just have to figure out how to better myself or how to handle the new situations that we keep having...come to us and problem solve."

Katie also considers the impact of her past on her future as a kindergarten teacher, reflecting on the importance of relationship building to her. The impacts of accountability policies have left her with less time for informal teacher-student interactions that once occurred during centers.

Now, when I'm interacting with students one-on-one, it's used for assessments.... I do sometimes tie in personal stuff, but when it's one-on-one, it's more like, "I have to do this; I have to do that." So, there's less time for those informal one-on-one interactions.

She sees the insistence of using data as becoming more intense in the future, which means she will have to be more intentional about finding ways to build relationships.

Katie's analytical moment further sensitizes her to a nuanced understanding of her present by reflecting on those present experiences that were part of her past that she also anticipates continuing into her future. The relational aspect of teaching attracted her to the profession and sustains her today through the form of psychic rewards (Lortie, 1975). However, this may require more intentionality in the future given the changing culture of her school and the various time constraints that limit her informal interactions with students. She tries to continue past practices she believes are in the best interest of her kindergarteners (e.g., centers, morning meeting/share time, art) but anticipates doing so will become more difficult in the future.

SYNTHETICAL MOMENT

My final conversation with Katie involved a synthesis of her reflections about her past, present, and future as a veteran kindergarten teacher in an attempt to arrive at a more holistic understanding of Katie's identity (Pinar, 1976). During this moment, Katie reflected on what it means to be a teacher since the passage of *No Child Left Behind* (USDOE, 2002) and other accountability policies at the state and district levels that have impacted her work as a kindergarten teacher. She reiterated the tensions she feels and her tendency to dwell on the negative aspects of recent changes. With a better understanding of her present, the synthetical moment enabled Katie to "choose what of it to honor, what of it to let go" in that she aspires to move past the negatives by recognizing the positives (Pinar & Grumet, 1976, p. ix).

Recent district actions that have placed constraints on her time cause Katie to feel bogged down in negativity. As previously noted in her other *currere* moments, Katie feels she has less time to develop relationships with her students. This feeling cannot be overemphasized since, after all, the relationship piece is the aspect of teaching that drew her to the profession and serves as a psychic reward (Lortie, 1975) that provides her with the greatest on-the-job satisfaction. Challenging student behaviors strain her relationships with students while requiring a substantial amount of her time and energy. To cope with these challenges, Katie finds herself starting each new day with a renewed outlook: "I'm constantly having to tell myself, 'It's a new day.'"

In an effort to consider how her teaching identity aligns with the kind of teacher she wants to be, Katie reflected on an aspect of her teaching identity that she wants to change. Synthesizing the insights gleaned from revisiting her regressive, progressive, and analytical moments illuminated an area of her identity Katie finds problematic, as expressed in the following excerpt from an email she sent me:

I think my negativity is what I was/am honestly feeling. I think it is a true picture of the present. However, I don't like feeling that way, nor do I like being seen that way.... I DO love my job, and I know it's what my calling is. I wouldn't want to do anything else. It's just that a lot of stuff makes it harder to make a difference in my students' lives. That's where my own personal reflection of how to improve on my own attitude and be the light in their not so bright lives comes in.

She identifies areas where she can make improvements, one being the way she interacts with teachers in her building. Sometimes she passes other teachers in the hall, and they joke about counting down the time remaining until the school day ends. Instead, she wants to find a way to "pull the positive out" of situations, possibly by surrounding herself with positive people and constantly reflecting. She also believes positivity is contagious: "The more positives I give out, I think, the more positives I'm going to get back."

DISCUSSION

Katie's *currere* narrative elucidates her evolving identity as a veteran kindergarten teacher, aligning with Dewey's (1938/1997) theory of experience, specifically his continuity of experience. The purpose of this discussion is to "make sense" (Creswell, 2013) of Katie's narrative by placing her narrated experiences in context (Eisner, 1998). To this end, I draw connections between her narrative, classroom observations, and related literature. Specifically, this discussion centers on four themes from Katie's narrative: top-down decision-making, increased focus on academics, changing teacher-student relationships, and lessened morale.

EXTERNAL FORMS OF CONTROL

Forty years ago, educational scholars (Martin, Overholt, & Urban, 1976), predicted the effects of accountability initiatives in education on teachers, students, and schooling. They concluded that such recent initiatives would exacerbate existing hierarchies, further alienating teachers.

Although teachers will be given the opportunity to develop and implement goals for students, administrators will do the same for teachers, and so on up the line all the way to state and perhaps to federal levels. Teachers will be given freedom only within very strictly predefined limits. Under such circumstances, school systems will resemble large corporations where each subordinate is held directly accountable to his immediate superior at every rung of the hierarchical ladder. But the locus of real control will remain at the top, the locus of accountability at the bottom. (Martin et al., 1976, p. 77)

More recently, Gunzenhauser (2012), drawing from Foucault's (1975/1977) metaphor of the panopticon to describe disciplinary societies, argued that existing accountability policies enact forms of surveillance by encouraging teachers to discipline themselves. Katie must remain ready at all times for unannounced

visitors checking in on her adherence to district and state mandates. Additionally, she is required to share her students' progress in weekly data reports sent to the superintendent. These practices act as forms of surveillance over Katie's work.

In addition to Katie's comments about external forms of control during our four interviews, I visited Katie's classroom on a day when Potter expected a woman from the state to visit classrooms. When I arrived that morning to observe in her classroom for the first time, Katie told me about the visitor and hoped that she would not stop by Katie's room. Katie had remarked during one of our interviews that, due to her classroom's proximity to Potter's main entrance, she often received visitors. To Katie, teaching today involves an increased amount of surveillance from district and state leadership, a reality that is reflected in previous studies examining teacher identity in accountability reforms (Day, 2002; Lasky, 2005).

INCREASED RIGOR IN KINDERGARTEN

One way that district personnel have extended their reach into the classroom is by dictating the amount of time per day that Katie must spend teaching each subject. An increased focus on reading, math, and writing has undermined other aspects of kindergarten Katie views as equally valuable, echoing findings by Bassok, Latham, and Rorem (2016) who utilized two nationally representative data sets to compare kindergarten and first-grade classrooms between 1998 and 2010. Aligning with Wood's (2004) discussion of the narrowing of the school experience since *No Child Left Behind* (USDOE, 2002), Bassok et al. (2016) found that, compared to their counterparts in 1998, kindergarten teachers in 2010 devoted more instructional time to literacy and math skills while leaving less time for classroom centers focused on science and art. To Katie, an increased focus on academics stifles students' creativity, standardizing their learning experiences.

Additionally, prior to her district mandating the amount of time teachers are expected to spend on each section of their day, Katie gave her students a great deal of choice. Now, however, due to an increased focus on academics, she feels she has to make most decisions for her students in order to ensure their exposure to content they will be held accountable for on future assessments. Bassok et al. (2016) found the percentage of kindergarten teachers engaging students in self-selected activities fell by 40 percent from 1998 to 2010, while seeing a dramatic increase in whole-class instruction in 2010.

A heightened focus on data-driven decision-making in Katie's district has resulted in more paper-pencil activities for kindergarteners. She reminisces about past centers when, during the fall, she and her colleagues planned integrated units around leaves, during which students utilized magnifying glasses to examine and compare different leaves and counted how many leaves they had of each color. Due to current pressures to document student progress, she spends more time on district-adopted curriculum that consists of didactic forms of instruction (i.e., worksheets, textbooks, and workbooks): "I think it's too worksheety." Bassok et al. (2016) found that the use of reading and math textbooks in kindergarten more than doubled between 1998 and 2010. Similarly, their findings also revealed an increased use of worksheets in reading and math by 17 and 15 percentage points, respectively (Bassok et al., 2016).

Bassok et al.'s (2016) findings on the use of assessments by kindergarten teachers provide additional connections to Katie's feelings about the increased role of assessment in kindergarten: "Everything's test scores." Their findings suggest that kindergarten teachers in 2010 were more concerned with students' performance relative to their peers and to local and state standards than were their 1998 counterparts

(Bassok et al., 2016). Likewise, kindergarten classrooms in 2010 devoted significantly more time to standardized assessments than did first-grade teachers in 1999. Relatedly, Katie recognizes the trickle-down effects of the Third Grade Guarantee on her classroom practices, as she and her kindergarten, first-, and second-grade colleagues feel the pressure to prepare students for the high-stakes reading assessment taken in third grade.

CHANGING STUDENT-TEACHER RELATIONS

As mentioned previously, increasing demands on Katie's time have made it more difficult to maintain positive relationships with her students, undermining the interpersonal aspect of teaching that attracted her to the profession. Katie's experiences parallel Kelchtermans' (2005) narrative-biographical work with teachers, specifically the discussion about teachers' emotions and vulnerability during accountability reforms. Accountability policies have usurped the interpersonal dimension of teaching with a heightened emphasis on the instrumental dimension, through which technical means are linked to prescribed ends (Kelchtermans, 2005). Likewise, Lasky's (2005) findings revealed that, like Katie, teachers felt pressured to cover content at the expense of establishing relationships with their students. Instead of engaging in informal banter with her students during centers time, Katie now uses that time to assess students' progress to report in her weekly data meetings. The detrimental impact of accountability policies on student-teacher relationships has grave implications for students' social, emotional, and academic development, since positive student-teacher relationships have been correlated with increased student motivation and learning (Birch & Ladd, 1997; Koca, 2016; Pianta, Steinberg, & Rollins, 1995).

LESSENE D MORALE

The most negative effect of accountability policy, according to Gunzenhauser (2012), is the impact it has on teacher morale. The dissonance between expectations about teachers' work and teachers' beliefs about their practice negatively affects their morale (Gunzenhauser, 2012; Noddings, 2007; Sirotnik, 2004; Tienken & Orlich, 2013). The rewarding aspect of teaching, from Katie's perspective, building and maintaining relationships with students, is overshadowed by demands on her time and an increased focus on academics. The intense micro-management and surveillance of Katie's work result in a decreased sense of self-efficacy: "I feel like I'm not valued as a person, as a teacher, like I was before." Additionally, challenging student behaviors and the expectation to act as a data analyst interfere with her job satisfaction. These and other aspects of teaching kindergarten in an accountability era make it difficult to remain positive at work. She finds herself putting on a show while she is teaching, masking her emotions until she gets home with her family, where she feels she unleashes her frustrations.

CONCLUSION

Katie's narrative revealed the nuanced ways in which her past and present experiences, combined with her predictions about the future, contribute to her identity as a veteran kindergarten teacher in the context of recent reforms. More specifically, she finds herself acting more as a data analyst and less as a teacher. Her narrative surfaces the changing role of kindergarten teachers in an era that has pushed academic expectations down to even the youngest grades in elementary school. Additionally, for those pursuing a career in teaching because of the interpersonal appeal of the job, Katie's narrative draws attention to how an increased focus on data-driven decision-

making instrumentalizes student-teacher interactions. Further, her narrative illuminates the growing control district personnel exercise over teachers' instructional and time management decisions and the resultant feelings that can arise when district personnel make unannounced visits to teachers' classrooms. As Katie continues teaching, she will need to find creative ways to promote positive interactions with her students despite various demands on her time and the district's emphasis on frequent assessments. Likewise, she will need to continuously interrogate her attitude toward her work and toward her students to ensure she is not succumbing to the pessimism the present moment brings.

References

- Amrein-Beardsley, A., & Collins, C. (2012). The SAS education value-added assessment system (SAS® EVAAS®) in the Houston Independent School District (HISD): Intended and unintended consequences. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 20(12), 1-31. Retrieved from <https://epaa.asu.edu/ojs/article/view/1096/982>
- Bassok, D., Latham, S., & Rorem, A. (2016). Is kindergarten the new first grade? *AERA Open*, 1(4), 1-31.
- Benton, T., & Craib, I. (2010). *Philosophy of social science* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Berryhill, J., Linney, J., & Fromewick, J. (2009). The effects of education accountability on teachers: Are policies too stress provoking for their own good? *International Journal of Education Policy & Leadership*, 4(5), 1-14.
- Biesta, G., & Burbules, N. C. (2003). *Pragmatism and educational research*. Lanham, MA: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Birch, S. H., & Ladd, G. W. (1997). The teacher-child relationship and children's early school adjustment. *Journal of Psychology*, 35, 61-79.
- Creswell, J. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Day, C. (2002). School reform and transitions in teacher professionalism and identity. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 37, 677-692.
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience & education*. New York, NY: Touchstone. (Original work published 1938)
- Eisner, E. (1998). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
- Foucault, M. (1977). *Discipline & punish: The birth of the prison* (A. Sheridan, Trans.). New York, NY: Random House, Inc. (Original work published 1975)
- Gunzenhauser, M. (2012). *The active/ethical professional: A framework for responsible educators*. London, UK: Continuum.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). Accountability shovedown: Resisting the standards movement in early childhood education. *Phi Delta Kappa*, 83, 457-462.
- Kagan, S. L., & Kauerz, K. (2007). Reaching for the whole: Integration and alignment in early education policy. In R. C. Pianta, M. Cox, & K. L. Snow (Eds.), *School readiness and the transition to kindergarten in the era of accountability* (pp. 11-30). Baltimore, MD: Brookes.
- Kelchtermans, G. (2005). Teachers' emotions in educational reforms: Self-understanding, vulnerable commitment and micropolitical literacy. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 995-1006.
- Koca, F. (2016). Motivation to learn and teacher-student relationship. *Journal of International Education and Leadership*, 6(2), 1-20.

- Lasky, S. (2005). A sociocultural approach to understanding teacher identity, agency and professional vulnerability in a context of secondary school reform. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 899-916.
- Leavy, P. (2008). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Lortie, D. (1975). *School-teacher: A sociological study*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.
- Martin, D., Overholt, G., & Urban, W. (1976). *Accountability in American education: A critique*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Book Company.
- McNeil, L. M. (2000). *Contradictions of school reform: Educational costs of standardized testing*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Noddings, N. (2007). *When school reform goes wrong*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Pianta, R. C., Steinberg, M. S., & Rollins, K. B. (1995). The first two years of school: Teacher-child relationships and deflections in children's classroom adjustment. *Development and Psychopathology*, 7, 295-312.
- Pinar, W. F. (1976). The method. In W. F. Pinar & M. Grumet (Eds.), *Toward a poor curriculum* (pp. 51-65). Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Pinar, W. F. (2012). *What is curriculum theory?* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Pinar, W. F., & Grumet, M. (1976). *Toward a poor curriculum*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company.
- Quantz, R. (2014). *Written lecture #3: On interpretive discourses*. Unpublished manuscript, Miami University, Oxford, OH.
- Ravitch, D. (2011). *The death and life of the great American school system: How testing and choice are undermining education*. New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Schubert, W., Schubert, A., Thomas, T., & Carroll, W. (2002). *Curriculum books: The first hundred years* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Sirotnik, K. (2004). Holding accountability accountable – Hope for the future? In K. A. Sirotnik (Ed.), *Holding accountability accountable: What ought to matter in public education* (pp. 82-99). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Tienken, C., & Orlich, D. (2013). *The school reform landscape: Fraud, myth, and lies*. New York, NY: Rowman & Littlefield.
- United States Department of Education (USDOE). (2002, January 07). *No child left behind: Executive summary*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/NCLB/overview/intro/execsumm.html>
- United States Department of Education (USDOE). (2009, November). *Race to the top: Executive summary*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>
- Wood, G. (2004). A view from the field: NCLB's effects on classrooms and schools. In D. Meier & G. Wood (Eds.), *Many children left behind: How the No Child Left Behind Act is damaging our children and our schools* (pp. 33-50). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Endnotes

¹ pseudonym

² pseudonym

³ While the study occurred during the 2015-2016 academic year, for the sake of clarity, from this point forward, Katie's narrative is presented in present tense except when she refers to a time prior to the study (most often during her regressive moment).