

A Descriptive Study
Of Loopers in Four Schools

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A Descriptive Study of Loopers

In Four Elementary Schools

Melva Holland Belcher

(Abstract)

The concerns society has expressed regarding the education of children have prompted educators to relentlessly search for instructional methodologies and organizational designs to maximize student achievement. One instructional organizational design that has surfaced is looping. Looping is the process wherein the teacher remains with the same group of children for a period of two or more years. Looping has been tried at all grade levels with a single teacher or with a team of teachers and with the same students over a period of years. The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of looping in four schools and to provide a descriptive account. A case study approach was used. Teachers and principals at four elementary schools using looping were interviewed regarding their experience. Data were analyzed using a qualitative approach for emerging themes.

These findings indicated that schools implement the looping concept to build relationships, for instructional advantages, extended time and to lessen anxieties.

Also, schools implemented the looping concept by doing an indepth study of the concept and by allowing teachers and parents to participate voluntarily. Finally, specific outcomes as a result of the implementation of looping were as follows: parents were knowledgeable about school functions and the overall program of studies; students had a safe haven; and teachers felt that looping gave them more time with their students.

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CHAPTER I

The Problem

Educators and non-educators alike have publicly criticized our schools in recent years, and that criticism has caused educational leaders to intensify their listening. Declining achievement levels in our children have public school supporters dismayed. Even with the “high stakes” testing that’s taking place in Virginia schools, forty percent of schools may not be accredited by the year 2007 as reported by Joel Turner in the Roanoke Times dated November 4, 2000. Mark Christie, a member of the State Board of Education, said the bad news is the schools in the bottom category are in deep trouble in terms of student achievement and need immediate attention. There remains work to do because four of every ten schools in Virginia are not on track to meet the state’s standards to become fully accredited when the new requirements take effect. There was a report by Silvernail (1986) that indicated a rise in the dropout rate and an increase in illiteracy at the national level. Public outcry charges that more children are coming to school with fragile, unmotivated lives. Other explanations for the decline in learning and achieving include: an increase in television viewing, changing family configuration and curricular changes wherein youngsters are pressured to do too much too soon (Coletta, 1991).

Educators can give reasons and public school supporters can make excuses, but that will not erase the critical inadequacy of our schools, as the public views them. Along with new accreditation standards and improved standards of learning should come organizational flexibility and instructional initiatives that will accommodate varied student needs. Student needs are an essential component of the learning process, therefore, teachers must be allowed to utilize their firsthand knowledge of the children they work with and be supported by policies set by district supervisors and state officials. Too often policy decisions about education are based more on economic, social and political factors than they are on child development principles. But child development principles must be considered if a school system wants to emphasize student needs as key elements.

Teachers must be able to attend to a child's developmental stages through developmentally appropriate practices. Key players, such as school administrators and classroom teachers, have the interest and success of students at heart. They provide a positive learning environment to individualize the instructional program and allow students to progress at their individual pace.

The looping concept is an instructional/organizational infrastructure that could be considered as a means for meeting the needs of children. This concept is one tool for delivery of developmentally appropriate practices combining

elements of fun, teamwork, practical activities as well as social and academic learning opportunities.

Problem Background

School districts across the nation are going through a paradigm change in hopes of improving academic achievement. They are taking on the challenge of meeting the needs of a diverse student population. Student diversity has caused administrators and teachers to try a plethora of organizational/instructional practices, such as transitional and multiage classrooms, new course requirements, curriculum packages, testing policies, centralization initiatives, decentralization initiatives and a wide array of regulations in order to meet varied developmental stages and individual needs. District initiatives call for strong leadership, instructional flexibility, varied teaching styles and the formation of schools-within-a-school to improve student performance and ensure student success.

These are not new concerns. In 1920, John Dewey recognized that the great problem in education on the administrative side was how to unite the isolated parts (Holt, 1982). He discussed the need to break down grade barriers and eliminate the waste in education due to the way schools were organized. He viewed the administrator as the change agent to improve student performance, create stability and routine, and increase overall mental health. The principal, in the last ten years,

has used vision building, staff development and resource assistance as vehicles for improvement and to unite the isolated parts. Today, the individual school is increasingly recognized as the critical force for changing and improving student performance. This challenges school administrators to become risk takers as they promote innovative organizational and instructional practices.

In the 1960's, about forty years after Dewey's educational observation, teacher characteristics and teaching styles received a lot of attention in order to maximize student learning. The characteristics of a good teacher included such variables as teaching skills, knowledge of subject matter, enthusiasm, consideration and fairness in grading. Those teaching behaviors found to directly affect student achievement were feedback, questioning strategy, structuring activities, clarity of presentation, classroom reward structure, and task-oriented behaviors (Silvernail, 1986). Teaching is a complex, multi-faceted act and effective teaching involves an ongoing multitude of strategies and a superlative blend of theory and practice.

It is also necessary to create surroundings that acknowledge and address child development needs. The schools-within-a-school concept breaks a community of learners into smaller units. The child finds motives for constructive activity that correspond to his developmental needs when placed with a small

group of learners. He must have contact with an adult who is familiar with developmental practices and who does not get in his way by overprotecting him, by dictating his activities, or by forcing him to act without taking his needs into account.

The child's classroom environment must provide times for repetition, work to be done with his hands, assigned tasks that interest the child, materials that are age and grade appropriate. Curricula has to be innovative and address the multiple intelligence in each child. There has to be an instructional change that not only highlights superior work in reading and math but recognizes abilities in art, music, dance, physical activities and interpersonal relationships as valued traits in the academic setting (Gardner, 1993).

Even with smaller instructional classes and the use of varied teaching styles, time continues to be the greatest hindrance. Primary grades require a child to concentrate despite distractions and to cope with a full day of school. Early grades also require coordination between the hands and eyes, so that a child can write words on a page. A child who has not reached the developmental stage needed to meet these requirements is at risk and may fail. Some children need more time to learn and teachers need more time to teach and to make observations to determine a child's stage of development and readiness for different learning experiences and task.

While educators have done much to make primary grades more developmentally appropriate for young children, they continue to feel strong pressures to increase the amount of formal academic instruction. In addition to the pressures created by politicians and some educators, pressure may also come from parents who think that speeding up a child's intellectual development is advantageous, and that other aspects of development are far less important. Children are complete human beings - not memory storage units - and need to develop their physical, social, emotional and intellectual capabilities. A common sense approach to readiness, therefore, requires adults to consider all four aspects of development when determining a child's placement in a specific grade or program.

Young children experience considerable physical and emotional strains. As administrators make decisions about primary and elementary grade structures, they should consider the following reasons to give children "extra time" with the same teacher for two or more years:

- Family patterns of slow development
- Prematurity or physical problems in early life
- Immature motor development
- Easy distractibility and short attention span
- Difficulty with right-left hand or eye coordination

-Lagging social development

(Coletta, 1991)

Decision-makers should also consider the natural rhythm of childhood and realize that maturation rates vary widely. When children are pressured to take on tasks before they are developmentally ready, they suffer stress and loss of self-esteem (Coletta, 1991). Teachers feel locked into programs of study, curriculum and scheduling. That leaves the teacher very little time for innovation, simulation, creativity, experimentation or diversity in teaching. Teachers and students need unstructured time to wonder, question, share and acquire skills in a relaxed atmosphere. In order to meet with success, some students may need an extra year in a setting that is matched to their developmental stage.

Educators are trying a variety of organizational patterns to accommodate a diverse student population. One such organizational pattern is called looping, also referred to as multiyear, teacher-student progression, twenty month classrooms, continuous progress and teacher rotation. This organizational framework allows teachers to remain with the same class for a period of two or more years. Spending more time with the same teacher in a program of studies can relieve certain children of a tremendous burden, and allow them to experience school success. Teachers can appropriately address developmental needs, and fewer learning problems will surface.

The ‘standards’ and ‘mandates’ being legislated in many states require teachers to cram even more curriculum and instruction into the same school year. A teacher would have to be a wizard to provide individualized instruction to such a wide range of children, and have them all attain the same educational goals in the exact same amount of time. The looping framework allows teachers the opportunity to accommodate differences in young children’s rate of development and readiness to succeed in school.

Origins of Looping

Looping frequently occurs along with multiage classes, and can be traced back to the one room schoolhouse where children of all ages and levels learned together with the same teacher year after year. Although the concept existed during the one room classroom era, the terminology did not. It was not until 1974 that looping reappeared in the United States, when schools in New York implemented the process (Hanson, 1995).

Prior to this time, looping was popular in Germany. Teams of six to eight teachers worked with the same students from fifth to tenth grade (Hanson, 1995). Russian and Japanese elementary schools also had teachers stay with a few classes for two or more years (Grant, Johnson and Richardson, 1996).

The literature indicates that more schools are implementing the looping practice as a means to create a developmentally appropriate learning environment

for students. This practice does not stop with primary and elementary, but middle and high schools have a team of teachers staying with the same students from school entry to graduation. As schools across the United States share positive results of looping, the concept gains rapid momentum.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the implementation of looping in four schools so that a descriptive account can be written.

Research Questions

In order to investigate the implementation of looping, the following questions will be used to direct this exploration:

- 1.) Why was the looping concept implemented?
- 2.) How was the looping concept implemented?
- 3.) What were the results?

The questions are intended to explore the implementation process and generate descriptive narratives.

CHAPTER II

Related Literature

Many children today lack continuity in their lives, so more time with the same teacher yields positive outcomes as added societal problems infiltrate the instructional day. Today's children, on a fast track along with their families, move from home to school, to after-school activities, to day care, adapting to parents' job schedules along the way. Roland Barth (1990) believed that adult relationships within a school greatly affect the quality and character of the school and the accomplishment of students. The continuity of relationships and the learning environment can make learning more individualized, relevant, and developmentally appropriate. Some school districts have implemented ungraded initiatives to ensure long-term student-teacher relations.

In 1992, Madeline Hunter coined the learning term "continuous progress" as a part of the ungraded effort that increased time on task and individualized person-centered schools. Continuous progress referred to student progress from the time of school entry until graduation. Continuous progress was designed to challenge students appropriately at progressively more difficult levels. Students did not have to spend time on what they had already adequately achieved, nor could they proceed to more difficult tasks if they had not learned materials or skills necessary for the new level of knowledge.

The ungraded initiatives were created to allow students more time to individually succeed at their individual pace. This was definitely an important characteristic of looping. They were the closest account in relationship to the looping concept.

As the ungraded initiative continued, Robert Anderson and Barbara Nelson Pavan (1993) coined another term called “multiage continuous progress.” This ungraded program focuses on each child’s individual progress. Children follow no rigid timetable or pattern. This model acknowledges individual differences in rates of development, in abilities and in learning styles. The multiage continuous progress model was designed for a heterogeneous group of children and builds on that diversity. The ungraded initiatives were created to allow students more time to individually succeed at one’s individual pace. This is definitely an important characteristic of looping. They were the closest account in relationship to the looping concept. These ungraded initiatives did not allow for an extended stay with the same teacher. Dr. Joseph Rappa, Superintendent of the Attleboro School District in Massachusetts, reports the use of the looping concept which gives the student at least two years with the same teacher. This extended relationship through looping gives the teacher time to respond to problems that a child may have. With the additional year, teachers can focus more on learning, rather than “covering” the curriculum (Grant,1996). Looping requires school systems to

venture far from the standard 180-day schedule and explore educational concepts that do not fit the traditional public school mold. Educators need to implement promising initiatives that they believe could greatly improve students' academic achievements and help them to better compete with those in other countries.

Quality Programs

Many school divisions are now focusing on creating developmentally appropriate learning environments as students remain with the same teacher for more than one year. Some schools have a team of teachers following a group of children as they incorporate developmental practices to individualize and build units to support, challenge and strengthen needed skills.

The Coombes County Infant and Nursery School, a semi-rural English school serving 200 children aged 4 to 8, has a team of teachers following groups of children for two or more years. They make learning more developmentally appropriate by using the schoolyard to enhance and integrate the curriculum. The school sits on a one acre plot packed with educational opportunities such as ponds, orchards, flower and vegetable gardens, sheep and chicken enclosures, an outdoor theater, and wildlife habitats. The school has painted its asphalt playground for a variety of games and activities (Riukin, 1995). Students experience learning in a hands-on, interdisciplinary environment as social studies and art are combined; as nutrition, art, and math use flowers, fruits, and vegetables as materials in learning;

and as myths and folk tales give insights into plant growth, decay, and regeneration. This English school created a great place to learn and play by converting its modest grounds into a unique educational environment. Creating such a rich environment gave the children a place of purposeful play and effective teaching.

Japan is initiating major changes for the 21st century as they go through a third major reform movement. The first reform took place in 1872 when Japan replaced a feudal system of separate private schools with a European-style of schooling. The second major reform took place after Japan's defeat in World War II. School administrators introduced an American-style public school system, with a compulsory first nine years. By 1976 Japan added junior colleges, five-year technical schools and special training schools to its school system.

Ishizaka (1995) pointed out that even though Japanese children had high scores in the first, second and third international studies of math and science, many Japanese educators felt that their schools could be better. In 1987, after three years of study, the educators who were involved recommended a focus on three major changes that would emphasize students' individuality, switch the schools' primary goal from academic to life long learning, and prepare students for a global society in the Information Age. The third reform movement emphasized a shift from rote learning and teaching methods to individuality and development of the child's

character and abilities as a team of teachers worked with students for two years or more.

Public School P. S. 161 in Brooklyn's Crown Heights neighborhood is committed to meeting individual needs and making learning more developmentally appropriate with cooperative learning and a reading program that incorporates phonics and whole language. This school consists of 1,370 students in grades K-5. Black children make up ninety percent of the student body. Of the other ten percent, Latinos comprise eight percent and Asian and white children one percent each. Ninety-seven percent of the students are eligible for free lunch.

The school's standardized test scores are the best in the city. The scores in reading, writing and math exceed the average for New York City and state (Siegel, 1997). Principal Kurg points out that academic achievement has risen because of what is going on in the intimate confines of the classroom as the teaching-learning process takes on a developmental approach.

In 1988, educators at the New City School in St. Louis, Missouri, decided to individualize the curriculum, student assessment and communication with parents with the implementation of Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences. A multiple intelligences approach recognizes and respects the different ways in which students learn (Armstrong, 1994).

About one-third of the students at New City School are from minority groups, mostly African American. One quarter of the student body receives need-based financial aid. The school services students in preschool through grade 6.

The four schools, described above, used a team of teachers to follow students for two or more years, and they implemented innovative, creative, and flexible instructional programs. These prototype schools focused on children by addressing various intelligences.

Multiple intelligences, as a framework and a tool, focused instructional efforts on the student. It has also given structure for faculty to learn from and with each other. Students taught under this model score far above grade level on standardized test each year from the use of this developmentally appropriate practice, which employs learning centers and portfolios in capturing students' performances (Coletta, 1991).

Public schools must continue to be innovative with program designs as the pressures such as the threat of charter schools and vouchers increase. Many of the reform movements address developmental stages of students instead of chronological age as they use developmentally appropriate practices to make students successful and increase achievement. Learning activities and materials should be concrete, real, and relevant to the lives of students. The teacher is an

important piece of the puzzle as developmentally appropriate curriculum bases its planning on teacher observations and recordings of each child (Bredekamp, 1987).

Theoretical Base for Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Many theorists support the importance of making learning more developmentally appropriate through the use of developmental practices as they meet the physical, emotional, social, and cognitive needs of students. Piaget believed that patterns of active behavior governed the life of a child. From his classroom experiments, he concluded that children learn through actively following, repeating, exploring by touching and handling and manipulating (Schwebel, 1973).

Developmentalist Sue Bredekamp (1987) pointed out from her studies that each child is unique and has an individual pattern and timing of growth. Many children develop in one area - socially, cognitively, emotionally, or physically - more quickly than in another. Each child performs at his or her individual rate.

Eighteenth century philosopher, Jean J. Rousseau, declared that a child must have time to learn not through words, but through experience; not through books, but through the Book of Life (Armstrong, 1997). He also believed that schools need to stop forcing on children things they do not need and try to teach a child what is of use to him as a child (Dewey, 1920). Rousseau's teaching that education is a process of natural growth has influenced most theorizing upon

education, along with his strong belief that the child best prepares for life as an adult by experiencing in childhood what has meaning to him as a child (Dewey, 1920).

In 1987, the National Association for the Education of Young Children published an expanded edition of Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children : From Birth through Age 8. One of the nine principles takes a bold position in support of developmental practices. Principle one states that a teacher must be aware of all aspects of a child's development.

NAEYC Position Statement: "Because development cannot be neatly separated into parts, failure to attend to all aspects of an individual child's development is often the root cause of a child's failure in school."

- Children have a major social-emotional need to develop a sense of competency... our culture values being able to read, write, and calculate numerically and these things therefore are important to a child's sense of competency.

NAEYC Position Statement: "When expectations exceed children's capabilities and children are pressured to acquire skills too far beyond their abilities, their motivation to learn as well as their self-esteem may be impaired."

- Young children do not just acquire knowledge and skills, but also attitudes and dispositions. Children will learn curiosity, helpfulness, pleasure in reading, and the enjoyment of problem solving, or, conversely, will develop a distaste for “learning.”

The thoughts of these scholars run deep and provide an added layer of support for developmentally appropriate practices. The work of Piaget, Montessori, and other child development theorists and researchers such as Elkind and Kamii have demonstrated that learning is a complex process that results from the interaction of children’s own thinking and their experiences in the internal world (Rogers, 1994). Knowledge is not something that is given to children as though they were empty vessels to be filled. They acquire knowledge about the physical and social worlds in which they live through playful interaction with objects and people. Young children learn by doing.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Developmentally appropriate practices are practices resulting from a process of training and teaching young children based on an understanding of children’s stages of development (Coletta, 1991). It is important to understand what these practices are in order to see why looping can be an effective tool for their delivery. Children develop at different rates. Effective teaching realizes that a class of children will exhibit a wide range of abilities in four developmental areas -

physical, emotional, social and intellectual. Therefore, time has to be allocated to the learning environment in order to diversify materials and strategies to include learning modalities, concrete materials, whole language approach, thematic teaching, learning center activities and alternative assessment. These are ‘best practices’ that should be in every classroom, and especially in classrooms where teachers remain with the same students for two or more years.

Learning Modalities

Children absorb information by hearing, seeing and touching, which are more formally known as auditory, visual and tactile/kinesthetic modalities (Coletta, 1991). Some children use all three modalities while others acquire skills and concepts better through one modality than the others. A good rule for teachers to remember is: “teach to a different learning modality every day.” Students can be given a reading style inventory to determine each child’s learning style (modality). The elements of noise, light, temperature, design, sociological stimuli, perception centers and mobility are all addressed to accommodate each child. Honing in on a child’s dominant learning modality and exposing learners to a variety of teaching materials and methods leads to increased achievement, improved attitudes and reduced classroom stress (Armstrong, 1987; Carbo, 1991).

Whole Language Approach

The whole language approach uses high-interest children's literature and language connections to strengthen learning and make it more meaningful. Classrooms become mini-libraries as big books, picture books, fairy tales, fables and brief biographies are provided for students to immerse themselves in a print-rich environment (Charbonneau & Reides, 1995).

Reading, writing, spelling, penmanship, speaking and literature are related and integrated into curriculum units. Children take ownership of their learning and work cooperatively to support each other. In whole language classrooms, teachers do whole group instruction and small groups are organized for specific skill instruction, phonics, cooperative learning and learning center projects (Desjean-Perrotto, 1996; Traw, 1996).

Learning Centers

Learning centers are designed for active discoveries, extended learning and integration of all subject areas. Centers or learning stations can reflect themes, curriculum concepts, and daily content areas (Armstrong, 1994). The seven intelligences could be used as the guide for the creation of learning centers in the classroom. These intelligences include bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical and spatial (Gardner, 1993).

The seven intelligences serve as additional tools to help the teacher to use students' strengths to help them learn. The following is a description of the seven phases of intelligences.

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

This is the 'learning by doing' intelligence which uses the expertise of one's whole body to express ideas and feelings (Guttoff, 1996). It also includes using one's hand to produce or transform things (e.g., as a craftsman, sculptor, mechanic, or surgeon). This intelligence includes specific physical skills such as coordination, balance, dexterity, strength, flexibility, and speed, as well as proprioceptive, tactile, and haptic capacities. It also uses such tools as dance, drama, physical games, mime, role-play, body language, physical exercise, and inventing (Armstrong, 1994; Lazear, 1994; Gardner, 1982).

Interpersonal Intelligence

This is the ability to perceive and make distinctions in the mood, intentions, motivations and feelings of other people (Guttoff, 1996). It comes through person-to-person relating, communication, teamwork, and collaboration. It employs such tools as cooperative learning, empathy, social skills, team competition and group projects that foster positive interdependence. This can also include sensitivity to facial expressions, voice and gestures; the capacity for discriminating among many

different kinds of interpersonal cues; and the ability to respond effectively to those cues in some pragmatic way (e.g., to influence a group of people to follow a certain line of action) (Armstrong, 1994).

Intrapersonal Intelligence

This intelligence includes having an accurate picture of one's strengths and limitations; awareness of inner moods, intentions, motivations, and desires (Armstrong, 1994). This is the knowing that occurs through introspection, metacognition, self-reflections and "cosmic questioning". It uses such tools as affective processing, journals, thinking logs, higher-order thinking, and self-esteem (Armstrong, 1994; Gardner, 1982).

Linguistic Intelligence

This intelligence involves the use of words orally and in writing. It includes the ability to manipulate the syntax of language and the phonology or sounds of language (Guttoff, 1996). Tools in this intelligence include essays, debates, public speech, poetry, formal and informal conversation, creative writing, and linguistically-based humor (riddles, puns, jokes) (Lazear, 1994).

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

This is the capacity to use numbers and to reason (Armstrong, 1994). The

kinds of processes used in the service of logical-mathematical intelligence include: categorization, classification, inference, generalization, calculation, and hypothesis testing (Lazear, 1996; Armstrong, 1994).

Musical Intelligence

This intelligence conveys the capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical form. It includes the ability to be sensitive to the rhythm, pitch or melody, and timbre or tone color of a musical piece (Guttoff, 1996). It utilizes such tools as singing, musical instruments, environmental sounds, tonal associations, and the endless rhythmic possibilities of life (Armstrong, 1994).

Spatial Intelligence

This intelligence involves sensitivity to color, line, shape, form, space, and the relationships that exist between these elements. It includes the capacity to visualize, to graphically represent visual or spatial ideas (Armstrong, 1994; Lazear, 1994). It uses such tools as drawing, painting, sculpture, collage, montage, visualization, imagination, pretending, and creating mental images (Guttoff, 1996).

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning gives students an opportunity to interact and bounce ideas off of others. This is especially beneficial to social learners. Peer sharing,

cooperative groups (small groups), board games, simulations are a few teaching approaches that incorporate interaction among students (Slavin, 1989; Armstrong, 1994).

Alternative Assessment

Alternative assessment means evaluating that goes on continually (Calkins, 1992). It reflects learning experiences that can be documented through such means as observation, anecdotes, records, work samples, journals, conferences, and test scores. By using various alternative assessment methods the teacher obtains a broad picture of what a student can do (Armstrong, 1994).

Thematic Teaching

Thematic teaching integrates reading, language arts, social studies, math, science, music and art by organizing the curriculum around themes (Coletta, 1986). There is built in flexibility with thematic teaching that allows children to become involved and to learn at their own pace. This integrated learning supports individual learning styles and developmental growth patterns (Charbonneau & Reider, 1995).

Concrete Experiences

Piaget believed that action was the key to mathematical and logical thought. Hands-on math provides concrete experiences through the use of manipulatives as students quantify, think critically and conceptualize the problem (Armstrong,

1994). Learning with concrete objects is essential if children are to be successful in understanding more complex concepts as they progress through school (Coletta, 1991). Children better understand abstract concepts as they manipulate objects in the real world to see relationships between them. Such manipulation encourages students to think divergently, make judgments and make decisions as concrete experiences introduce them to objects that can be observed, compared and classified.

Children's developmental needs should be the foundation for every choice made in classrooms and schools (Wood, 1994). Teachers must acquire some knowledge of children's stages of development and use sensitive observation to make informed decisions about teaching and learning. These practices are linked to looping because of the freedom to explore and the flexibility that are found in a looping environment. Thus, looping enhances the opportunity to use developmentally appropriate practices.

Historical Background of Looping

The importance of ensuring developmentally appropriate practices for children provides the basis for multiyear grouping, also known as looping, teacher/student progression, or twenty month classroom. In a looping organizational model, students and teachers remain together for a period of two or

more years. Daniel Burke (1996) points out that research on school effectiveness suggests that student performance is improved by long term teacher/student relationships. He reported the following results from a group of teachers using looping:

- *70% of those using the looping plan stated that it allowed them to use more positive approaches to classroom management.

- *92% stated that they knew more about their students.

- *69% described students as willing to participate voluntarily in class.

- *85% stated students were better able to see themselves as important members of a group, feel pride in that group and in school as a whole.

- *84% felt they formed more positive relationships with parents. (p. 360)

Looping approaches to structuring classes are not completely new ventures. The origins of these programs have roots in the one-room schools and Montessori schools.

The one-room schools represent schooling in rural America during the early twentieth century. These multiage classes existed long before a system of grades was introduced (Anderson & Pavan, 1992). Out of necessity, children of all ages went to school together, learning from each other and from the teacher. One-room

schools continued in rural areas even though a graded structure had become the norm. In 1918, there were 196,037 one room schools, representing 70.8% of all public schools in the United States (Miller, 1989).

There was a reflection of the looping concept in the late 18th century when Maria Montessori organized schools for the mentally ill children and poor children in the slums of Rome (Shepherd, 1996). After an extensive study of the Montessori Method, Shepherd (1996) wrote that the implementation of this method had revolutionized the educational system of the world. Madame Montessori had a mission to teach children to teach themselves. She believed that children need liberty in the classroom in order for the teacher to know the needs and capabilities of each pupil and in order for each child to receive a well-rounded training, making for the best development of his mind, character, and physique. Activity founded on liberty was the guiding principle of the Montessori schools (Dewey, 1920).

Madame Montessori organized her schools so that the teacher could remain with a group of students ranging in ages from 2 years to 6 years. Madame Montessori taught teachers that children learn best by using their five senses and at their own individual paces. As people visited her centers, they observed children making choices, working independently and in small groups and progressing significantly in reading, writing and math. The Montessori Method spread all over Europe and to the United States.

German schools form heterogeneous groups of students in first grade and they remain together with the same teacher for the next four years. Then teams of six to eight teachers work with the same students from grades five through ten (Koppich, 1988). Looping approaches continue to be common in European and Japanese schools. These schools believed that the most important variable in a school program was the constant attention of a single teacher with whom the child develops a meaningful relationship. They believed that a single teacher with the same students would provide a secure and stable environment during difficult adjustment periods in their lives.

Early twentieth century Austrian educator Rudolf Steiner, founder of the Waldorf Schools, felt that the teacher should follow the class throughout the elementary grades much like a “third parent” (Ogletree, 1974). He, too, believed that long-term relationships with significant adults were the keys to educational improvement. Waldorf teachers used a kinesthetic, action-loaded approach which involved the child first in impulse expression, then emotion, and then in knowledge and skill development. Waldorf schools follow Steiner’s precepts to this day.

Looping Benefits

Classroom Benefits

The underlying philosophy of the looping classroom allows teachers and students the “gift of time” (Mazzuchi & Brooks, 1992). If a teacher is assigned the same class for a second year, there will be a gain of one to two months of instructional time by eliminating the “getting-to-know-you” period at the beginning of the second year. Anecdotal notes from teachers report that students pick up where they left off the second year, both instructionally and socially, and get into the swing of school in moments, rather than weeks (Grant, 1995; Hanson, 1995; Jacoby, 1995). Part of this is due to the summer contacts that teachers make with students by providing extended units, summer camps and other monthly summer family projects that are shared with parents as a way for the teacher to keep connected and to make connections. These activities help to minimize the chances of students “losing ground” over the summer.

Jim Grant, internationally known educator, consultant, author, and lecturer, is the nation’s leading proponent of the looping concept and has popularized the term. His anecdotal notes from teachers indicate that looping provides additional student, parent and teacher benefits (Grant, Johnson & Richardson, 1996).

Student Benefits

Having the same teacher for two or more years gives the student more of an opportunity to experience continuous progress. Continuous progress challenges

students appropriately according to developmental stages. Challenging students appropriately and providing instructional continuity can be accomplished when there is little transition time to deal with and fewer unrelated and overlapping parts. Dewey (1920) believed that there had to be a reduction of waste arising from reduplication and transition that was not properly bridged (Holt, 1982).

Other student benefits cited in the The Looping Handbook by Grant, Johnson and Richardson, 1996 were:

- *a sense of stability
- *strong interpersonal relationships and the time to build and maintain
- *trusting and honest relationships
- *a stronger sense of community among teachers, students and family
- *a curriculum that builds on previous experience and prior knowledge
- *an interactive community of independent learning.

Parents' Benefits

The looping relationship itself fosters a much stronger, more positive relationship between parent and teacher. Parents play a vital role and are important stakeholders in their children's education. Therefore, the closer the parent is to the education of the child, the greater the impact on child development and educational achievement (Fullan, 1991).

A close link between home and school is more important than ever before as these partnerships (Rogers, 1994; Boyer, 1995) include parents, teachers and administrators. Boyer (1995) pointed out the importance of sustaining the partnership throughout the school years as parents participate in regularly scheduled conferences and informal conversations to keep them informed and involved. Currently, most parents of elementary school children meet with teachers only one to three times a year, according to a survey by the Carnegie Foundation in 1994.

Teacher Benefits

Most teachers view the looping concept as teachers and students progressing together. Two to three years with the same students give the teacher an opportunity to provide developmentally appropriate instructional practices that require active participation and a child-centered learning environment. Activities are planned around each child's developmental needs.

Other benefits cited by teachers in anecdotal notes (Grant, 1995) were:

- *instructional continuity
- *instructional flexibility
- *strong support of parents
- *stronger bond with students
- *increased student observation time

*awareness of individual learning styles

*reduction in special needs referrals and grade retentions

*minimal curriculum changes from level to level.

Conclusion of Benefits

It is evident, from these studies, that remaining with the same teacher provides a learning environment that parallels a close knit family. This family maintains successful individual and group learning, cooperation and collaboration, positive social skill development and interactivity. The family also teaches a group responsibility, as it allows for independence in learning, growing and developing into life-long learners (Grant, Johnson, and Richardson, 1996).

Time spent in school and on instructional activities is relevant. Researchers consistently obtain a positive correlation between measures of instructional time and student achievement (Effective Schools: A Summary of Research, 1985, p.61). More time results in more learning taking place. When the school environment supports goal attainment with careful and continuous monitoring of student progress, and insures continuity of instruction across grades, a positive classroom climate for learning is established.

Lastly, looping is relatively simple to implement. It requires no financial commitments, no additional physical space, no extensive training and a very short orientation for teachers and parents (Fenton,1995; Hanson,1995; Jacoby,1995).

Program Concerns

Jim Grant admits that there are times when looping will not work.

Sometimes the make-up of a class, such as an imbalance of emotional difficulties and motivated students, could adversely affect the group's potential to learn. In such cases classes need to be split up. Only competent teachers should be looping candidates, and marginal teachers and those who have no control of their classes should not be used for looping. Having an inefficient teacher for a series of years was a primary concern in a memo sent out to school divisions by the Officer of Education in 1913. Educators decided that the inefficient teacher should be eliminated and should not be permitted to waste money, time, and opportunity through a single year.

In 1991, Dr. Thurston Atkins of Teachers College, Columbia University, researched looping to discover a concern regarding child/teacher personality clash (Grant, 1995). His study concluded that if there is a personality clash between the teacher and a child, or teacher and a parent, it would be in the best interest of all concerned to separate this union.

A dysfunctional class, a group of students that cannot get along, poses another potential problem. Grant (1995) suggests that looping should not be considered, with a dysfunctional class. Teachers should be empowered to make this decision after they have spent at least a half year with the class. Guidelines, as

suggested by Grant and other looping theorists (1995), need to be established and followed in order to balance looping classrooms and to allay concerns. Such guidelines could include:

- *equal number of boys and girls
- *racial and cultural balance
- *socioeconomic balance
- *linguistic balance
- *equal range of ability levels
- *equal percent of special needs students

Another concern is that the looping classroom may mask a learning disability. That is, the teacher has gotten to know her students so well that she automatically makes modifications and adaptations without referring the students for Special Education. The only way around this is by addressing academic discrepancies when they are discovered.

Because there is “twice the loving and learning” (Jacoby,1995) in a looping classroom, it becomes very traumatic to say good-bye at the end of the second or third year. The teacher has to be very judicious as the bond is broken and assist students and parents with the program termination. This is an emotional time for students, teachers, and parents.

Contacts with Practitioners of Looping

More school administrators and classroom teachers are beginning to share their success stories as a result of the multiyear configuration. They consistently reported that the looping classroom was time-efficient and the extended relationship gave teachers the opportunity to assess the needs and strengths of individual students.

Missie Campbell, a looping teacher in Florida, reported that two of the biggest benefits of looping were a lack of discipline problems and increased parental support. Students know their classmates and the ground rules (Hanson,1995) which operate within the class. Parents were better able to understand her methods of working with children.

Esther Peterson of Orchard Lake Middle School in West Bloomfield, Minnesota, piloted a looping program in 1993 with 54 self-nominated students and two teacher volunteers. She expected the program to improve students' attendance, increase students' involvement in school activities, raise students' grade-point averages, and increase parents' interests in their children's education- and her expectations were realized (Burke, 1996).

Deborah Jacoby (1995) a looping teacher since 1990, gave a powerful testimony of her looping experience. She pointed out that her curriculum was partially defined by previous experiences with the children. For example, books

and authors would be compared or contrasted with books read the previous year. She was able to build on known foundations and utilize the children's strengths and talents more than ever before. She also noticed that she was able to offer more constructive criticism on students' academic work without damaging their teacher-student relationship. Students knew she believed in them and their cognitive abilities.

Jean Jubert, first and second grade looping teacher from Wisconsin, concurs that significant time has been saved at the beginning of the second year of each subsequent loop (Hanson,1995). This is accomplished by not having to repeat routine procedures and practices.

From all the literature reviewed, including many narratives of looping experiences, the time theme continues to surface as an impressive, noteworthy piece of the looping framework. Ann Ratzki, headmistress of a looping school in West Germany noted:

“We don't lose several weeks in September learning a new set of names, teaching the basic rules to a new set of students, and figuring out exactly what they learned the previous year; and we don't lose weeks at the end of the year packing students up. Most important teachers get to know how each student learns the importance of this is incalculable.”

(Shepherd, 1996, p.125)

Despite these findings, meaningful discussion of long term teacher/student relationships is scarce in our nation's schools, and implementation of the looping concept is rare enough to be regarded as an exceptional practice. Society and the needs of children have changed. The environment they are growing in has changed. Since we live in the technology/information age and know more about child development and how children learn, the instructional and organizational frameworks have to change to better serve the children. Individualizing the instructional program according to developmental stages through looping, gives teachers and students "the gift of time." Looping promotes the establishment of a classroom laden with a variety of instructional strategies that impact positively upon the success and achievement of students. The responses of administrators and classroom teachers who were a part of a looping program verified the positive effect of looping on developmentally appropriate practices.

Chapter III

Research Design and Procedure

The researcher used qualitative inquiry methods in four elementary school sites to study the implementation of the looping concept. The conceptual framework is built around what Maykut & Morehouse (1996) call the phenomenological approach as looping is studied at each site, with a focus on “practical understanding” of meanings and actions from participants. The researcher used approaches as outlined by Maykut & Morehouse to study the nature of change and the cause of change. Stated succinctly, the researcher wanted to glean an understanding of the events that lead to looping and to discern outcomes as a result of this action. The primary sources of data for this investigation were interviews with teachers and principals at four schools where looping had been implemented.

An interview protocol guide was developed with areas of interest to the researcher in order to move beyond surface talk to a rich discussion of thoughts and feelings (Maykut & Morehouse, 1996, p.80). Questions fall into five categories: 1) knowledge of looping, 2) purpose of looping, 3) instructional strategies, 4) support system and 5) evaluation of the looping concept. These categories consistently appeared in the professional literature reviews by the researcher. At least one open-ended question has been formulated for each

category. It is advantageous to keep questions open-ended to allow for further elaboration and extension of the content as the interview unfolds (Maykut & Morehouse, 1996, p.84). Follow-up questions were asked as the opportunity presented itself to better understand what was important about the setting and the experiences of people in that setting (Maykut & Morehouse, 1996, p.81). A personal researcher's journal gathered working hunches, questions, ideas, thoughts, concerns and decisions made while completing the inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 1996, p.68).

An interview protocol guide (Appendix A) helped structure the interviews with the looping teacher and for the building principal. Discovering patterns of meaning from words, speech patterns and the behavior of participants are noteworthy pieces of data the researcher must be ready to recognize and capture to print (Maykut & Morehouse, 1996, p.21). General conclusions were formed on the basis of facts gathered through interviewing.

Directing the Exploration

Qualitative research sought to understand a situation by focusing on the total picture (Ary, Jacobs and Razarish, 1996, p.22). The major goal was to create a holistic picture and depth of understanding through the use of in-depth interviews in case studies at four elementary schools. The following questions directed the exploration:

- 1.) Why do schools implement the looping concept?
- 2.) How do schools implement the looping concept?
- 3.) What are the specific outcomes as a result of implementing the looping concept?

The researcher encouraged the interviewees to tell their looping story. The researcher used a comparative story structure with a beginning, middle and end to address core questions on the interview protocol guide. Storytellers were asked to elaborate as much as possible with the use of focusing and elaborating probes (Appendix A). Core questions and probes were based on themes that appear in the published literature (Appendix A).

Purposive Sampling

Pseudonyms have been assigned for schools and interviewees in order to protect their anonymity. The following schools have been chosen for this study: Woodson Elementary, Grassy Hill Elementary, Brandon Elementary and Claytor Land Elementary. Three of the four schools are currently implementing looping. One school completed the loop, but decided not to start a new rotation this year. These schools were selected because of their geographical location, which is accessible to the researcher for on-site visits to conduct interviews in the natural setting where the phenomenon under study takes place (Maykut & Morehouse,

1996, p.72). More than one school was included in order to gain a broad perspective.

Because of the distance between districts and crowded work schedules, interviews were set and conducted in a timely manner being that the four schools are within a radius of 10 to 40 miles from the researcher. The interview sessions were scheduled for two hours with additional time built in if needed. In depth interviews were conducted with each individual participant. Participants' words are the data. The researcher asked permission to tape the interview session. Additional data will be collected and analyzed if sites share evaluative data, documents regarding the implementation, effectiveness and specific outcomes relative to "why schools implement the looping concept."

Schools

*Woodson Elementary, located in a very affluent section of Bees Wax County, is a rural school with a student population of 525 serving levels kindergarten through four. The school has implemented many instructional changes, with the looping framework being the most recent. This framework was used to allow several special needs students an opportunity to remain with the same teacher who had made a positive difference in their lives. The building principal and the only two looping teachers were interviewed.

*Grassy Hill Elementary consists of 344 students in a rural setting in Leftwich County, Virginia. The school serves students in levels preschool through four. The looping framework was initiated for levels K-1; 1 – 2. This is the second year for staff and students to experiment with this instructional / organizational design. The building principal and four looping teachers were interviewed. The principal selected the teacher participants.

*Brandon Elementary is a small, at risk urban school located on one of the busiest thoroughfares in Hancock City. This community of learners consists of 180 boys and girls in levels three, four and five. Its whole school looping framework has been in place for two years. The building principal and four looping teachers were interviewed. The principal selected the teacher participants.

*Claytor Land Elementary is a small Diamond County school with a population of 450 students in levels kindergarten through fifth. This school has become the Regional Center for learning disabled students. A kindergarten teacher chose to remain with her students for first grade. This teacher and the principal were interviewed.

Validity Consideration

Instrumentation: An interview protocol guide was developed by using guides from Miles & Huberman, (1994). Five colleagues reviewed and field tested

the instrument in order to identify ambiguities, misunderstandings and other inadequacies as suggested by Ary, Jacobs and Razarish (1996).

Data Collected: Interview participants read their individual story after transcription for accuracy. Interviewees were given the opportunity to make changes as needed before the first phase of the data analysis occurred. All data in the form of stories can be found in Appendix G.

Data Analysis

Before and During the Interviews

The researcher gained entry into the schools by calling and setting up an appointment with each principal. The principals in turn gave the researcher a date and time to discuss the topic and to determine the possible number of participants to be interviewed. At the initial meeting a day and time to re-enter the school was given to interview selected teachers. Principals selected the interviewees.

A brief synopsis of the project was shared with each interviewee prior to the interview. The researcher gained permission to tape record the interviews at each site from all participants. During the interviews, the researcher followed the story format and used lead in questions as needed to keep the interviewee focused and the story flowing. Participants at each site gave a very detailed and descriptive account of their looping program.

After the Interviews

The researcher listened to and transcribed each tape. Each transcription was read at least seven times as revisions were made before they were actually typed. The researcher asked the interviewees to review final versions and to make corrections, revisions, deletions and additions as needed. The participants were pleased with what had been written and the amount of sharing they had done.

There were three final readings of the finalized versions by the researcher to match answers with research questions.

The researcher grouped and coded answers with the number used for the question. Each transcript was completed following this procedure and comments were lifted according to the numbered versions.

After the Transcription

The researcher created a stacking grid for each school in order to mine data in reference to the fifteen questions. The answers for the fifteen questions were numbered directly on an extra copy according to the number on the grid for quick reference. As the answers were extracted from each set of transcripts, they were placed on the individual school's stacking grid.

After the Stacking Grids: The Analysis

After completing all the individual stacking grids, the researcher examined each one and read them about five to eight times to be certain that information had been grouped appropriately. In order to mine the data from each school's stacking grid, a Mother Stacking Grid was developed. The Mother Stacking Grid was created with each question having its individual cell. Schools were color coded for quick recognition.

Extra copies of the color-coded transcriptions were made and sections cut apart to be placed in the appropriate cell of the Mother Stacking Grid. The

researcher made comparisons, looked for themes and identified how schools individualized their looping program and how they regrouped after the first year of the loop. An analysis of findings was placed under each question on the grid. A summary of each cell was derived from the compiled Mother Stacking Grid by coding commonalities and including individual and unusual responses. An Analytical Grid of Four Schools housed the summaries with schools denoted for quick reference. Five principles from the analytical processes emerged. Questions from the protocol guide were carefully reviewed and clustered under the perceived principles (Appendix F).

Chapter IV

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the implementation of looping. This was accomplished through a descriptive account of looping in four elementary schools. The description is based on information gathered with an interview protocol (Appendix A) which consisted of core questions, a story structure and a focusing / elaborating section. A stacking grid with questions and responses was used to mine data for each school (Appendix B). An analytical grid (Appendix C) of the four schools was created for data reduction. The following principles that emerged from the literature and interviews were used for conducting the analysis process and to shape the presentation of the findings:

- ◆ Getting Ready to Loop
- ◆ Purposes for Looping
- ◆ Challenges Encountered
- ◆ Benefits from Looping
- ◆ Instructional Strategies

These principles were used to guide the clustering of questions and responses from the analytical stacking grid of the four schools (Appendix G). Findings are shared under each principle of the clustered responses with quotes from participants given to illustrate the principles.

Principle #1: Getting Ready to Loop

As participants at the four schools got ready to loop, various initiatives took place. The following questions were used for the elaboration of these initiatives:

- ❖ How did you learn about looping?
- ❖ How did you prepare staff and the school community?
- ❖ What should be considered?
- ❖ How did you get ready to loop?

How did you learn about looping?

Personnel at each school site learned about looping from teachers and / or principals who had attended conferences or seminars. A national leader in the movement was often the guest presenter as well as a practicing practitioner from his company, The Society for Developmental Education.

One school received its initial information from a teacher who had experience looping in a former school division where she was teaching. The teacher said she was exposed to ideas about ungraded teaching and learning philosophies and her principal encouraged her to study them. She and another colleague decided to study the looping concept. After moving to Diamond County she had an opportunity to attend a seminar on looping by the Society for Ingenious Thinking.

Teachers at three of the four schools received information directly from the principal who had attended a conference and from collected literature on the topic. The principal at Woodson Elementary, reported attending the NAESP conference where a national leader spoke on multiage and looping as ways to help children in the early years to get extra time to avoid retention. The principal commented, “That is where the interest was really sparked!”

Thus it seems that interest in looping had two sources from which interest flowed. Within the building, teachers’ previous experiences influenced them along with suggestions from the principal. Externally, educators were influenced through professional dialogue and national conferences.

How did you prepare staff and the school community?

Staff members in each school had opportunities to hear about looping at staff meetings. The school community was prepared for the looping process as each school sent out letters, fliers, and information parent packets. A teacher at Grassy Hill remembered having a ‘lot of meetings’. She said, “We talked about the pros and cons with the staff and with our school community.”

Two schools sponsored study groups and informational meetings, also, as teachers prepared to loop. A teacher at Brandon Elementary said, “We are constantly sharing in staff study-groups and studying how the brain works as we improve and modify our looping model.”

It is essential that staff and the school community are aware and knowledgeable of new school programs. Informational meetings and parent packets, letters, and fliers on looping were worthwhile mechanisms to educate all individuals involved.

What should be considered?

The number one consideration when considering looping was teacher readiness for the long-term relationship. Shelby Townes, teacher at Grassy Hill responded, “I think when you are deciding to loop you need to first of all ask yourself if you are the type of person that could get tired of a class.” Participants at each school site stressed how important the teacher was in the looping process.

The principal at Brandon Elementary said, “Interestingly, sometimes teachers complain about looping, I think, because they got tired of having the same students.”

Therefore, it is the impetus of the classroom teacher that will make it successful or keep it from succeeding. It is the responsibility of the classroom teacher to provide a positive learning environment, to individualize the instructional program and allow students to progress at their individual rate. If the teacher is not a willing and active participant, the program will not succeed.

How did you get ready to loop?

Participants at three school sites saw a need to allow parents to choose to ‘loop or not to loop’ as they got ready to loop. Participants at all four schools found it beneficial to share as much information as possible with parents through informational literature, support groups and discussion sessions before implementing looping. It was the consensus of participants at the four school sites to get parental support up front. “I believe it would be a major challenge if parents were not supportive,” concluded Tommy Price, former principal at Claytor Land.

When vying to implement new programs, having a strong parent advocacy group is important. Parents must be a part of the decision making process and treated as equal partners.

Principle #2: Purposes for Looping

Two questions were asked to gain a perception for each site’s purpose for looping:

- ❖ Why did you decide to loop?
- ❖ What was the main idea(s) of your looping program?

Why did you decide to loop?

Personnel in three schools wanted to try something new. Hattie Bunt, Grassy Hill’s teacher commented, “The principal that was here at the time had

come across information about it and came to us and asked if we wanted to try the experience. I jumped right on and said I'd love to try it." Another Grassy Hill teacher, Pringle Rider, said it was a long decision making process. She stated, "At first, I wasn't going to loop, I talked to a lot of people about it and I decided it would be something new to try. I like to try new things and I thought it would be interesting."

Susie Eddy, from Woodson Elementary, said, "This is not a 'new' concept, but it is new to me. At least 'new' to me that I wanted to try it when my principal, Mr. Welly, shared information after returning from a principal's conference. I am always ready to try something new."

Three schools wanted to better meet the needs of children and to try something new. Karen Austin, teacher at Brandon, replied, "I liked the idea of having the same children for two or more years. We always looked out for the 'best interest' of the child."

Grassy Hill's teachers had an opportunity to use looping as an important part of a Truancy Grant through the State Department of Education to improve attendance. Boyce Howard, teacher at Grassy Hill, concluded, "It involved a correlation between truancy and more parental involvement. The school decided that those of us who were interested in looping would get the grant."

Woodson Elementary's teachers reflected on the need to keep consistency in the lives of special needs children. Two schools wanted to try something new and at the same time do what was best for students as instructional needs were addressed.

It is evident that educators are risk takers and willing to try new programs. There is also an implication that this new program kept the focus on students as instructional needs set the precedent. New programs can also invigorate the possibility of applying for grant monies.

What was the main idea(s) for your looping program?

The main ideas for the looping program were: 1) building relationships and 2) getting to know students well. Many times the word 'family' was used to describe the closeness and strong bonding of a looping class.

Bonnie Barrison observed that looping was a way that students could stay with their family and primary adult. Security needs were being met and there was a high level of trust between students and teacher.

Another teacher commented, "Usually when I start a new grade and conference time comes, I get nervous, I don't want to hurt their feelings, I don't want to offend them. Looping made me feel much more at ease. A lot of times parents are trying their very best but you don't actually see this. They are doing the very best they possibly can and I think looping enables us to see it better.

Being with them (parents and students) and actually over a longer period of time has helped. You are teaching families and they are teaching you too.”

Dike Welly, principal at Woodson Elementary, pointed out that Woodson primarily looped its special needs population and students who needed special nurturing, behavior modification or showed special educational needs. Pringle Rider, teacher at Grassy Hill, stressed the need to have children in a loving, caring environment with people which she believed looping offered.

Binda LaFayette, teacher at Brandon, marveled that the main ideas for their looping program were consistency with classroom routine, instructional continuity and familiarity with children and parents. Ann Thomas, teacher at Claytor Land, stated that students can become so comfortable with the teacher and classmates that it becomes a ‘family affair’.

Therefore, looping promotes a secure, trusting, nurturing and familiar environment as teacher, students and parents work together as a family. Looping provides a stable learning environment during the critical years of development by allowing students to keep the same instructor.

Principle #3: Challenges Encountered

There were some challenges shared by personnel at the four school sites. The following questions were used to seek out challenges encountered:

- ❖ How did you prepare students to exit the looping program?

❖ How much work is it to change grade levels?

❖ What major challenges did you encounter?

How did you prepare students to exit the looping program?

After teacher and students had been together for two or more years, two schools found it a challenge to prepare students to exit the program. Those two schools discovered that time with non-loopers in the school through activities (social and academic) helped with separation and exiting out of the looping family. Such social and academic activities included field days, assemblies, book buddies, outside times with loopers and non-loopers, and lunch times were grouped together also. Students were familiar with other students outside the loop.

Two schools had no problems as students severed the looping ties. That is, after two years with the same teacher, students moved into a new learning environment with a new teacher without incident. Brandon Elementary's program had become "the routine thing to do".

It is psychologically sound to have a plan of action in place to include loopers with other students and teachers during the school day and throughout the school years. Separation anxieties can be present after students and teacher have been together for two or more years. It is wiser to be proactive than reactive knowing the partnership will end.

How much work is it to change grade levels?

Personnel at each of the schools concluded that there was “little” work to change grade levels. However, there were two major concerns as teacher and students moved to the next grade level.

The first concern regarded Virginia SOLs (Virginia Standards of Learning) and the need for the looping teacher to learn two sets of SOLs. Teachers at Grassy Hill and Brandon Elementary voiced this concern. A teacher at Brandon Elementary said that it became quite stressful trying to adequately organize subject matter and materials for two sets of SOLs and being accountable for two years of a student’s learning. But the principal of Brandon, Robin Holland said, “We cannot allow the SOLs to tear down our looping learning community.”

The second concern had to do with physical changes as classrooms were altered to look like students were moving to the next grade level. Teachers at Grassy Hill and Claytor Land shared this concern.

For example, Ann Thomas’s kindergarten students at Claytor Land were concerned about desks in rows as they saw them in other first grade classes. They thought that was how they wanted their room to look being that they had co-op tables. They wanted to be like the other first grade classes. Just to meet the students concerns, desks were placed in the classroom for the second year loop.

Hattie Bunt looped from kindergarten to first grade at Grassy Hill. She said it was a major burden to physically move to another room and, in her situation, kindergarten was upstairs and first grade was downstairs. She had to pack everything she owned and move downstairs and then the following year she picked up a kindergarten group and had to move back upstairs. She recommends staying in the same room and making the necessary changes to make the room look different rather than physically move.

It is evident that there are some consequences involved in a decision to loop such as learning a new curriculum at a different level, adjusting to grade-specific standardized tests and changing the physical space to accommodate student needs.

What major challenges did you encounter?

Rejection was a major challenge to teachers at Grassy Hill and Woodson Elementary. That is, some parents did not want their child in the same classroom and with the same teacher for a second year.

Shelby Townes at Grassy Hill had to learn to accept rejection. She said, “I just had to get over it. The parent did not want me another year. You cannot take it personally.”

Susie Eddy at Woodson Elementary had two parents who decided not to continue the loop because of her special needs children. She stated, “That was shameful and their great loss.”

The formation of ‘cliques’ among students was a major challenge to teachers at Brandon Elementary and Claytor Land. Since Brandon Elementary had three year loops in place initially, the staff decided to do two year loops (third to fourth) and fifth grade would be the year of change. Teachers pointed out that if one looped in third and fourth grades and went on to fifth, a newcomer had a difficult time fitting in because the culture had gotten so close. Claytor Land’s teacher had to modify her discipline plan the second year because the children had established cliques. The guidance counselor worked with the teacher and students as cliques were discovered in the classroom. Discussion sessions were held on how to be respectful of others’ feelings and to be inclusive.

Another challenge was masking a learning disability. Tommy Price, former principal at Claytor Land, cautions teachers who loop not to wait to ask for help if they see students need special instructional needs through the special education department. He said that sometimes instructional adjustments will be made in a looping classroom and once the students move on, the next teacher may not take time to discover individual needs and make needed changes according to learning styles. The looping teacher’s efforts to turn things around can delay the special education process. He said that a good teacher has the tendency not to give up.

Three major issues that surfaced from looping are as follows: parent (child) does not want the same teacher the second year – rejection; the social bonding

tends to create cliques that are difficult to separate; and a student's potential learning disability could be overlooked.

Principle #4: Benefits from Looping

The following questions were used to gather benefits from looping:

- ❖ Was there evidence of more efficient and/or effective use of time in the instructional program?
- ❖ How did parents respond?
- ❖ What were student benefits?

Was there evidence of more efficient and/or effective use of time in the instructional program?

A gain of time the second year of the loop was cited by personnel at each school. The instructional program started day 181 of the second year. Teachers at each school said time was not wasted during the first month of school getting to know students and setting classroom rules and school procedures. Because teachers already knew instructional levels and individual instructional needs of their students, the first month of the second year loop allowed the teachers to “pick up” where the students left off at the end of the first loop.

Ann Thomas from Claytor Land declared, “I really noticed a gain in instructional time the second year. I already knew where my students were academically. I did not have to do all those primary assessments. I picked

students up where they had left off in kindergarten. The beginning of first grade was a breeze. I already had their portfolios in place. I already had the developmental word knowledge on each child, developmental spelling analysis and we were off and running into our program of studies.”

A teacher at Brandon Elementary stated, “At the beginning of the second loop, I did not have to get use to them, they knew my expectations, they knew the rules and we did not spend a month getting use to each other. I knew my students well enough to know what they would do and how they would respond. I knew exactly where they were academically.”

Pringle Rider stated, “Instructional time was gained in that we were able to start week one of the second year with a brand new unit and we were able to actually do a whole unit or two more than the other second grade teachers last year. It’s great with instructional time because it takes sometimes four or five weeks to figure out where the weaknesses and strengths are in your room and I knew day one the second year.”

Dike Welly at Woodson Elementary declared, “Three to four weeks are salvaged the second year because the teacher does not need time to discover learning styles, etc., the looping teacher already knows from the first year.”

Until the looping concept has been experienced for at least one complete cycle, it is difficult to envision a gain of time in the instructional program. The

second year loop is credited with the gain of time factor in the instructional program.

How did parents respond?

The principal at Woodson Elementary reported that ninety-five percent of the time his teachers received positive comments from parents on an end of year parent survey. He said, “Parents were very pleased because they knew the teacher and knew the teacher well!”

The looping program gained the support of parents in each school. Parents were elated with the academic performance of students and the family appearance as teachers, students and parents worked together to make a positive difference. Parents viewed the looping classroom as a comfortable, non-threatening learning environment with instructional continuity and consistency prevailing. Robin Holland said, “The parents have been very supportive and appreciative of the comfort looping creates.”

Therefore, from the perspective of principals and teachers interviewed, parents are supportive of the looping concept because of the strong sense of community and open lines of communication.

What were student benefits?

Since students were not interviewed, personnel at each school site gave six benefits from their perception.

The first benefit was instructional continuity with identified learning styles and strategies according to individual needs. Having the same teacher for the second year ensures a continuation of instructional discoveries and the implementation of best practices.

The second benefit was consistency with instructional delivery and routine that help build confidence. Some students lag behind academically because of the time it takes to get use to a new environment. It is sometimes referred to as 'downshifting'. It helps to have uniformity in place as the instructional welfare of the whole child is considered and addressed.

The third benefit cited by interviewees was a comfortable, non-threatening learning environment which provided that feeling of accomplishment for a longer period of time. There was freedom for students to be risk takers. Teachers were flexible, understood the developmental stages of their children and respected their individual differences.

The fourth benefit was more productivity the second year with the instructional program. The familiarity component with established instructional needs and abilities allowed for the immediate instructional start up time and focused learning with the program of studies.

Stability was the fifth benefit. Having a stable learning environment gives students a security blanket and thus removes the fear of displacement.

Interviewees cited extended time to learn over a two year period with built in remediation and intervention as the sixth benefit. There is time to observe children being children. There is time to identify and assess individual needs and potential academic / behavioral challenges. There is time to work on resolving any problems that exist.

Boyce Howard at Grassy Hill stated it this way, “After the first year, it was like home. Kids felt free to speak their minds. They felt free to try things and not feel like they were going to be ridiculed by their classmates if they got it wrong. They just felt safe and I think they felt that they could be themselves.”

Principle #5: Instructional Strategies

What instructional strategies were used?

One instructional strategy used by looping teachers at the four schools was “teaming” (cooperative learning) of students to facilitate learning. The second instructional strategy used by looping teachers was individualization.

Teachers at each school site maximized the opportunity to individualize the instructional program with one-on-one and small group direct instruction. Tommy Price, former Claytor Land Principal, observed the use of individualization by his looping teacher. Participants at the school sites were very much in favor of allowing students to progress at their individual rates. They viewed looping as a

practice that would buy the teacher time to get to know his/her students and to incorporate a variety of strategies to ensure student success.

Developmentally appropriate (best) practices play a vital role in the selection of instructional strategies for whole group, small group and individual learning.

Chapter V

Conclusions and Recommendations

The concerns society has expressed regarding the education of children have prompted educators to relentlessly search for instructional methodologies and organizational designs to maximize student achievement. One instructional organizational design that has surfaced is looping. Looping is the process wherein the teacher remains with the same group of children for a period of two or more years. Looping has been tried at all grade levels with a single teacher or with a team of teachers and with the same students over a period of years. There is no additional space needed nor is there additional cost to implement the looping concept. The only cost is the time it takes to study the concept and share information with parents and other stakeholders.

Looping is viewed as a ‘retention softener’. That is, two or more years with the same teacher is extended time to teach and learn as schools are about the business of ensuring the success of every child (Grant, 1995). Students don’t have to be retained to receive extended time to review, and overlearn needed skills.

The concept is very simple to get started. It requires commitment and two teachers who agree to form a team. The teacher team is committed to and responsible for two years of schooling the same group of students academically,

socially and emotionally. The team is formed with teachers at different levels, for example, a first grade teacher teams with a second grade teacher. The first grade teacher follows the group of students to second grade. The second grade teacher drops back and picks up a first grade group and keeps them until the completion of second grade. This same process is used with teams at other grade levels including middle and high school teachers.

The leading proponent of the looping concept is Jim Grant, founder and Executive Director of the Society for Developmental Education. He has authored and co-authored several books on looping. As I read his books and attended several National Conferences hosted by the Society for Developmental Education on multiage and looping and interviewed participants at four school sites, three questions emerged that guided my inquiry.

- Why do schools implement the looping concept?
- How did schools implement the looping concept?
- What were specific outcomes as a result of implementing the looping concept?

Summary And Discussion

The answers to the following questions are based on the commonalities that emerged from each school setting. While the settings for looping were quite different, a number of similarities related to looping were apparent.

Question One

The first question addressed by the researcher was: Why do schools implement the looping concept? Schools implement the looping concept to build relationships, for instructional advantages, extended time and to lessen teacher/student anxieties.

It was evident from the literature (Grant, Johnson and Richardson, 1996; Rogers, 1994) and participants at the four school sites that looping students develop strong interpersonal relationships with teachers and peers during the two years together. Looping allows for the formation of a caring and nurturing environment that facilitates partnerships with families.

The second year of the loop gives teachers an opportunity to incorporate experiential learning because of the 'jump start' that comes with having the same students a second year. Several weeks of school are not wasted setting procedures and classroom rules the second year of the loop (Hanson, 1995). Students are ready to pick up where they left off in the spring. That is, day 181 (the first day of the second year) is a productive instructional day.

In a looping class, there is greater opportunity for instructional continuity and consistency within a comfortable non-threatening learning environment (Jacoby, 1995). Student's strengths and developmental needs can be addressed. Finally, there is a decrease in apprehension about the new school year by both

teacher and student when a group of students remain with the same teacher for the next year.

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Question Two

The second question addressed by the researcher was: How did schools implement the looping concept? Schools implement the looping concept by doing an indepth study of the concept and by allowing teachers and parents to participate voluntarily.

An indepth study of the looping concept through staff development, parent meetings and compiled literature packets facilitated the success of the program. All staff members were schooled about the concept although there was not 100% participation. Parents were able to ask questions and study the looping literature before deciding to loop or not to loop. Information was readily accessible for interested community members and all stakeholders. Meetings were scheduled throughout the school year to inform and keep lines of communication open between home, school and community.

Participation in the program was on a volunteer basis for teachers as well as for parents volunteering their children's participation in the program. The teacher had a desire for the extended time with the same group of students. The parents

had faith in and trusted the teacher's ability. Therefore, it is important for parents and teachers involved to be supportive of the long term relationship.

The formation of teacher teams and a two-year commitment from the teams were necessary for the survival of the program. The principal or looping teacher became the contact person, monitor and researcher as the concept was implemented.

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Question Three

The third question addressed by the researcher was: What were specific outcomes as a result of the implementation of the looping concept? Specific outcomes that permeated the literature and shared at the four school sites were as follows: parents were knowledgeable about their school (Hanson, 1995; Jacoby, 1995); school served as a safe haven for students (Grant, 1995); and teachers had more time with students and more time to teach (Mazzuchi and Brooks, 1992; Grant, 1995).

Parents were knowledgeable about school functions and the overall program of studies. They were more involved and actively participated in parent activities and family school programs. Students had a safe haven. They were relaxed in their family-like classroom environment. There was stability and a high level of trust. The instructional program was developed around the students' developmental

stages. Teachers felt that looping gave them more time to get to know students, more time to get to know needs and more time to use long term strategies to effectively teach to individual needs.

Researcher's Point of View

Looping provides a comfortable, predictable world for students. Remaining with the same teacher provides a learning environment that parallels a close knit family. This family maintains successful individual and group learning, cooperation and collaboration, positive social skill development and interactivity. The family also teaches the group responsibility, as it allows for independence in learning, growing and developing into life-long learners. There is ongoing cooperation, support and trust between the teacher and classroom community of learners. The second year of looping brings excitement, a quick instructional start and familiarity with teacher expectations and classroom routine.

One year (9 months) is not enough time for a classroom teacher to make a positive academic difference for some students. Students need the security, curricular continuity and that solid relationship formed by the teacher and students in a looping classroom.

The teacher is the pacesetter in a looping class. If the teacher is enthusiastic about the looping concept and committed to its implementation, student success academically, socially and emotionally will be eminent. The looping teacher has to

believe in active, integrated learning. The looping teacher has to be willing to implement developmentally appropriate practices and to vary the instructional methodologies to accommodate individual differences. The teacher sets the pace for the success of the extended time together.

As I reflect over my high school years (8th grade – 12th grade), two homeroom teachers remained with my class of sixty-five students until graduation. At the end of the fifth year, they dropped back to pick up a new eighth grade group and followed them until they graduated.

I believe that all children can learn. I believe that some children have a greater chance to learn if given the opportunity, support and encouragement over a longer period of time with the same teacher. I believe that looping is an important pathway to academic excellence as childhood becomes a ‘journey and not a race’. I believe that looping at the primary/elementary levels will slow down the process of rushing children out of childhood and make their one-and-only voyage through childhood the finest possible preparation for a lifetime of self-discovery (Slavin, 1988).

In our fast paced instant society, students need a caring adult in an environment of routine and consistency. They need that significant relationship. The looping classroom gives children extra time together to build relationships

with each other, their teachers, and the world around them, providing a continuum of experience that boasts achievement and learning (Grant, 1996).

As a former classroom teacher, I often wanted ‘just a little more time’ to work with certain students. The ‘late bloomers’ were just getting ready to burst forth! The light bulb was beginning to light up! Those students would have to start over with a new teacher when I had worked relentlessly with them and the break through was ever so near. After twenty-eight years of searching for the possible program that would significantly deal with the time issue and provide a means for a more stable environment, the answer had come...Looping.

Recommendations for Further Research

(1) Since there were no data collected by the four schools to show academic progress of students in a looping environment for two or more years, it would be beneficial to follow a group of looping students to determine the effect on achievement in the four core areas.

(2) There was a problem with the formation of student cliques as a result of students being together for two or more years. It would be of interest to research this phenomenon to determine the nature of relationships among children in looping settings.

Recommendation for Practice

The four schools did not have an instrument in place to evaluate their looping program and monitor its progress. An evaluation / assessment component needs to be made part of an implementation process of any looping program.

Epilogue

Participants at the four school sites wanted to continue the looping concept. The looping teachers felt that looping was a very positive experience because all children can learn, feel good about themselves, accept others, work together and bond as a learning and social community. Personnel at the four school sites shared current and future plans as follows:

- Claytor Land – Currently there are no looping teachers. The former looping teacher is an adjunct instructor for the University of Virginia and the former principal is Director of Personnel for Diamond County. However, the principal expressed a desire to implement looping schoolwide if ever he had the opportunity.
- Brandon Intermediate – Currently the looping program is in place for third and fourth grades during the 1999-2000 school year. However, the principal who was a strong proponent of the concept has taken an assignment in another state for the 2000-2001 school year. The current principal has not continued the looping program. Therefore, the looping

concept is not a part of the schools instructional / organizational design for 2000-2001.

- Woodson Elementary – Currently, there are two teachers continuing to loop with special needs students. The principal continues to be a strong advocate for the looping design. He is hoping that other teachers will try the concept next year because of the many student benefits.
- Grassy Hill Elementary – Currently, there are three looping classes at this school. During the 2000-2001 school year, there will be no looping classes. Teachers had been given the opportunity to opt in or opt out of the looping program. The former principal is coordinator of the County's Special Education Department. She was a true believer in looping. She believed the next step would be the study and implementation of the multiage concept. However, the current principal has procured all possible looping information for first and second grade teachers to study and plan for implementation during the 2001-2002 school year. There will be a commitment from teachers at first and second to remain with the same students for two years over the next four years.

The current administrator of Grassy Hill Elementary believes that as a teacher loops for a longer period of time, he / she does a better job, becomes more

flexible, time efficient, academically effective and more motivating. Evidence of instructional gains will be indicated through:

- Improved test scores...Virginia Standards of Learning
- Improved reading skills...Virginia Standards of Learning and Reading Rubrics
- More curriculum/material covered...Resource Pacing Guide in the four core areas
- Use of developmental processes to address developmental stages...classroom observation

Looping is a positive way to provide extended 'teaching for learning' time for all students and especially school dependent students.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol (Principal / Teacher)

- Column #1: Core of Questions
- Column #2: Story Structure
- Column #3: Focusing and Elaborating

Interview Protocol
(Principal/Teacher)

Name _____ School _____ # of Years Looped _____ # of Classes Looped _____ Time _____

Column #1: Core of Questions	Column #2: Story Structure	Column #3 Focusing & Elaborating
<p>1. Knowledge: A. What is your perception of looping from experience? B. Does looping have historical roots?</p> <p>2. Purposes: A. Why did you implement looping in your school?</p> <p>3. Preparing to Loop! A. Explain how you planned and prepared for looping.</p> <p>4. Instructional Strategies: A. What instructional strategies are being used B. Are these different strategies that were used in the single step classroom? Explain.</p> <p>5. Support System A. What kinds of support has been in place for the looping teachers</p> <p>6. Evaluation of the Looping Design A. Share specific outcomes as a result of the implementation of the Looping Design. B. What are the pluses? What are the minuses to avoid?</p>	<p><u>Part I: Beginning</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How did you learn about looping? ◆ Why did you decide to loop? ◆ How did you prepare staff and school community for the change? ◆ What should be considered when deciding to loop? ◆ How did you get ready for actual implementation? <p><u>Part II: Middle</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Describe the main ideas of your looping program. ◆ What major challenges did you encounter? How did you meet them? ◆ What evidence can you cite that would support the gain of instructional time? <p><u>Part III: End</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ How much work was involved to change grade levels? ◆ How have parents responded? ◆ How have students benefited? ◆ What lessons were learned (successes/failures)? ◆ What future plans do you have? 	<p>1.</p> <p>A. Looping has provided the time needed for teaching/student bonding and instructional continuity. Most students need this two-three years configuration with the same teacher to grow and develop academically, socially and emotionally.</p> <p>B. One-room schools, ungraded movement, continuous progress movement.</p> <p>Montessori Schools, Waldolf Schools (Steiner) German and European Schools Leading Looping Proponents: Maria Montessori, Steiner, Jim Grant</p> <p>2.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve instructional flow using developmentally appropriate practices • Assist Special Education population • Improve Attendance • Needed a teacher at the next level, therefore teachers decided to move with students (accidentally needed) • Wanted to try configuration <p>3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information from conference (Jim Grant) • Information from Colleagues • Internet/other searches • Graduate Class • Meetings with interested teachers and parents to share looping information • Purchased Looping video, Looping Handbooks, Looping Evaluation book, multiyear Looping Calendar, Looping: Questions/Answers. <p>4.</p> <p>A. Cooperative learning, learning centers, Multiple Intelligences, Themes/Simulations, Authentic Assessment-Taking under consideration the developmental needs of each child and making accommodations accordingly.</p> <p>B. Some are done in the single step briefly, looping gives the teacher 18 or more months to use a variety of strategies to accommodate varying developmental needs to a greater degree.</p> <p>5. Must attend a National Looping Conference</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network • Collaboration <p>Staff Development on various developmental strategies, national multiage-looping conference, common planning time for looping teachers, parent night for looping parents, counseling sessions to ready for transition after 2-3 years (students, parents, teacher), collaborations with administrator (teachers/parents).</p> <p>6. Pluses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional consistency • Varied grouping to accommodate student needs • Strong support of parents • Instructional flexibility as developmental strategies are used • Less waste of instructional time especially in the second and third years • A gain of a month of instruction the second year <p>Minuses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masking a disability • Unbalance in classroom • Separation anxieties <p>Have not been able to collect any empirical data because of program inconsistency and the duration turnover. Have not had the opportunity to follow a group. Would like to take a look at achievement and overall academic performance as a result of Looping.</p>

Appendix B

1.) Stacking Grids with Questions and Responses

- Grassy Hill Elementary
Page 86 through page 96
- Woodson Elementary
Page 97 through page 100
- Brandon Intermediate
Page 101 through page 107
- Claytor Land
Page 108 through page 115

Grassy Hill Elementary School

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>1. How did you learn about looping?</p> <p>2. Why did you decide to loop?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *from principal in conjunction with a grant *from literature (Elementary principal) *from co-workers who had heard and read about it *additional information from internet *attended seminar in Lynchburg *change needed after being in a grade for a number of years *improve attendance *better able to meet developmental needs of children *opportunity to do something different *make learning more developmental 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>3. How did you prepare for the staff?</p> <p>4. How did you prepare the school community?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *shared at staff meetings *provided small group informational meeting with looping teachers *made it optional and teachers volunteered *sent out letters / held meetings *looping parent groups met regularly *parents sharing the good news with other parents as program for loopers progressed *looping flyers were shared *teacher sponsored looping seminars to inform 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
5. What to consider?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Personal readiness for this long term teacher student relationship *Get rid of the fear of change by making it optional *Balanced of classes so no one feels all difficult children would be placed in regular classrooms *Some parents may not want you for a second year (rejection) *Are you dedicated? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -extra programs and activities -phone calls weekly -home visits 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
6. Getting ready to loop?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Read literature *Discussed with team of loopers *Involved parents (meetings / letters) *More work during the summer getting ready for the second loop *Formed support groups among loopers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -met weekly -later met monthly *Formed balanced looping classroom groups 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>7. Main ideas of looping program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Building relationships *Family affair *Strong bond (teacher / student) *Building parent partnerships *Providing security *Knowing your students and parents *Loving, caring environment *Comfortable environment for parents *Providing a fluid, flexible and consistent instructional program 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>9. Evidence that there was a gain of instructional time?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Ahead of others at the same level as far a subject coverage *Able to jump right in the second year with the instructional program instead of using the first three to four weeks going over rules and classroom procedures and expectations *Second year could skip parent issues and behavioral problems because they knew the procedures, rules, and expectations *Second year knew instructional strategies that worked and new learning styles of students *Knew strengths and weaknesses of students – could start the instructional program day 1 of the second year 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>10. How much work to change grade levels?</p> <p>11. Instructional Strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Very little *Just learning new SOL *Getting new materials *Altering classroom to look like students were moving up *More conferencing with students *More hands-on *More individualized instruction according to student's learning style *Reflect and add-on *More independent group work *Flexible – skill groups 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
12. Parent responses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Overwhelmingly positive *More parents wanted the program than the school could accommodate *Looping parents were positive and supportive *Participatory and in favor of looping 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
13. Student Benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Able to stay with friends *Build pride, increased confidence and insured success *Comfortable knowing classmates and teacher for two years *Consistency *Soften retention *Security and feeling good about themselves *Strong relationships with an adult and peers *Smooth transition *Fewer transitions *Long lasting connections 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>14. How were students prepared to exit out of the family?</p> <p>15. Lessons learned:</p> <p>Future plans?</p>	<p>*Provided social and instructional times with non loopers / other Classrooms</p> <p>*Discussed leave and assured students of a ‘personal check’ to make certain things were going fine and adjustments were made</p> <p>*Tough on everyone but promised to be there whenever they needed reassurance</p> <p>*Bought into ‘family’ support</p> <p>*Hands on – ongoing process of teacher growth</p> <p>*Looking at schools differently</p> <p>*Accept rejection if parent does not want a second year with you</p> <p>*Do it again (loop)</p> <p>*Next step is multiage</p>	

Woodson Elementary

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>1. How did you learn about looping?</p> <p>2. Why did you decide to loop?</p> <p>3. How did you prepare the staff?</p> <p>4. How did you prepare the school community?</p>	<p>*attended NAESP conference and heard A National Leader</p> <p>*from principal</p> <p>*studied European Countries</p> <p>*to service special needs children</p> <p>*wanted to try something new</p> <p>*shared information from A National Leader at staff meetings</p> <p>*sent information to possible looping parents only (this was a mistake)</p> <p>*left this up to the principal</p>	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>5. What to consider?</p> <p>6. Getting ready to loop?</p> <p>7. Main ideas of looping program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *sharing information with total parent body of school *allow parents to choose to loop or not to loop *select looping teachers carefully *possibly rejection the second year *desire to be together on the part of the teacher *did nothing special *did not overload classes with special needs children *shared information with looping parents *knowing students well *comfort for students parents *special nurturing *build relationship 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>8. What major challenges did you encounter?</p> <p>How did you meet them?</p> <p>9. Evidence that there was a gain of instructional time?</p>	<p>*could not meet the parents demands wanting to loop</p> <p>*Learning next level SOL's and VA. History</p> <p>*Rejection</p> <p>*Shared at more meetings. Allowed parents to vent frustration of not being able to loop.</p> <p>*Team planning helped</p> <p>*Consider rejection as their loss not mine nor the other students</p> <p>*three to four weeks are saved the second year</p> <p>*quick start up</p> <p>*fewer management things the second year</p> <p>*knew strengths and weaknesses of of students – instruction started day 181</p>	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>10. How much work to Grade levels?</p> <p>11. Instructional Strategies</p> <p>12. Parent responses?</p> <p>13. Student Benefits?</p> <p>14. How were students prepared to exit out of the family?</p> <p>15. Lessons learned:</p> <p>Future plans?</p>	<p>*very little</p> <p>*teams, and peer instruction</p> <p>*same as other classes</p> <p>*parents loved it</p> <p>*more parents wanted looping than we could accommodate</p> <p>*consistency</p> <p>*nurturing</p> <p>*comfortable learning environment</p> <p>*avoidance of retention</p> <p>*instructional continuity</p> <p>*involved in whole school programs and activities</p> <p>*share with all parents (looping and non-loopers)</p> <p>*Continue looping at levels. Allow other teachers to participate.</p>	

Brandon Elementary

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>1. How did you learn about looping?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * researched models * Principal Smith * study groups * other teachers * information from internet * literature * conference (SDE) A National Leader 	
<p>2. Why did you decide to loop?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * whole school decision * Principal was strong proponent * set up a good learning environment * in the best interest of our children * to avoid downshifting 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>5. What to consider?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * how children learn * what is best for children * parental support * needs for flexibility * placing children first * meeting SOLs * readiness of teacher and students for long term relationship 	
<p>6. Getting Ready to loop?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * discussion with parents * deciding grades to loop (3,4,5; 4,5; 3,4) * considering SOLs at various levels 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>9. Evidence that there was a gain of instructional time?</p> <p>10. How much work to change grade levels?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * time is not wasted the first month or two of the second loop getting to know children and setting procedures. * jump start to the instructional program at the beginning of the second loop * pick up from where you left off in the spring and immediately move forward in the curriculum * SOLs have made it difficult * MUST be organized * have good housekeeping skills 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
11. Instructional Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * portfolios * team work * co-op groups * various modalities for individual student needs 	
12. Parent Responses?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * positive * supportive * pleased 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
13. Student benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * comfortable, non-threatening learning environment * instructional continuity * taps prior knowledge * less downshifting * jump-start to the instructional program in the second year of the loop 	
14. How were students prepared to exit out of family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * no problem * so routine 	
Lesson(s) learned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * watch out for clicks * beware of SOLs 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
<p>11. Instructional Strategies?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * more individualization of instructional program * long range planning * portfolio * loop teams * use of interactive activities 	
<p>12. Parent Responses?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 100% supportive...the teacher had sold herself. * just thrilled...wanted three years 	

Questions	Informant: Teachers and Administrators	Respondents Initials
13. Student benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * wonderful for inclusion * comfortable learning environment * more work with reasoning / thinking skills, cooperative learning, problem solving * taught at developmental level 	
14. How were students prepared to exit out of the family?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * no problem 	

Appendix C

Analytical Stacking Grid of Four Schools
Page 116 through page 119

Analytical Stacking Grid of Four Schools

Questions	Informant: Analysis	Respondents Initials
1. How did you learn about Looping?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conference or seminar, A National Leader - Information from principal and literature 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>Woodson, Grassy Hill Brandon</p>
2. Why did you decide to loop?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Try something new - Better meet the needs of children 	<p>Woodson, Clayton Land Grassy Hill</p> <p>Woodson Grassy Hill Brandon</p>
3. How did you prepare staff?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shared at staff meetings. - Study groups and informational meetings 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>Brandon Grassy Hill</p>
4. How did you prepare the school community?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - sent out letters and prepared information parent packets 	<p>All Schools</p>

Analytical Stacking Grid of Four Schools

Questions	Informant: Analysis	Respondents Initials
5. What should be considered when getting ready to loop?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teacher readiness for the long term relationship - allow parents to choose or not to loop 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>Woodson Grassy Hill Clayton Land</p>
6. How did you get ready to loop?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - shared information with parents by way of informational literature, support groups and discussion Sessions. - Parental support needed up front 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>All Schools</p>
7. What was the main idea (s) of your looping program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Building relationships - Getting to know students well 	<p>All Schools</p>
8. What major challenges did you encounter?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Had to deal with rejections - Had to handle “cliques” (K-5) 	<p>Woodson Grassy Hill</p> <p>Clayton Land Brandon</p>
9. Was there evidence in gain of time in the instructional program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instructional programs start day 181 of the second year loop. -Time was not wasted during the first month of school with setting procedures and classroom rules. 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>All Schools</p>

Analytical Stacking Grid of Four Schools

Questions	Informant: Analysis	Respondents Initials
10. How much work is it to change grade levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “little work” - concerns regarding SOLs - physical changes 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>Brandon Grassy Hill</p> <p>Grassy Hill Clayton Land</p>
11. What Instructional strategies were used?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - teaming of students to facilitate learning - individualization of the instructional program 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>All Schools</p>
12. How did parents respond?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supportive, positive, pleased 	<p>All Schools</p>
13. What were student benefits?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - instructional continuity and consistency - a comfortable non-threatening learning environment 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>All Schools</p>
14. How did you prepare students to exit the looping program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no problems as students severed the looping ties - provided times with non loopers through activities 	<p>Brandon Clayton Land</p> <p>Grassy Hill Woodson</p>

Analytical Stacking Grid of Four Schools

Questions	Informant: Analysis	Respondents Initials
<p>15. What lessons were learned?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Learned to accept rejection - ongoing teacher training - accepted family support with a different attitude - more aware of SOLs - “cliques” can damage the program - careful not to mask a learning disability - share concepts with looping parents and non-looping parents 	<p>Grassy Hill</p> <p>Grassy Hill</p> <p>Grassy Hill</p> <p>Brandon</p> <p>Brandon</p> <p>Clayton Land</p> <p>Woodson</p>
<p>Future Plans</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To continue to implement the looping concepts - study multiage concept 	<p>All Schools</p> <p>Grassy Hill</p>

Appendix D

Definitions Page 121 through 125

Definition of Terms

The following terms need to be defined for clarification and ready use:

*Alternative Assessment - an assessment of what we actually want students to be able to do or understand. Assessment that occurs in the context of normal classroom involvement and that which reflects the actual learning experience, i.e., portfolio, journals, observations, taped readings, video taping, and conferencing.

*Cooperative Learning - an extensively researched instructional method that groups students heterogeneously to produce academic and social gains. Students are individually accountable for their learning.

*Developmental Appropriateness - there are two dimensions: age appropriateness and individual appropriateness.

-Age appropriateness refers to universal, predictable, sequences of growth and change that occur in children physically, emotionally, socially and cognitively.

-Individual appropriateness refers to each child's unique individual pattern and timing of growth, as well as individual personality, learning style and family background.

*Developmentally Appropriate Practices - instructional/organizational practices that address developmental stages such as whole language, cooperative learning, multiple intelligences, thematic (theme) learning, reading and learning styles, alternative assessment.

*Integrated Curriculum - cutting across subject matter lines in order to bring together the various content areas of the curriculum into a meaningful and true to life association.

*Learning Centers - the integration of subject areas through active discoveries, using manipulatives and multiple intelligences.

*Multiple Intelligences or Seven Intelligences - gifts that humans possess:

-Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence- expertise in using one's whole body to express ideas and feelings and facility in using one's hands to produce or transform things

-Interpersonal Intelligence- the ability to perceive and make distinction in the moods, intentions, motivation, and feelings of other people

-Intrapersonal Intelligence- Self-knowledge and the ability to act adaptively on the basis of that knowledge

-Linguistic Intelligence- the capacity to use words effectively orally or in writing

-Logical-Mathematical Intelligence- the capacity to use numbers effectively and to reason well

-Musical Intelligence- the capacity to perceive, discriminate, transform, and express musical form

-Spatial Intelligence- the ability to perceive the visual-spatial world and to perform transformations upon those perceptions

*Reading Styles - A person's special learning style for reading which focuses on a person's needs and strengths during the act of reading: visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, global and analytic.

*Teaching Styles - A person's special instructional styles to motivate and to keep students attentive and actively involved in the teaching-learning process.

*Theme Study (Thematic Learning) - a technique for integrating curriculum.

*Whole Language - language is taught as a 'whole,' not by fragmented skills. Listening, speaking, writing, and reading permeate the whole curriculum, rather than exist in isolation.

Appendix E

Looping Stories

1. Grassy Hill Storytellers

- Hattie Bunt page 127 through 130
- Pringle Rider page 130 through 134
- Shelby Townes page 134 through 139
- Boyce Howard page 139 through 142
- Bonnie Barrison page 142 through 144
- Summary page 145

2. Woodson Elementary Storytellers

- Dike Welly page 147 through 150
- Becky Woody page 151 through 152
- Susie Eddy page 152 through 153
- Summary page 154

Chapter 4
Looping Stories

Grassy Hill Storytellers

Four classroom teachers and one principal at Grassy Hill School in Leftwich County, Virginia agreed to tell their looping stories. The interviews took place in the principal's office at the school. We were seated comfortably with the tape recorder between us on the desk during each session.

The following were interviewed:

Teacher	Age	Years Taught	Years Looped
Hattie Bunt	45	24	3
Boyce Howard	53	21	4
Pringle Rider	29	9	2
Shelby Townes	31	8 ½	2
Principal			
Bonnie Barrison	45	5	2

Name of Interviewee: Hattie Bunt
Name of School: Grassy Hill Elementary
Date of interview: October 13, 1999
Time: 4:00 p.m. – 5:15 P.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: K/1st grades

I thought looping was a wonderful experience as far as building relationships with the students and having them comfortable, particularly for 1st grade students. They kind of got attached to me and I got attached to them. We were almost like a family.

It was offered to us, first of all. The principal that was here at the time had come across information about it and came to us and asked if we wanted to try the experience. I jumped right on and said I'd love to try it. We focused on improving academics and attendance. We started off with looping first and then we were able to use the truancy grant as part of the looping. They kind of merged together.

As far as planning we sat down first and had to make sure that the parents were on board. We sent them all letters explaining what looping was about and offering them the opportunity to participate or to opt-out and go their separate way. I had one student who opted out. She was hoping to follow in her brothers footsteps and have the same teachers all the way through. It didn't work that way for her, but she was in part of my loop in the 3rd grade. As far as planning, I thought it was easier to plan. Of course, you had to learn the new SOLs and the objectives for the different school year for the different grade but you knew exactly where you stopped and what you had taught in the year that passed. We would often bring up things we did the year before and build on those experiences.

We did a lot of discussion and a lot of language experience kinds of things where we would pull in the past as well as what we were doing currently. As far as instructional strategies we did them all. Well ...I guess with looping you kind of picked up on which ways the students learned the best. You are able to continue using those and other learning styles. You could hone in on particular styles students needed, such as hands on, and you could focus on those needs. Using the rubrics and building upon what we had in place, I was able to really kind of zero in on the steps they were going through and follow through the next year. Usually you make recommendations and you want to have goals if they go to another teacher. A lot of times those goals are forgotten or they don't come to the forefront right away. Whereas we picked up on the first conference period connecting the past with the present. I was able to inform students of things I wanted them to work on and we jumped on them right away. So the conferencing and discussion with the students I think were important.

We had a grant that came through the truancy at the time that we were doing looping and we had some additional funds that we were able to use to do things with families and groups which was very beneficial. You don't have to have it but as far as a support system that was

something that we were fortunate enough to have. As far as the outcome, I felt like the students had learned possibly more because you did not have that down time and you had the ability to build on what they had already learned in the past and bring those things in. As far as any minuses, if some of the students developed a personality conflict that would definitely be a minus. But we didn't see that too often. If you did have one you felt like you were going to have a personality problem, you had the opportunity to separate and put the student in another classroom.

We went on the internet and we found several sites that had some information and we got some things from A national leader and read some of the articles from that.

The grant that came into play allowed us to sponsor special breakfasts, parent lunches, picnics and field trips to bring us all together. The principal that was here, Bonnie Barrison, was very supportive. Parents were very, very supportive. The superintendent was very supportive of the looping design as well.

I don't know that there was any particular staff development. We read the articles, we sat around and talked and discussed. We would meet, the teachers that were looping at the time, about once a month and sit down and discuss the things that we had found and the things that we liked, the things we were having problems with. Of course, there weren't that many problems. I think that was kind of helpful. We actually had a special notebook that we had all of our things set up in. I will bring it to you if I can find it.

Being able to build on what you already know about your student is a definite plus. That is, having the knowledge base for the following year and building upon that with the students. The positive rapport among the students was outstanding. One of the things that I thought was really funny was the first couple of weeks of school children usually come in very timid and quiet. Well, those kids the second year came in talking! I mean they walked in the door on business day and they had stories to tell and they were anxious and excited being together and talking to each other. That was probably our minus, because it took us awhile to turn them off. Too familiar with each other!

In some of the literature that I read it talked about one minus being masking a disability. In fact, that's exactly what happened. Having worked with the family situation, knowing what was going on at home and how the child did things and also kind of knowing what to say to the child to get him to go on and do the work helped the child succeed with me. For an example adjusting spelling list and things of that nature were just kind of an automatic kind of thing to do.

At the end of my two-year loop when it was time for us to separate we all cried. Teacher included. We talked a little bit about the upcoming separation. And we talked about the fact that we would see each other next year and those kinds of things. I made a point the following year to go by and make sure I spoke to them all and checked on them and I still do that.

Looping was an experience that I think everybody should go through. I think it's beneficial for all the teachers and all the students. I don't recommend it for several years running because I think the students need some different teaching techniques, different personalities. I think it is beneficial to students being with one teacher for at least two years. A

lot of children are timid and scared when they come to school and knowing that familiar person is going to be there is helpful. I think that's particularly true because I taught Kindergarten and 1st grade. Those students who came in Kindergarten crying did not come in and do that the next year; whereas you saw it in some of the other classrooms that weren't looping at the same level. You can also say that the successes were just the fact that you could bounce back in time and say remember last year when we talked about plants and we talked about these kind of things, well this year we are going to talk about that some more but we are going to add on to it. Next, I would talk to them about how you add on to the skills.

Given the opportunity I would probably loop again.

I think the kindergarten/first is a definite, or first/second. In third grade students hit a different level academically and it might be beneficial for them to see a different face who is not doing things quite the same way. They need the mothering, but I think they need a little more distance. You don't want to fall back on some of those kindergarten/first grade kinds of things. You want to make them more independent. You want to make them more responsible and they will probably see you as someone who would do all those things for them.

I think it's something everyone ought to try. I think that most of the parents that came through were very much in favor of it. I had two little girls that moved during the summer. Their parents would bring them in so they could stay with me because they were looping. It's really something for the parents being that supportive.

I keep saying everybody should experience this. First of all it would make your second year so much easier because you've already sat down so many of your ground rules and your routine, expectations, behavior, all of those things have been pretty much set and are in place. You don't lose time academically getting to know kids. It's just like you were home for just a week or two during the summer because you pick up where you stopped.

The children just seem to fall right into place so easily. Of course, you've got to get them to stop talking to each other but once that's done, just give them time to get that out of their system. As far as talking someone into it. I probably would tell them it's wonderful. Talk to the kids. I think they need to talk to the kids and the parents. They are some of your best support right there.

One of the things we did here at Grassy Hill is when we moved from one grade to another we physically moved to another room and in my situation Kindergarten was upstairs and First grade at the time was downstairs so I had to pack up everything I owned and I had been there for several years. I packed everything up and moved it downstairs and then the following year I came back so I had to pack it all up and move it again. That was a major burden on me as a teacher. My recommendation would be to do like Ms. Townes did and change your room and have your room look different rather than physically move. I don't think the kids mind being in the same room. The thought, at the time, was for them to feel like they were still moving up and weren't in a Kindergarten classroom but we could make it a first grade room wherever we were.

Name of Interviewee: Pringle Rider
Name of School: Grassy Hill Elementary
Date of Interview: November 11, 1999
Time: 9:15 – 10:00 A.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: First/Second Grades

I learned about Looping through a grant when our Principal, Bonnie Barrison approached us about it. Some of the teachers had read some information about it and became interested in it. Actually it started out with Elaine Hattson's class, who looped only her children as a class. They looped from a PreK situation to a Kindergarten situation. I thought that would be an interesting technique to try with my own kids. It was a long decision making process. At first, I wasn't going to loop, I talked to a lot of people about it and I decided it would be something new to try. I like to try new things and I thought it would be interesting.

Basically, to start preparing staff and school community, we had a lot of meetings as a group for people who were going to loop. We also met with other teachers in the school to make sure that classes were as even as possible. One of our biggest concerns was if I took my class on for another year, would that make the other classes unbalanced? We tried to do it the best we could. There were some children unable to loop because we wanted to make the classes equal. We talked about the pros and cons with the staff and the school community. When parents first came on business day, I told them that this was a looping class in first grade and at the end of the year they would be allowed to make a decision to go on with me to second grade. The children that were in my class for first grade would have the option to be in my class for second grade.

When deciding to loop, many things should be considered. First of all, academically it's a great thing to watch a child, especially from First grade to Second Grade to come in as a non-reader and then leave in Second Grade as a fluent reader. It's fantastic to actually watch them make that big span.

One thing to look forward to is after the second year you have more contact with the parents. You are more comfortable with them and they are more comfortable with you. The second year, I saw more parents coming to conferences, stopping by my door or sending in things and more involved within the classroom setting. That's one of the big bonuses with looping because they feel more comfortable with the teacher, the other parents in the classroom, and the other students. The students also feel more comfortable with the other students. During a new school year, it takes nine weeks before everybody starts to feel comfortable with everybody. The second year we started out day one already knowing who we were and where we were going.

My first year we didn't do too much to get started because it was like a brand new class but we did activities and met with the parents. More work is actually done during the summer between your two looping times. We had to sit down and decide who's going to go on with

you. The parents needed to agree. We also looked at the balance in the other classes. If I was looping to second grade, I wanted to make sure the other classes are balanced with my class. And also make sure every child is ready to move on with me and that I am not just taking him on because I am moving on. I had one child in first grade that I might have considered keeping back in first grade, but we went ahead and promoted the child. The parents and I decided to send the child with me because I already knew where she was academically. We didn't lose that first nine weeks again with a new teacher and she ended up being at the end of second grade. She passed the second grade reading test with flying colors and everything. Looping was a neat way to see that happen.

The looping I did from first to second grade and the main ideas of the looping first of all is to have the children in a more loving, caring environment with people, a more comfortable environment I should say. Of course, some other people did it from kindergarten/first or second/third. Looping gives the children a more comfortable setting; they are used to their peers. They don't have to get used to new rules and new settings. Also, the same thing with the parents. The parents don't have to learn a whole new homework cycle again. They are more comfortable in talking with the teacher about concerns or suggestions. I saw more interaction with homework and projects and things even our second year.

One of the major challenges is the parents. They know you too well sometimes so they will tell you every option that they have and sometimes it's hard to be the teacher too and be the friend the second year. They sometimes do not see you as the teacher anymore. They see you as a friend and that's hard because you still have to stand your ground as a teacher and still follow your process. Yes, my biggest challenge the second year was the parents. They felt so comfortable with the classroom I think they wanted to be in our classroom everyday from 8 to 2:30. It was difficult for me to try and tell them to come at certain times or make an appointment. If they wanted to come watch our reading class fine but they would just linger within the classroom. It might have been that set of parents or it might have been the looping, I'm not sure. If I ever tried looping again that would be interesting to monitor.

Another major challenge was that the kids did know me. They knew where my limits were and they knew where my limits were not by the second year. We didn't have to go through basic normal rules in the classroom because they knew what I expected. They also knew what they

could get away with so by the end of the year we talked about that and to prepare them for a new teacher.

I think the last day of school was the hardest day I have ever had. After two years, I cried for hours and we talked about how they, the students, would be going on to another teacher. They would have new rules and new classmates. Half my class actually went to Leftwich Elementary, so they were not just leaving me, they were also leaving the school and their friends here. That was a big change and you could tell about three weeks before school ended they were already starting to worry with such remarks as: I'm not going to be able to see you. I'm not going to be able to come read to you. I'm not going to see you.

Challenges are met day by day. A lot of these challenges you don't know are going to come up until they are right there in front of you. We just took one step at a time. I was able to talk to other looping teachers that were at the same point that I was or that had already looped before and they were able to give me insight. We had parent meetings and we talked about some of the concerns together with some of the parents.

Instructional time was gained in that we were able to start week one with a brand new unit and we were able to actually do a whole unit or two more than the other second grade teachers last year. And it's great with instructional time because it takes sometimes four or five weeks to figure out where the weaknesses and the strengths are in your room and I knew day one the second year. I already knew how to group the students. I knew computer lab, I knew where for them to sit in the room and that was one of the benefits because you know so much about the children to be able to place them correctly in your room. Instead of the first three weeks of going back and telling them how I want their planners done or homework done, they knew right off the bat. I only had two new students that joined me the second year and it didn't take very long to get them in the groove. They were with a similar teacher that had similar ideas and policies that I did so they slid right in and we helped them as we went along and that was fine.

Moving to another grade level was a big concern actually my first year because I had always been a second grade teacher and I went down to first grade. My first year with my new class was my first year in a brand new grade level but the teachers that I taught with had already been in first grade so they were very helpful in getting me going. It was actually neat to step back because as a second grade teacher you think why didn't they learn this in first grade? Then, once I got there I said, oh, now I know why. It was neat to see them at the very beginning because most of the time I get them at the end of what they learned in first grade. Second grade tends to be more of a review of what was taught in first grade. Where in first grade I got to actually really teach them how to read and it was just fascinating.

Parents responded positively. I had wonderful comments and summaries at the end of two years. A lot of parents wanted me to go on to third grade and I finally had to say no, I'm sorry I have to stop. The students, I think, really benefited from it not only becoming really good friends with the students but today there are still students who stop by my door every day that are in rooms in teachers across the hall. They'll come over and tell me stories...I had a little girl the other day that came in to tell me her mother was getting married and could I come to the wedding and different things like that. I'm still part of their life and I think they will never forget that. I think the students enjoyed being in the same group two years, they felt comfortable, they didn't have to worry over the summer who their next teacher was going to be, would their best friend be in their class and things like that. It took a little bit of the edge off from the summer.

I think looping was a wonderful, rewarding and enjoyable experience. I'm glad I did it. I would like to do it some other time maybe with different grade levels.

Failures, I don't think I had any failures other than some challenges. Challenges came up with parents. A lot of the behavior I was able to control because I had them for two years. I think I saw more benefits.

Maybe down the road I want to do something in looping or multi-grade classroom. I'm in fourth grade now and that's as high as I can go with my certification so I probably would like to go maybe back down again or do a third/fourth loop. I'm interested in doing something with looping again in the future.

Name of Interviewee: Shelby Townes
Name of School: Grassy Hill Elementary
Date of Interview: October 19, 1999
Time: 3:30 – 4:00 P.M. Interrupted
4:30 – 5:00 P.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: K/1st grades

I did ½ year of substituting and then I got a long-term substitute which led me to teach here at Grassy Hill. I began teaching in first grade as somewhat of an inclusion teacher the first year and after that I was a full-fledged inclusion teacher where I had special education kids in my classroom. I taught in first grade for three years and enjoyed first grade but was somewhat frustrated. So after the third year the principal contacted me and asked me if I would be willing to move to kindergarten. I did. I taught kindergarten for four years following the move.

There was a restructuring of schools in Leftwich County as far as grade levels and there would no longer be six kindergarten classes. There were only going to be three so I had the choice of either looping with my kids to first grade or switching schools. I chose to loop with my kids, first of all because the kids worked very well together and worked well with me. We meshed very well together. Personalities were great, the kids were really doing wonderful work and the parents were very supportive like a big family. It was very nice knowing the kids already and going to first grade with them. The parents didn't have an adjustment, neither did the kids have an adjustment at the beginning of the year. There was an adjustment, of course of moving grades but they didn't have to learn a new teacher's style, rules, regulations, and those kinds of things. I knew where each child was academically, as well as socially and everything. So, I thought those were good reasons for me to switch grades, plus I thought at the time maybe it was time for me to switch grades because I needed a change.

I involved my parents first of all because we sent out a letter asking parents whether or not they wanted to have their child remain with me in the looping class. They had the option of opting out which I did have a parent to choose to have their child in another classroom and I chose a child to move to another classroom as well simply because there were difficulties with personalities with the parents. I don't think I was everything that the parent wanted me to be as far as a teacher and that was fine. I think it is important that if you are going to loop you need to have that openness and that parents need to be able to opt and teachers, too, because a lot of times you have personality conflicts. Your personality might not mesh with another child's or vice versa and I think that's good, as far as looping and switching grades. I think switching grades was made easier because I was looping with those kids who wanted to be with me. I didn't have the initial need to re-teach my kids the rules. I was already dealing with changing grades so I had to learn new SOLs and follow up on the SOLs that I was teaching to my kids; I already knew where I could start so that saved me some time in the very beginning. Looking at

a year of not looping with my first graders this year, I think the kids actually made more progress when I looped with them last year than now. My kids are making progress now but I think it's more noticeable when you loop with a class.

I think when you are deciding to loop you need to first of all ask yourself if you are the type of person that could get tired of a class. At first I wondered because I'm the type of teacher that likes a lot of change. I like change to an extent so I was really curious as to whether or not I was going to get tired and need a change half way through the year but this never happened. It never happened... which was wonderful and if I could I would loop from here on out with that same class. I think that's what looping is about. I think it builds such a strong relationship between you and the child and you and the family. It's a bond. You just don't have that with kids you only have for a year. I mean, you do have a bond but it's not like the long lasting bond you have with two years or even more. Kindergarten and first grade are the first two years of kids in school so that in itself is special anyway. Having them for two years and seeing them make those leaps and bounds and overcome hurdles and that kind of thing is just wonderful. As far as I am concerned, those are the positive aspects of looping.

To get ready for looping, we discussed it with parents and changed the classroom as much as I could. I needed to have a change for the kids because I didn't want them to feel like they were staying in my classroom and it was a Kindergarten classroom again. I wanted them to see that I could change it around. It could be the same classroom and be a different grade. That was one of my main focuses on setting my classroom up so that it didn't look like a kindergarten classroom when it was really supposed to be a first grade classroom. This was my biggest adjustment that I wanted to make because I wanted the kids to feel like they had made achievements and accomplishments and they were moving up and not staying in a Kindergarten classroom. I think as far as looping my main idea was to have a longer period of time to take the child and make a fluent, flexible well-rounded child. For looping, it doesn't stop! You have the months of the summer as well as 18 months. The transition is just so much smoother. I don't care whether the child is an extremely flexible, well-rounded child, there are still going to be transitions and when you eliminate some of those transitions it makes so much more sense. That's why I think looping is so wonderful. All the kids feel successful and it helped from the very beginning. I think with looping you do have a good rapport. You are somewhat assured that you would have this rapport because you have chosen to loop with those students and they have chosen to remain with you. This way every one's feeling good at the beginning of the year. I think it eliminates a lot of wasted time. The first month of school in any grade is when you've got to get your rules down, you've got to make sure the kids understand what you're doing, you've got to understand what the kids are doing, you have to learn the kids and the kids have to learn you. With looping you eliminate that first month of going over the simple step by steps of walking quietly, keeping your hands to yourself. You review it of course but you don't have to spend the amount of time you do when you are getting a brand new class. So I think that's really great!

The challenges I encountered were the fact that the classroom was one. If it is feasible, I think moving rooms would not be a bad idea when looping just because the children did struggle with that a little bit last year. These kids thought it was still a kindergarten classroom. They'd ask, when are we going to go to housekeeping? When are we going to go to this or when are we going to go to that? Well, we were in first grade so that in itself was a little bit hard. If at all possible, I think moving classrooms would be the best option. Another obstacle that could arise is sometimes you have kids that do know you so well that they are very friendly with you and will sometimes almost push too far. This did occur for me. I would have to say now you know what I expect and once I said that they would get themselves back together. The students were not being disrespectful. It's just a matter of comfort and when you feel comfortable with someone you feel more at ease to try things. I would consider this to be a problem, but I would not consider it a huge challenge.

As far as meeting the challenges you reassure and try to make things as different as possible but keep the familiarity. They know you, they know the school, they know each other. Try to make small changes so that they don't think it's just another year as far as activities are concerned.

Changing grades is great but you can also do things the same way you taught them the previous year. You can teach things the same way but sort of change it a little bit. If you find something that works the previous year it's good to stick with it. You know "Oh, these kids really did well when I did it this way", so you might have a different skill but you know you can do it this way and the kids really will get it. That's a neat thing. They can get things pretty quick.

As far as changing grade levels itself, I didn't find, I was very concerned about changing grade levels because of the SOLs. I thought I'm teaching this kindergarten SOL and the first grade SOLs. They have to go hand in hand but I was worried about where some SOLs had been placed. There are a lot of first grade SOLs that I thought were extremely difficult for first graders and kindergartners as well. This is why I was concerned. Plus when I taught first grade before, skill groups were not really done. You pretty much kept the kids in your classroom. This was difficult because first grade is so fundamental and just learning to read is so frustrating for some students. There are so many exceptions to so many of the rules. Letters don't say the sound they are supposed to so many times. When I taught first grade before it was so frustrating because I could see those poor little guys that just weren't ready to read, and they were really feeling down about themselves. They were doing the best they could possibly do. We forget so many times that reading is developmental. Now the skill groups are available so the kids are feeling successful wherever they are and it's almost like they're not placed in a grade. It doesn't matter what grade they are in they are just placed with their skill group so they are feeling good about themselves and meeting with success. This was one of my biggest concerns about going to first grade. I thought it was going to be the same as it was before and that was hard for me as a teacher because I wanted all my kids to feel good about what they were doing I did not think that they were because the frustration level was there. As far as changing grade levels I think this concern was eliminated a lot. I was skeptical, but it was not as

hard because I knew where my kids were and I knew where to push my kids so that they didn't reach that frustration level. Because I think first grade is so frustrating anyway its very important for me to know this especially my first year back in first grade.

I knew where I needed to start with each child. This helped me a whole lot when I switched grade levels and it didn't make it quite as difficult as far as getting prepared and changing things to meet each child's levels.

The parents were wonderful!! They responded wonderfully! There was one parent who was not pleased with me as a teacher in Kindergarten which was fine. Everybody is entitled to that and that's fine. This parent chose to put the child in another classroom and I was sad about that because I really thought the child was doing well with the other kids and with me as well. I thought that child needed to be with some of the same kids because this child was sort of a withdrawn child anyway. That was the only negative, the only hard thing as far as parent's response. I've kept in contact with a lot of my parents. It's been like a family. If ever there was a concern they were always there. The communication was always open, whether they had a concern with me, whether I had concern with a child to them, or whatever. As far as I was concerned I never felt uneasy about talking to any of my parents which was fantastic. Usually when I start a new grade and conference time comes, I get nervous, I don't want to hurt their feelings, I don't want to offend them. Looping made me feel much more at ease. A lot of times parents are trying their very best but you don't actually see this. They are doing the very best they possibly can and I think looping enables us to see it better. Being with them and actually seeing what they do day in and day out over a longer period of time has helped. I did not do home visits but I think this would be wonderful. I never did this but there were some loopers who did visits which I think would be beneficial. I think this would be good because it gives you an overview of how the child lives and that kind of thing. I think that's important too. I had siblings of some of the kids I looped with. That made it even better because then I got to have this other sibling for two years and that brought the families closer together. It makes teaching even more fun. You are teaching families as well and they are teaching you too. It was a wonderful experience!! Even though I found it to be a wonderful experience, I don't think it is for everybody. You have to know your class. You have to be comfortable with your class. You have to mesh well together. It's got to be a teamwork situation. I think the students benefit because they feel really confident; or I hope that's how they feel. I feel that's how they left. It feels like a big family. It's just hard to explain because the kids just worked so wonderfully together just like being a family. They thought of each other all the time, and they are still friends. I see them in the hall and they're still together. It's really neat. They only are in second grade but that's their first years of learning. That's really important. I think if a child gets on a good start to learning they're going to keep that learning up. Especially in these early years, if you can have consistency in the kids lives, that's so important. So many kids don't have consistency and if they have it at school that's a step in the right direction because they are here for so long during the day.

In order to be successful at looping you have to keep an open mind. There's a possibility that not everyone is going to want you as a teacher and that is hard. There are times when you get too comfortable with the kids and the kids get too comfortable with you and then at times you would have to back up and say you're getting a little out of hand. We've got to calm down and get back in order. This would be something that you would have to be prepared for and don't let yourself get too comfortable.

I wouldn't mind looping again; however, I would like to remain in the lower grades. I would like to go back to Kindergarten and loop up to first but it might not be bad to loop to second either. This is where my comfort zone is. The benefits of looping are numerous. You could just see kids that you wouldn't think would come out. They talk now...I can definitely see the benefits of looping. I think it would be beneficial to loop in the middle/high school levels. I think the drop out rate would be less. The consistency could help build their confidence and they could carry that feeling of accomplishment with them longer.

Name of Interviewee: Boyce Howard
Name of School: Grassy Hill Elementary
Date of Interview: November 5, 1999
Time: 3:30 – 4:30 P.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: 1st/2nd and 3rd/4th Grades

The way I learned about looping was from our former principal. Bonnie Barrison had gotten some information about a grant that was going on. It involved a correlation between truancy and more parental involvement. The school decided that those of us who were interested in looping would get this grant. We were involved with the grant and we did get some monies for classroom items and things that we would be needing. I really thought the idea was wonderful. At the time I was teaching first grade, and I had a class that I had gotten close to and I had been with them for only two months. I decided that it would be a wonderful opportunity for me to go ahead with my students up to second grade. I decided to loop for that main reason so that I'd get to know my students better. The program that we had started had a lot of parental involvement. We would have monthly meetings with parents, have activities and share with the parents. At most of those meetings we had something to eat, (which was to draw them in) and we had parent/child activities going on. At those meetings we had no less than ten and most of the time somewhere between 15 and 20 parents.

We prepared the staff and school community for the change by putting information in the newspaper that we were looping. We had flyers printed up and sent home with the students. Not all the classrooms were looping. They chose five of us as a pilot program and of course at our faculty meeting the staff and faculty were filled in on how we were going to do it.

I think some of the things that should be considered when deciding to loop is if you are dedicated enough to go with it because it did take for us more than I realized. Longer hours, after school programs that we were doing, especially the nightly programs required a lot of our time. That wasn't always obvious at the beginning but it became obvious as we went along. I think you need to realize that it's not just here at school but its part of getting parents involved. It's phone calls weekly to parents, planning activities out side of school time but those things which would be things that coincide with what we are doing in class. I think basically it's just the dedication to sticking with the program.

We went to a seminar in Lynch City and at that seminar we were given materials. There was some information that we got on other states, other countries, that were doing looping. We were basically given an overview of the looping program and when we came back we got together with the teachers who were looping. We met once every two weeks as a support group for looping and I think that was really important for us to all have our support group because we could all contribute what we were doing and it really made for a much better program. I think the one thing that we encountered with the looping program was the amount of paperwork. Because it was a grant and there was a lot of things we had to keep up with and that to me was a

real challenge. After the paper work and after the second year when we no longer had the grant it became less of an obstacle. I think the one major challenge I found when I did loop was that I really had to come up with lots of new ideas, innovative ways. I had to sometime differ my teaching style so that my kids weren't seeing me being in a repetitive or boring situation that they had seen before. That was, for me, one of the major challenges. And the way I met those, I took some classes in teaching strategies. I did a lot of work on the internet pulling up things other teachers, other countries, had done for their looping programs. The other thing was staying in touch with parents. They had my phone number, which was a good thing because then they could call me when they wanted to. We just felt really comfortable with one another.

The evidence that I can cite that supported the gain of instructional time was that after the first year and going into the second year, I knew exactly where my children were. I knew where their strengths and weaknesses were. We could start right off on the first day everyone knowing everyone. It was a safe and friendly environment. After the first year it was like a home there. Kids felt free to speak their minds. They felt free to try things and not feel like they were going to be ridiculed by their classmates if they got it wrong. They just felt safe and I think they felt that they could be themselves. Getting back to talking about knowing where the children were, I could start right off, have the skills we learned the first year and just keep on going with those skills that we were doing for the second year. I did do about three or four days of testing to find out if they had lost or gained, rather than spending, sometimes three or four weeks finding out where a child was and then going with them from there. So I gained a lot of time that way. The children knew the routine in the room, they knew what was expected of them. We didn't have to go through all that, it was just kind of a refresher thing like being gone on vacation and come back and now we're back in the groove of home and knowing what was going on there. Everybody got back to work.

There was not a lot of work that was involved to change grade levels. It required a lot of ideas and a lot of theme gathering, but when I look at it I know my teaching styles pretty much stayed the same. I did have to go out and get some more materials on what I needed to teach especially with the SOLs that were coming. But actually other than having to get different materials or teaching a new subject, it wasn't that difficult for me. It wasn't that involved to change a grade level.

Parent's response was absolutely overwhelming. We did see that students who were more likely to be truant (stay out of school) were coming more. We did see that in our results that we gathered from that program. I think parents knew that I would be calling them on the phone or coming by their house. We did have home visits so I think maybe they felt that they knew me, they knew the school and that maybe if a child said he was sick (he had a headache) they felt maybe an obligation to go ahead and send him to school. They trusted the school's decision and it wouldn't be something that we would overlook. I think students have benefited. I know two of my students for sure that did. One child had repeated. She was with me her first year and she had repeated first grade. She was developmentally delayed and another child that I had had learning problems. I

knew those two children really had to struggle so I was able to work with them, know what their weaknesses were and their strengths and I was better able to (by knowing what they were) hone in on those skills and try to develop them.

I think I, myself got a lot of satisfaction. I, like children, like consistency. I learned also I think that it's hard to let go. That first year when a couple of kids moved away it was difficult but after the second year, I think it was harder on me than it was on the students. This is my third year. I have two students who are left and boy when they leave I know that's going to be a real trauma to me.

I think that possibly I could have done a little more with home visits. We weren't allowed to go on a home visit by ourselves and I can understand that but I think if I had been more open to going to home visits to visit with parents (I did do some but I think if I could have done a lot more), that we would have had a little better rapport with some of the parents than we did. But overall basically I felt it was a success. Parents felt it was a success because they felt comfortable and safe here. A lot of them had not had good school experiences, (parents themselves) and I think this helped show them that there were some good experiences that their children could have in school and they felt better about coming.

I won't be looping anymore right now. I like the grade that I'm in. I hope I'm allowed to stay in 4th grade but I can only say if you ever have the opportunity to loop and you have that dedication to be with a child, to promote that rapport that you get with a child, then I would say go for it.

Name of Interviewee: Bonnie Barrison
Name of School: Grassy Hill Elementary
Date of Interview: November 19, 1999
Time: 2:00 – 2:40 P.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: 3 Years as Principal

Actually, there was an article in the Elementary Principals bulletin about looping. I thought it was very interesting and I had a conversation with Mr. Johnson, the superintendent, too. He told me he had heard something about looping and he thought it was a good idea. At that point, I had a teacher who had been in Kindergarten for 25 years and I really felt that she needed a change. Her style was more upper and she wasn't coming around to understand what I expected on the Kindergarten level. I approached her with the idea of looping which got her into first grade. That really worked well for her. So we paired her up with another teacher and we started just with two loopers. It went well. And then a grant possibility came across my desk. Of course, we had to apply. Since it was in attendance, I called the state level people because most attendance is not going to be methodology; it's going to be more monitor and respond. So I sold the idea and they agreed to it. At that point, we went to three pairs of loopers. Basically six teachers were paired. They would be in the same cycle and trade rooms. We had ongoing meetings and they made adjustments as we made adjustments.

First of all looping is optional for all participants. Starting with two teachers made it a little more exciting because they spread the word. The next year, we needed 6 teachers to volunteer for it. I had more volunteers than I could accommodate. We gave notice to the parents that this was a looping set up and what it meant. We were very clear that if this is not your preference then we would put your child in a non-looping class. We also made it quite clear that if you choose to attempt it the first year and didn't like it you could opt your child out the next year. So we kept it pretty much like that. Now community, we did do presentations here and there but it wasn't so much to our population but the local and state community. The audience included people who were interested such as fellow professionals. In designing the groups we designed them very much like we designed any class. That was one of the fears when we first started talking about this; one teacher said to me, "Well, they will get all the best kids". I had to reassure the teachers, "No, we will strategically place heterogeneously". (You probably have that same system, male, female, high, medium, and low in reading and behavior problems.) That was real important to the other teachers that if they didn't choose to do it that they wouldn't get all of the difficult children.

Our looping program had a lot to do with security needs being met. It also had a lot to do with loss time as you changed teachers into another year. We felt we were gaining a month. Instead of a child in kindergarten going to a brand new first grade teacher where the first grade teacher had to spend a whole month to get to know the child, we felt we were gaining time and meeting security needs. This school's fairly large. I envied Coles Creek where the children

have been together kindergarten through fifth grade. There's something really valuable with this especially when we had six kindergarten classes, six first grades, six second grades and then they switched to a whole new school. (We had children with the possibility of 18 different classes in a three-year span.) Security in Early Childhood is a big issue. Looping was a way that they were staying with their family and their primary adult.

The first challenge was one that I already mentioned. There was a little upheaval about the loopers getting "the best kids". I reassured the teachers that they would be making the decisions and whatever group a teacher got was the group she continued to loop. That helped. I think a challenge that we ended up with (a little bit) is that I had two children who opted out the second year and when I placed them in another class they didn't know many other children. We had our outside times and our lunch times grouped together in preparation for a particular child that may loop out. Sometimes the looping cycles would be out of sync. A child could be kindergarten, looped into first grade and enter a second grade that is in its second year of a looping cycle; that child would walk into a group that had already been a family for a year. To help this, when a cycle was done we make sure we paired good buddies together and we moved them into the class together. So even though a child might go into a second year cycle they took some of their previous two-year family with them. Parents didn't have a whole bunch of issues. Now I can see a problem if you get a weak teacher. But generally the volunteers were average or above. One of the best benefits I believe in looping was the staff development process. That goes back to why we started it. When we are in our own little world that's all we see. So kindergarten was everything. It helps further the understanding that everything is developmental. With looping I got a better vision of what needs to be done and when. So the staff development process is excellent.

We did not compare our results to a control group. We heard the results from the teachers, how good the program was, including improved behavioral issues and parent issues.

There was not much preparation needed to change to looping because we had ongoing sessions and teachers were in a cycle with another teacher. It was a smooth cycle; teachers even traded rooms and materials. It was such an ongoing process I don't even think students noticed it as "a change".

Parent response was overwhelming! I had more requests than I could fill. I can recall two children after the first year who opted out. One had to do with a parent not liking a teacher who was absolutely wonderful (just a difference of opinion).

Looping made me buy into families. It made me buy into looking at schools in a different way. It also made me buy into the hands on process of teacher growth. I'm a big believer in looping. I believe the next step, which I would love to have gotten into, would be multiage. We did allow for teachers to loop out if they wanted to after they completed their two-year cycle. To ready students for the separation we did as much resource things together such as recess and lunch times. We also had celebrations, only for loopers. We had an end-of-the-year picnic after school. We gave them an opportunity to be with the other children.

We did evening programs with parents. We developed an extended family where parents were together. When I went in as the principal in my son's looping parents meeting, which we did once a month, I was not a principal. I was a "Mom". I'm still keeping up those relationships with those parents. We just didn't meet security needs of children; we met security needs of parents. That's what it takes because sometimes it's a matter of trust.

Summary

In September of 1995, two classes of students looping started in the first year of their two-year cycle. During this time, evening parent sessions were designed and implemented based on a cooperative learning, participatory model which included the whole family. The cost of establishing looping classrooms was no more than the cost of continuing any classroom. The evening parent sessions were expense free to the school; these sessions counted toward a contractual obligation each teacher had for required evening activities.

During the winter of 1996, Grassy Hill was awarded a Truancy Grant to further looping endeavors. Four more K – 2 teachers volunteered to loop. Teachers were paired in three teams to exchange ideas, materials and rooms. Teachers and principal met monthly to plan, brainstorm and make decisions regarding the optional looping programs. Groups remained heterogeneous and flexible.

Adult participants in the looping program reported the feeling of empowerment from becoming true working partners in the education of children. Parent sessions, field trips, luncheons and volunteerism averaged 70 – 95% parent participation in the second year classes. First year classes had a good and growing participation of parents; all exceeding non-looped classes.

Looping at Grassy Hill Primary School, involving two-year placements for students, parents, and teachers, with a strong component of authentic parent interactions, has provided a true extended family for 120 students. Objectives targeted and exceeded aimed at the very core of student success. In the hierarchy of child development, meeting needs for security and consistency in relationships were top priority. Since parent involvement is a very important factor in a child's educational development, it became an important component of the looping program.

As a result of the looping experience, it was discovered long term, ongoing relationships give both student and parent the opportunity to develop a trusting relationship with a teacher and school community of workers as an extended school family. Rather than the traditional parent programs, whole family with participatory interactions set the stage for sharing and trusting. Given an extended period of time with a child, a teacher is more likely to resolve behavior challenges and build upon individual learning modes. In non-looping classes, these issues must be rediscovered and resolved yearly, with every new teacher and new peer-groups.

Woodson Elementary

Two classroom teachers and one principal at Woodson Elementary in Bees Wax County, Virginia have been working with me on this project for two years. They were anxious to share their looping experience and to tell their stories over a four year span. The principal vociferously shared his looping story from the walls of his office. Mrs. Eddy decided the school's conference room was a good place to share her looping story and Mrs. Woolard felt comfortable in her classroom. A tape recorder was used to capture the stories in each setting.

The following is a profile of the interviewees:

	Age	# Of Years Taught	Years Looped
Mrs. Susie Eddy	35	12	4
Mrs. Becky Woody	48	20+	2
Mr. Dike Welly (Principal)	43	15	5

Interviewee: Mr. Dike Welly
 Name of School: Woodson Elementary
 Date of Interview: June 10, 1999
 Time: 4:00 P.M. – 4:30 P.M.
 Setting: Principal's Office at Woodson Elementary
 Looping Duration and Grades: 5 years (K-5th grades)

Our decision to start the looping process was very much based on some historical perspectives. Back in the days of one room schoolhouses the kids were all grouped together and there was a lot of multiage grouping going on. At that time older kids helped the younger ones. Probably the key part of great interest to us was those children who needed the extra attention of an adult had the ability and the opportunity to remain with one adult who would get to know them really well over several years. Our program calls for a two-year loop or a complete cycle of two years.

There are many benefits to staying with the same teacher for two or more years. To name a few: (1.) Teacher knows student's strengths and weaknesses from one year to the next. (2.) The second year the teacher does not take up time getting to know the children and their learning styles and interests. Three to four weeks are salvaged the second year because the teacher does not need time to discover learning styles, etc. the looping teacher already knows from the year before. This is especially true of our special needs population. The teacher has

worked through any special needs, behavioral concerns and the boundaries have been set. (3.) First year expectations are carried into the second year.

Basically, we first learned of the looping concept about five years ago when I attended the NAESP conference. I heard Mr. A national leader speak on multiage and looping and ways to help children in the early years to get some extra time to avoid retention. That is where the interest was really sparked. He has written several books on the concept of multiage grouping and looping.

In looking around at the research, we found many European countries that used this concept of a teacher picking up a group as a class then continued on with them for multiple years. After attempting or implementing the looping concept over several different teachers, we would always have parents complete a survey in order to assess their feelings about looping. Ninety-five percent of the time we received positive comments from the parents. Parents were very pleased because they knew the teacher and knew the teacher well! They felt good the first year their child had that particular teacher. Therefore, they felt comfortable bringing up problems, concerns and communicating with the teacher. There was a real level of trust that had been built. This was reflected in the surveys by the parents. The kids absolutely loved it. After having a successful first year with the teacher, they were thrilled to death with the opportunity to stay with that teacher the second year. We had also implemented a few student surveys with smiley faces that asked questions like, "How did you feel about school?" All came back very positive. Children in looping classrooms had very positive attitudes about learning and coming to school and certainly about their teacher. The other kind of evaluation we did was to give parents an opportunity to opt out of the second year loop! This was done by way of information sent home with a brief description and other pertinent looping findings. There have been only two or three parents that have decided not to continue the loop. This is a definite tribute to the teacher. These parents were supportive of having their children have the same teacher another year because of the knowledge the teacher already had concerning the students.

When preparing to loop, I relied on the information I had gotten from the NAESP conference. I made a presentation at a staff meeting and allowed volunteers to step forward to explore the concept further. I did get the volunteers needed. The first year of looping found one class at each of our five grade levels participating in the two-year placement with the same teacher. As far as having to prepare teachers, there was not a whole lot that we had to do other than understanding the concept of why we were doing it. When it comes down to the instructional program you really don't do anything differently. You just continue on through the curriculum. One benefit we had that helped the process was the grade level planning that was already in place. For example, when that Kindergarten teacher looped to the first grade, there was a whole team of first grade teachers that helped her with the SOLs, materials and activities. The great concern was if that looped teacher would know the next level curriculum in order to continue on. This whole team grade level planning was a definite plus leading to teacher success. I think our biggest weakness was preparing our parents. We just sent a sheet home showing the pros and cons of looping and said we were offering this. During the summer I had to field a lot of questions because parents had concerns that had to be addressed. These

questions came from looping parents as well as non-looping parents. ALL parents want the great benefits for their children that looping had to offer. It also ended up that the teachers who volunteered were the more popular and requested teachers on my staff. There were about ten to fifteen called almost daily from parents who also wanted to loop. We could have done better with our public relations with the general population of parents. The following year we fixed this by sharing at every public meeting we could find.

We primarily looped our special needs population and students who needed special nurturing, behavior modification or showed special educational needs. We did not over load these classes but worked to keep classes balanced across the grade level. We really felt that some of these students would benefit greatly from having this strong teacher for two years. By April or May of the first year, we could see things happening positively for these special needs children. We wanted these good happenings to continue. Their peers accepted them and were too willing to assist them.

The dynamics of the classroom are important. If you have a group of students who do not get along, those students need to split up the second year and completely dismantle this loop. I don't believe it would be professionally sound to loop 70 – 85 % of the class and leave others out. Any time you decide to implement the looping concept, it should be opened to every child in that particular class. You should not single out a couple of kids, but deal with the problems and concerns. In my school, if for some reason the teachers did not want to loop with 100% of her class, then that teacher did not loop that year. It was all or none. I just did not allow it.

There was not a “real” cost to loop. Everything is the same concept when changing grades, however, there could be a slight increase for materials for the teacher. But the grade level planning and sharing took care of that. Same with instructional strategies! Everything instructionally continued through grade level planning. Sure there were modifications but all students were presented with the same curriculum, instructional strategies, enrichment opportunities, etc...in the looping and non-looping classes. That equity had to be there for the welfare of all children. The great difference is the head start that students get the second year in the loop because the teacher already knows the students. Whereas, in a non-looping class the teacher has to learn the students, deal with discipline problems and reach critical instructional decisions that the looping teacher had resolved the first year. There was some management things that the looping teachers did not have to deal with the second year.

Staff development did not change for looping teachers. Staff development was the same for the whole school. There was no need for extra support. That too remained the same. I can not think of anything that a looping teacher needed to know differently in order to be prepared or to make looping a successful model. Looping was a social benefit, from my perspective, to the children with their relationship between the teacher and the learner as opposed to any type of educational programming, strategies or instructional techniques being that there has to be something different. It is the relationship that you are building in looping

that gives the learner the opportunity to take risks, to feel more comfortable and to progress in the structure of the curriculum that you have for all children. This seems to me to be the difference!

Again, we boped for two years. When it came time to transition back to the single step, there was no special preparation for the children. My teachers may share something differently. We simply did whole school activities, field days and assemblies so the students are mixed-up in other times and other activities. We made certain that the looping classes were not little enclaves or little sections that were not exposed to other children! We also had book buddies with looping and non-looping participants. These looping classes had relationships with classes throughout the school. We never felt that they (the loopers) were getting to be such a tight group that there would be a problem with them breaking out and being without each other the third year.

Finally, as always, we try to assess programs we put in motion. The evaluations have been mostly anecdotal. We have not looked at test scores (time does not permit us to do that extensive investigation) or that type of empirical data to verify that loopers excelled academically because of the looping program. The teachers have met together each year to determine if it had been beneficial and if they wanted to do it again. The teachers that have experienced a complete cycle report a very professional growth experience and enjoyment. They have all volunteered to do it again. Parents have been positive.

If you are considering looping, let me give you some helpful hints:

- Present looping information to all parents not just Parents of loopers
- Use experienced teachers
- Use the nurturing teacher who is flexible
- Spend time setting up a balanced looping class – don't overload with special needs

I have enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to share our looping ideas with you. Mrs. Susie Eddy will be interviewed next. She has experienced looping a couple of different times over the past five years, primarily, from first grade to second grade. Then, Mrs. Becky Woody who looped from third grade to fourth grade will share with you. They are experienced teachers and they have a lot to offer you.

Interviewee: Mrs. Becky Woody
Name of School: Woodson Elementary
Date of Interview: May 10, 1999
Time: 3:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.
Setting: Teacher's Classroom
Looping Duration and Grades: 2 years (3rd-4th grades)

I had children in third grade and looped up to fourth with them. It was a heterogeneous group: high, medium and special needs (very small). This classroom make-up was reflected in the non-looping classes also. There was a student I had that had been identified as having a compulsive personality. He had to do everything just so! He was a perfectionist. Very Smart! Very Brilliant! If he did not get it right or how he thought it should be he would lose control, so he needed that nurturing that would help him not to have to make all those adjustments again with another teacher. So in his case, looping was very beneficial for him. We had set up a routine with him at the beginning of school that would help him and the whole class understand him. By having his peers understand, it helped him feel more comfortable. That which benefited all my children was the time saved the second year because I knew the children and the children knew me. We did not waste time making discoveries. That had been done the first year. I knew their strengths and weakness and where to start the instructional program. Students held on to coping skills, rules learned and expectations as we looped to fourth. Students learned to be considerate and accepting of our special needs children.

The looping configuration reminds me of the Mastery Model. The Mastery Model requires that a student stay with the teacher until mastery has taken place, then he moves on. I took a class in gifted education when this model was discussed. In other words children moved from one mastery to another instead of from grade level to grade level. If it took the child two years to master the content, then he stayed with the same teacher until mastery was accomplished.

I have a masters in Special Education and eighteen hours in gifted education. That makes me interested in working with these mixed groups. Those that were high functioning had to be challenged. I could do that. Parents were pleased with the quick start up the second year. They had fewer adjustments to make.

The only challenges that I had were learning fourth level Math SOLs and brushing up on my Virginia History. I enjoyed them and they were interesting. I simply expanded my strategies and spent the summer building on my students already known math skills.

Looping is such a positive experience. It lessens transition times, allows for bonding and a strong support system for students needing more nurturing. All my parents loved it and said they would do it again. I think that is the real test.

To insure a positive looping experience, I think you should:

- Allow parents to choose to loop or not to loop
- Select looping teachers carefully

I am thankful that my principal shared this new concept and gave me the opportunity to participate.

Interviewee: Mrs. Susie Eddy
Name of School: Woodson Elementary
Date of Interview: May 10, 1999
Time: 2:15 P.M. – 2:45 P.M.
Setting: Conference Room at Woodson Elementary
Looping Duration and Grades: 4 years (1st and 2nd grades)

Looping benefits the whole child not just academically but socially and emotionally. The security of knowing their classmates is as big a part of the process as knowing the teacher. They really built up a trust factor with each other as they work as a team. The parents became close friends as well. Everybody just knew each other so well that the anxiety level was at an all time low especially at the beginning of the second year. Another marvelous benefit was the ability to take off running with the instructional program day 181. This was because procedures, rules and expectations had been established the first year. It was also easier to connect the present to the past and the past to the present. Yes, children in a looping class became very comfortable with each other because they know each other so well.

Let me tell you...there is a real easy opening of school and no stress for students the second year because they know each other so well. Now this year, the principal did place two additional children in with my loopers. You could probably go into my room and pick them out because they are just learning the other students and me. It has taken them longer to feel a part of the group and to move on.

In social settings, it has been interesting sharing what is going on in public education to discover there are older adults that had similar long-term relationships in school. I met someone from Michigan who had the same teacher for three years. After many years, they still exchange communications and Christmas cards. Open schools also had the same concept because you ended up with the same students for a number of years. This is not a 'new' concept, but it is new to me. At least 'new' to me that I wanted to try it when my principal, Mr. Welly, shared information after returning from a principal's conference.

I am always ready to try something new and I was willing to have special needs children in my classroom to try to make a difference for them over the two-year period of time. The looping classes had a lower pupil/teacher ratio because we had more students needing special attention. Since my students have left my looping class, they are still doing great. I check out the honor roll for their names and I check with their teachers. All my special needs children are making progress and continue to feel good about themselves.

My special needs children made great gains over the two-year period. The other children in the classroom were ever ready to assist them in anyway. The children were each other's cheerleaders. They encouraged each other and they celebrated accomplishments.

I must confess that I had two parents that decided not to continue the loop because of my special needs children. That was shameful and their great loss. All other parents were pleased with the looping program and all that we were trying to do with our special needs children.

In my looping classroom, I did more team activities, allowed more peer instructions and they do a lot more with helping each other. These are especially great additions for my special needs children. There would always be a peer there to answer a question or assist when the teacher was busy. A lot of children need that flexibility and support system.

Let me end my story with a ton of benefits from my four years of looping:

- Quickens start up in the fall of the second year
- More relaxed atmosphere
- More cooperation among students
- Easy communication with parents

A teacher must want to do this. She has to want to stay with a Group. The teacher has to be prepared for the sadness when it's time to move the group on. Then also, be prepared to have someone not want you the second year!

Summary

Forrest Elementary has experienced the looping concept for at least five years. There was a looping class at each of the five grade levels to nurture and provide long term relationships for special needs students. This configuration proved beneficial for students academically, socially and emotionally. Parents have especially appreciated the long-term relationship because of the comfort, involvement and open lines of communication. Teachers were pleased with the immediate instructional 'start up' time in the fall of the second loop. The instructional continuity was recognized by teachers and parents.

The looping concept was presented to the staff by the principal. He had attended a national conference (NAESP) and was turned on to the concept by A national leader, keynote speaker. If some students needed extra time academically, this was one of the better ways to give it to them. It was from the enthusiasm of the principal that teachers volunteered to implement the concept.

As looping classes are set up the following should be given special attention:

- Parent information – make certain parents are given information concerning the looping concept and an opportunity to ask questions. Several meetings should be scheduled for this purpose.
- Balanced classes- All classes throughout the school should be equally balanced. Although the main interest in looping was to nurture special needs students, these classes should not be overloaded with special needs children.
- Loopers' participation – Make certain loopers are a part of the total school. They should be involved in all school activities and treated the same as non-loopers. This will be helpful to students when they leave the looping environment.
- Optional for Parents – Allow parents to opt out at the end of the first year of the two-year loop. Remaining with the same teacher for more than one year should be done only with parental consent.

Appendix F

Looping Stories

3. Brandon Intermediate Storytellers page 156 to 167
 - Robin Lafayette page 157 to 159
 - Karen Austin page 159 to 160
 - Katie Belfry page 161 to 162
 - Denise Saunders page 162 to 163
 - Rubin Holland page 163 to 165
 - Summary page 166 to 167

4. Claytor Land Elementary Storytellers page 168 to 174
 - Tommy Price page 169 to 171
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Brandon Intermediate Storytellers

On Friday, February 11, 2000, I found myself at Brandon Elementary in Hancock, Virginia by 7:30 AM. I had an opportunity to tour a part of the school while waiting for the principal to arrive. By 8:00 AM, I had been given the names of the teachers I would be interviewing and their room numbers. I interviewed one teacher in her classroom. Two teachers met me in the teacher's lounge and the fourth teacher took me to a work area for her interview. The principal decided to be interviewed in his office. I was given permission to tape record each interview session.

The following were interviewed:

<u>Teacher</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Years Taught</u>	<u>Years Looped</u>
Binda LaFayette	57	24	3 (3 rd , 4 th , 5 th)
Karen Austin	29	6	3 (3 rd , 4 th)
Katie Belfry	51	20+	1 ½ (4 th , 5 th)
Denise Saunders	34	12	7 (4 th , 5 th)

Principal

Rubin Holland	50	20	7
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Name of Interviewee: Robin Lafayette
Name of School: Brandon Elementary in Hancock, Va.
Date of Interview: February 11, 2000
Time: 8:00 – 8:35 A.M.
Setting: Teacher’s Classroom
Looping Duration and Grades: 3 years (3rd, 4th, 5th)

The way our school approached the idea of looping was through lots of research, reading many books, study and talking with those who had tried it. I really started with multiage because I wanted to work with the younger children. I wanted to see just how they would mix with three age groups in the same room. After one year, we decided to do the looping instead of multiage. Our principal, Mr. Holland, was a strong proponent of looping. There was one other teacher who had actually done looping and she went on and on and on telling us how great it was.

Well, after my first complete loop, I went on and on and on with the great benefits from looping. I liked the idea of being responsible, I felt, in readying my students because I know what I wanted out of my children as I prepared them for middle school. Now I had the opportunity to get them in 3rd grade and to follow them through 5th grade. I really felt good about the preparation time I had with the students. I liked the idea of having three years to mold the students the way I wanted to.

We only have three grades at this school (3rd, 4th, 5th). Some teachers wanted to loop from 3rd to 4th. Others preferred the 4-5 loop. I wanted the 3rd, 4th, 5th loop. I had been in 5th the previous years, I dropped back and took my group from 3rd to 5th! Now it is a given. Parents know how long a child will have certain teachers.

As we started our program seven years ago, I remember the principal sending out a parent information packet and scheduled several looping informational meetings. This new model was received immediately with few questions from parents. I never heard anything but positive comments about looping. I had a concern! From the beginning I had concerns about what would be done if I got a child who did not like me or I could not control. You have to really think about this because you do not want to be stuck with him nor does he want to be stuck with you. From the outset, we really tried to make sure teacher and student were compatible. We also decided to abort the loop the second year if there were too many “challenges” for the group to continue the journey together. Also, I did not prepare for the second year loop until the end of the first year and I felt good about taking the students on. It was easy to go to the next level because we did not have any records to transfer and there was no new information. However, as I contemplated the second loop, I did not know if I wanted to go on with the same group. You know how you look forward to new kids in a new year! This had nothing to do with the students. It was all me! All summer long I did not feel the excitement that I had when I knew I was getting a new group of students. What would I do with the same group for a second year? I discovered that some of the students felt the same way. We talked about it and how to get the

excitement back even with the same group of students. My students and I realized that the whole school was looping and everyone was staying “put”. There would be no transitions.

When I came back after summer, I still did not have the excitement of newness. I dreaded returning. The fourth grade was not my favorite time because I was tired of them and they were tired of me. I started saying, “I don’t want to loop! I don’t want to loop”. About mid year of the second loop, it clicked. In retrospect, at the beginning of the second loop, I did not have to get use to them, they knew my expectation, they knew the rules and we did not spend a month getting use to each other. I knew my students well enough to know what they would do and how they would respond. I knew exactly where they were academically.

The main ideas of the looping program were consistency, continuity, familiarity with children and parents. I did not have to get use to a new set of parents. They, too, knew my expectations. Adjustments were made if there was a need to do so at the end of the first year.

Academically, I support looping very strongly if students are with a teacher with high expectations. The main challenge I have met with a looping class has been this year. I started out with a third grade group last year but I have asked not to go on with that group because of some problems with some parents. They said my rules were too strict. However, two of the students had siblings in my very first looping group. I had the same rules and they were not broken. Parents have come back to apologize because they realized that the second set of children was different than the ones I had at first. The first group did not challenge the rules. This year I am doing fifth. I moved from 3rd to 5th. Now I am seeing that had I looped with this group I have now, I would not be spending the first semester getting them into shape. They have had a teacher whose expectations have not been what I would expect. The thoroughness is not there. The self-discipline is not there. We are having one hard time! I can not cover the material and shape them up like I did my last group because I had them for three years. Everyone in the group I had for three years did outstanding on the writing test and Stanford 9 test. I see I can not get this group there nor can I undo some behaviors that were allowed in one year. I have asked to loop again! I see the importance of really shaping, directing and teaching a group over a period of time.

One of my former students came back to thank me for being his teacher in 3rd, 4th and 5th grades. He is doing great at the middle school. He scored past high school on his Stanford 9 test. With the same teacher in charge over a period of time, the curriculum can be really shaped, the SOLs can be consistently implemented and the sequence academically and behaviorally can be closely monitored.

I must say that I am a very strong advocate for looping. It was shaky in the beginning but I see all the great benefits for the students in the long run. It has forced me to be better organized and my housekeeping has come a long way. I have separated materials according to grade levels and I force myself to keep things in their rightful place.

There was one pitfall as I looped from 3rd to 5th. The fifth graders had been together for 3 years and “clicks” had formed. It was very difficult for a new comer to be accepted. Sometimes newcomers were not allowed to fit in because the clicks were so strong. It was hard for the newcomer, the students and the teachers.

Name of Interviewee: Karen Austin
Name of School: Brandon Elementary in Hancock, Va.
Date of interview: February 11, 2000
Time: 8:40 – 9:15 A.M.
Setting: Teacher’s Work Area
Looping Duration and Grades: 3 (3-4 grades)

Five or six years ago our principal introduced us to the concept of looping. We decided as a faculty that this would be best for the community of learners at our school. I decided to become a part of the looping process because I liked the idea of having the same children for two or more years. You know where the kids are. You know their strengths and weaknesses. On the very first day of school of the second loop, the teacher can pick up where she left off instructionally. You don’t waste time the second year getting to know your students.

We did a lot of research on looping. A colleague and I decided to use the internet to gather additional information and especially to try to locate other schools implementing the concept. We tried to find out as many pros and cons so that we would do it effectively. We went about gathering information for parent / community packets. Our principal shared with parents and with assembled groups. He successfully convinced parents that looping was in the best interest of the children. The whole staff supported his convictions.

We always looked out for the “best interest” of the child. If there was a personality problem or if looping was not working for some students, adjustments were made immediately. All the needs of the child must be a consideration.

Looping from grade to grade requires a teacher to really learn new content and to become a master teacher at several grade levels. Therefore, it takes time to relearn and become acquainted with the curriculum at the various levels. This is a major challenge!

The children’s best interest is at the heart of our looping program. It allows you to pick up where you left off at the beginning of the second year. You save time getting to know the students. It also allows you to know each child on a more individual basis because of the time together. I believe this is a gain in instructional time as the second year takes off instructionally instead of procedurally.

I have a child that I have had for two years. He came to me as a non-reader and a poor writer. He was an extremely frustrated learner. I felt like if he had gone on to a new teacher, the same frustrations would be there another year. He remained with me and his mother is pleased with his progress. She feels he is comfortable with me and his frustrations have decreased. The parent has requested that I continue into 5th being that we loop now for 3rd and 4th grades.

There is work to do when you change grade levels. Learning and teaching the SOLs at various levels are challenges we must consider before looping. Parents look forward to the looping years. They always give raving reviews with the hope that we will continue this concept because it is working. The children respond well to it. The faculty responds well to it. Mr. Smith, our principal, continues the study of looping in study groups. We are fortunate to

have him push something that is in the very best interest of our students. As long as I am under his leadership, I want to continue to loop because there is less down shifting and more learning.

Name of Interviewee: Katie Belfry

Name of School: Brandon Intermediate, Hancock, Va.

Date of Interview: February 11, 2000

Time: 9:15 – 9:45 A.M.

Setting: Teacher's Lounge

Looping Duration and Grades: 1 ½ (4th to 5th)

I was out of education to raise my children for about twelve years and came back in three years ago. I came to this school where a lot of innovative things are going on that are coming through education because our principal is a proponent of that. Looping is one of the strategies he tried with several classroom teachers and now it is a whole school concept. We continued to study looping in staff study-groups from current literature and personal experiences encountered.

I came back into education through Title I (Resource Reading Program). A classroom opened up in January of 1999. My principal came to me and asked if I would take over a 4th grade regular classroom. I went in and took the students to the end of the school year. They had a rough first semester and I only had them for the second semester.

I did not feel that they had gotten all that was needed instructionally. I felt I had a good handle of the group so I made a request to hang in with them for 5th grade. In other words, I wanted to loop with them. My principal granted permission for me to have the same students another year.

There were about eight newcomers added to my core group. These were new students starting fifth grade for the first time at our school. It was somewhat difficult for the new students. They had a difficult time penetrating some of the clicks and becoming a member of learners who had been together for a year.

I liked the looping concept from the standpoint that I knew where I had left off and I could build on prior knowledge. I knew where the students were going in light of the SOLs and social studies curriculum. I knew what I had covered in 4th grade and Virginia curriculum was quick to assist the newcomers and they modeled expectations and taught my guidelines. They helped with discipline as well as academics.

I don't feel that I have really gained instructional time because of the SOL mandates coming from the state and this school division. You have to teach so specifically that there is little time to pinpoint things that are working for the good of children. Lots of restraints and less room for creativity. There was no problem with going from one level to another. I really feel a loss of time because of the SOL restraints. Looping has proved to be a continuum. I just took the same subject matters and tried to look at them from different angles and experiences but I tried to keep the same framework as well as SOL expectations.

Parents have been very positive with me taking the children and having them for another year. I must say I was concerned about their feelings. I had a great rapport with parents and students. We were more into teamwork.

You know...maybe there was a gain in instructional time because I did not have to repeat a lot that students knew from the year before. Being that I had them again, I knew just what had been taught. I knew them and they knew me. My new students picked up procedures quickly from my core group. So, I did not waste time setting up my classroom environment. We took off with the instructional program almost immediately.

I want to loop again with a class. This class will be moving to middle school. I want a whole year at fourth with a group and take them on to fifth. I like to see the application of skills in fourth and fifth.

Name of Interviewee: Denise Saunders
Name of School: Brandon Intermediate, Hancock, Va.
Date of Interview: February 11, 2000
Time: 9:45 – 10:15 A.M.
Setting: Teacher's Lounge
Looping Duration and Grades: 7 (3rd to 4th)

I learned about looping when my school became very progressive and searched for models to provide the best opportunity and climate for our students for the past 10 years. We came upon looping and discovered that the majority of classroom teachers wanted to give it a shot. As we have been doing it we have continued to look at research as we came across it. From our experience we have been able to see the growth over time that the children have made by staying with the same teacher for multiple years. In the past we have been able to use portfolio type assessments. It has been simply incredible to see what students did in third grade and after two years with them see the growth through their portfolios. I was very proud and so were the students.

The whole school has plunged in and tried to keep up with research and implemented some of our own ideas. We are constantly sharing in staff study-groups and studying how the brain works as we improve and modify our model. Having a stable learning environment with the same teacher has provided a boost for their learning. Plus, time is not wasted the first month or two of the second loop. Teachers know where they left off and students already know what is expected of them. Usually, it takes two months or so to get a good handle on your class and getting to know how to work with them.

I looped one time from third all the way to fifth. It was difficult the third year together. I think a two-year loop is better. I discovered that too many cliques had formed. Cliques can cause problems. As a whole school, we are considering only two year loops and maybe doing the loops from third to fourth. Fifth grade would be the year of change. This will probably get them better prepared for middle school. I think it is definitely a challenge going beyond the two-year loop. Even with the two year loop there could be personality clashes or just in the best interest of the child to change teachers. This has happened before in some of the classes.

I must say that there is some difficulty now as you change levels. With the SOLs, we tend to be more fearful of the responsibility of two levels of content. Because of the positive support of parents for the looping model, we are continuing to deal with our self-reservations and do what is best for the students. Parents see that stability is good for their children.

It is becoming much harder to loop with the state and local pressures on us regarding test results. I am getting to the point that I want to be at one level and stay there. Maybe I can master the SOLs at that one level instead of trying to do two levels of SOLs. It is becoming quite stressful trying to adequately organize subject matter and materials for two sets of SOLs and being accountable for two years of a student's learning.

I don't know exactly where looping will place in a system such as we have in Virginia. Because of the standards, it is difficult to do now.

Name of Interviewee: Rubin Holland
Name of School: Brandon Intermediate, Hancock, Va.
Date of Interview: February 11, 2000
Time: 10:20 – 11:00 A.M.
Setting: Principal's Office
Looping Duration and Grades: 7 (3rd, 4th, 5th)

Once the looping idea came along I sent a couple of teachers to a conference by the Society for Ingenious Thinking. A national leader for the movement was the lead-looping proponent. We checked into all their materials on looping as well as brain base materials. I think looping was mentioned in some of that material, also. One of the reasons the looping concept was on my mind was the brain base study we have done. I believe it was called "downshifting". Children in an uncomfortable or threatening situation downshift. So we were wondering what some of the possibilities or things we could do to prevent this from happening. In other words, when students enter a new classroom in the fall they could be in a downshifted mode for two or three weeks until they figured out the routine as well as the teacher and what is going on. As long as they are in a downshifted mode, they are not learning. So one of the things we had thought was that looping would begin the fall at the end of the year and the fall would go better. Parents were telling us before the end of the year that children are thinking those thoughts, then learning is not taking place. So we decided to loop.

For the first several years we looped, we did third, fourth and fifth grades. The teacher stayed with the group of students for three years. One of the problems with that has been our mobility rate. Sometimes when you start the new year and eight or more of the twenty-five you had are newcomers could cause a problem. That many newcomers can change the culture of a classroom. But for those students that were here and looped with their teacher really enjoyed leaving school in the spring knowing where they were going to be in the fall. They had less frustration and less anxiety. They just come back to school in the fall and pick up where they left off. The other reason we wanted to loop was to not waste instructional time readjusting, learning and getting to know a new teacher. We figured that would certainly help us instructionally because in the fall the students could not say, "we haven't had this because my teacher last year did not teach it". The year can pick right up and go.

Interestingly, sometime teachers complain about looping, I think, because they get tired of having the same students. Their conversations will say how much faster they can start the year, how much sooner in terms of discipline, classroom culture and building a community for learners can be formed quickly in the fall even with the newcomers. This does not happen ordinarily during the first month of a new year with students that have been shifted around. It takes time to really form a good learning community. So, this brain base study led us to looping and the Society for Developmental Education. There may have been other sources to convince us but I can not think of them because it has been several years ago. We decided to loop because of the instructional and relational advantages. As we went on for four or five years, we stopped looping at the end of fourth grade. Things that caused only a two-year loop (3rd to 4th)

were our high mobility rate and the peer relations that tend to change at fifth grade. In other words, peer relations become more important at fifth grade. What we found was if you looped in third and fourth grades and went on to fifth a newcomer had a difficult time fitting in because the culture had gotten so tight. Our guidance staff members were in study groups and had an opportunity to implement some of their own ideas to make looping work for the students. Parents attended meetings and received information on looping. Staff and parents had an opportunity to ask pointed questions and get answers. We continue to share newfound information and looping stories from educational journals in our study groups and at PTA meetings.

The parents have been very supportive and appreciative of the comfort looping creates. Comfort for the parents as well as the students. We have only had a parent or two request a shift in placement at the end of the first year. If there is a personality clash between teachers and students we will not hesitate to move the student.

Before you consider looping, you need to train yourself about learning, so that the long-term relationship will be productive academically and learning is ongoing. We felt that the looping arrangement had an impact on learning. You must study room arrangements, instructional strategies and developmentally appropriate practices. These studies can only help in a looping class to provide variety. You should not try looping simply because it is a new idea. Any idea you try should be centered around learning.

Teachers remain in the same room regardless of the grade they loop to. They switch materials, but we are now purchasing enough materials so that does not have to happen. Teachers have done an outstanding job learning the content for two or three levels. Most of them have adjusted to having the same group for more than one year. The bottom line is meeting needs of students and not allow meeting the needs of the curriculum to take front seat. Our division is more curriculum centered but we are determined to be more child centered. We can not allow the SOLs to tear down our learning community. We are teaching the SOLs but at the same time we keep in mind those things we have learned about how children learn and how learning should be developmentally appropriate. We have done this for seven years and there are no questions asked. It's like routine. We tell parents when they enter the school at third level that looping is the order of the day. We keep children first! That's why looping is working so beautifully here at Brandon.

Summary

Brandon Intermediate is a very progressive school in northwest Hancock City. The instructional staff has experimented with multiage and looping. Multiage had to be aborted because the SOLs are grade and content specific. It was difficult to have three grade levels in the same room and completely cover three different curriculums. After much study and research on brain base learning, staff and principal decided that looping would better accommodate their learners as SOLs are taught at each level.

The whole staff feels strongly about doing what is best for children. They point out the following benefits of allowing students to remain with the same teacher for more than one year:

- provides student comfort and a stable learning environment
- allows for instructional continuity and strong relationships
- taps prior knowledge from the year before
- jump-start to the instructional program in second year of the loop
- sees student growth over time
- produces less “down shifting”

The staff is pleased with the instructional progress students have made in the looping framework. They feel they are meeting the learning needs of students even with the following challenges:

- SOL restraints
- cliques among students
- mastering multi-level content
- state and local pressures
- mobility of students (transients) (too many newcomers)

At the first implementation a teacher followed a group from third to fifth grade. Now teachers only remain with the same group from fourth to fifth or third to fourth because of the Standards of Learning. Again, the principal took the lead as staff members considered the looping concept. There is total support from parents. Since this school has been implementing the concept for seven years, it has become routine for staff, students and parents.

The staff is continuing their study groups and sharing journals regarding student learning, developmentally appropriate practices, inclusion and student assessment.

Claytor Land Elementary Storytellers

On Tuesday, March 7, 2000, I journeyed to the Hancock County School Board office to meet with Mr. Tommy Price. He was the former principal at Claytor Land Elementary during the time looping was being implemented by a classroom teacher. Mr. Hall is currently Director of Personnel for Hancock County Public Schools. We settled comfortably in his plush office for the thirty-minute interview.

On Friday, March 17, 2000, Mrs. Ann Thomas invited me to her home for our interview Session. She was the only teacher at Claytor Land Elementary who had remained with the same students for two years. She resigned her position after the birth of her baby during the 98-99 school year. She is currently teaching for the University of Virginia as an adjunct instructor. We sat in her cozy living room with tea and blueberry muffins as she anxiously shared her looping story for thirty minutes.

I was given permission to tape record each interview session.

Claytor Land's Interviewees:

Teacher	Age	Yrs. Taught	Years Looped
Ann Thomas	33	8	2
Principal			
Tommy Price	51	26	2

Name: Tommy Price

Name of School: Claytor Land Elementary in Hancock
County, Va.

Date of Interview: March 7, 2000

Time: 8:00 – 8:40 a.m.

Setting: Hancock County School Board

Looping Duration and Grades: 2 years (K-1)

I first learned about looping four years ago. It was brought to my attention by Ann Thomas. She had moved into my school from Charlottesville where the practice of looping was going on. After she talked to me about it, I decided to try this new innovative way to look at and improve learning. I already knew that she made learning fun. I was convinced that she was a good teacher. I knew that parents would buy into this program because she had already connected with each child in her classroom. I think that is the most important thing that is needed. In order for the parents to buy into looping, they have to like the teacher that their child has. You don't want any child to have two years with a bad teacher.

I would never force looping on anyone unless they really wanted to be committed to it, or I was convinced that it was the right teacher for the job. In this particular case, it was a good match and very successful. I prepared the staff by telling them about the philosophy of looping and I welcomed them that if they had an interest after they observed and wanted to keep the same class for two years to come by and see me. Nobody else did!

When you are considering to loop you need to realize that learning never stops. There is no reconnecting with another teacher. The teacher knows the children, their strengths and weaknesses and they never skip a beat. I can not say I saw any failures or disadvantages from the two-year loop. I only saw great benefits as mentioned. I especially like the program because it sort of reminded me of the one-room schools where you had the same teacher for more than one year. If you have a great teacher, I just think that is the way to go.

After two years with the same teacher, I think exposure is needed with another teacher. As they get into upper grades, they need exposure to more than one teacher. We all know that upper elementary and middle school whether it is departmentalization or exchanging classes as they do in one middle school, that is an adjustment for kids. We don't want them to get too dependent on any one teacher. So I think that in the early grades, looping is the best! That's where this looping took place. All students in this kindergarten class stayed with the same teacher in first grade. I think if this teacher had stayed in public education, she would have looped back down to kindergarten and carried that class through first grade. This teacher could have easily done this because she had a good reputation in the community and parents would have bought into it. That is the key. Plus she did not try to loop until the end of kindergarten and then she asked parents, "Can I have your child for another year?" Everybody on her class list was called and they all said, "yes!"

The main idea of the looping program was to save time. By being with one teacher for two years, you can do activities with your students that you probably could not do if you had

them for one year. I showed you the painting in my office that the students did in art over a period of time together as a class. They left something behind that they can really be proud of. Once they leave and go to middle and high school, they can return and see their artistic work still hanging in the cafeteria. It took teamwork. I really think that if looping had not gone on for two years, an activity like that would not have been possible! The teacher had time to incorporate this into her lessons because she knew she had two years with the students. That is definitely an advantage!

Also, when children at an early age had special learning problems and were identified, there was a lot more inclusion going on with that same teacher who had support from special education staff. Adjustments to accommodate that special needs child in a looping classroom was easier from my point of view. I think special education students have a hard enough time making transitions and looping would lessen that. I really think they benefit more than the regular education child by having the same teacher for two years.

You know, we really did not have any real challenges. I believe it would be a major challenge if parents were not supportive. Our parents were behind us one hundred percent. Now, if parents made a request to remove the child from the looping concept, I would certainly honor that request. My advice to others wanting to loop is to always allow parents to opt-out. Anytime you discover the situation is not good then you need to remove the child.

By having the students for two years, you can really pace your instructional program better. You don't have to worry about rushing through and finishing the standards of learning. Looping makes a more relaxed classroom atmosphere to accomplish what needs to be done. One of the reasons I became a principal was to see students progress from kindergarten to fifth grade. When I was a teacher, I loved to see how much they gained in one year. It is very heartwarming to see the progress of students in two years (K-1). They learn to read! Therefore, I think looping is valuable if you have outstanding teachers staying with the group for more than one year. The teacher is the key to the implementation of the looping process. If you cannot place your very best teachers in this position, don't loop!

At the end of the first year, we sent a letter home asking parents if they wanted to keep the same teacher another year. I did not have anyone request a move nor to change anything. The teacher is really building up a good volunteer program over a two year span. The teacher knows the parents and parents know the expectations of the teacher. Once the parents learn the teacher's system the first year then it is much easier the second because the connections have been made and they continue from year to year.

I did not have the opportunity to study test scores because I left that school but I saw a lot of individualization taking place; more than you would see if you only had the student for one year. I think looping really supported inclusion of special education students. I caution teachers who loop not to wait to ask for help if they see some instructional needs. Sometimes instructional adjustments will be made and once the students move on, the next teacher may not take time to discover individual needs and make needed changes according to learning styles. That did happen with a looping youngster who was finally identified as learning disabled. The

looping teacher's efforts to turn things around may have delayed the process. Just be careful because a good teacher has the tendency not to give up.

The success of the looping process depends on the teacher. If the administrator can pick the best teachers, I know the program will be a success. Every administrator should try looping as another instructional strategy especially in levels (K-1) and (2-3). I would like to see it implemented schoolwide if ever I had the opportunity.

Name: Ann Thomas

Name of School: Claytor Land Elementary (Currently: Adjunct
Instructor for University of Virginia [Reading])

Date of Interview: March 17, 2000

Time: 10 – 10:30 a.m.

Setting: Interviewee's Home (Salem, Va.)

Looping Duration and Grades: 2 years (K-1)

In the previous district I worked for in Madison County, I was exposed to ungraded ideas about teaching and learning philosophies and encouraged to study them. Another colleague and I decided to study the looping concept. At the time we were getting ready to implement looping for second and third levels. I moved to Hancock County. I began to teach kindergarten for Hancock County. The numbers were high for that kindergarten class. They needed three teachers wherein all other grade levels had only two teachers. I was the third teacher for that kindergarten class. It was at the end of the kindergarten year that I realized they would need three teachers for first grade also. That's when I went to my principal with the idea of looping with my class. I got literature on looping and shared the philosophy and my ideas about looping. He agreed that I could take my kindergarten class to first grade. I had to first get permission from my parents and educate them about looping. I immediately got a letter ready, which explained the looping idea and that we had an opportunity to be together for another year. Parents could opt-in or opt-out. All my parents agreed to remain with me. They were so thrilled that we would be moving together to first grade. In my letter I shared all the pros and cons of looping and I invited them to come in and talk with me if they had any concerns. I offered them literature and books to read so they could make an educated decision to loop or go on to another classroom. That worked out really well. There was a lot of communication between the parents and myself.

I don't think my co-workers understood what I was doing. They never came by to ask any questions. That school was so rooted in tradition that what I did made little impact on other staff members. I think the other staff members considered me moving up to the next grade to meet the needs of numbers. It would have been really nice if we could have inserviced everyone on looping. Maybe they would have chosen to do the same. It would have been a great learning experience for everyone but that did not happen.

There was a conference that came to Hancock from the Society of Developmental Education. I encouraged my principal to attend. I thought that would be a way for him to be educated on looping. He did not attend but I felt that would have been a very good opportunity to learn more about looping so that other teachers could be educated, to get the word out and to get others excited about this. I attended. It was a great conference and I learned a lot more about looping and got more support as to what I would be experiencing.

The dynamics of the class should be taken under consideration. If there are problems as far as parent and teacher or student and teacher, then this could be taken care of with opt-in or opt-out. Parents should not feel forced to spend another year with this teacher. I really think

you need to look at personalities and classroom dynamics. People need to be in an environment that is most conducive to learning. There needs to be a choice.

In my classroom there is lots of movement and allowing students to make choices. When it was time to share the possibility of staying with the group a second year, students decided on some physical changes. My students were concerned about desks in rows as they saw them in other classes. They thought that was pretty neat being that they had co-op tables. They wanted to be like the other first grade classes. Just to meet the students concerns desks were placed in my classroom. This was big kids stuff. I maintained my learning centers and circle seat rotation as well as the use of manipulatives to reinforce and make learning relevant. Some things were taken away such as the housekeeping center, block and sand centers. Comprehension, fluency, writing, publishing, word study were important pieces of my instructional day.

The classroom physically matured. I compromised with the desks. I put desks in and took out the tables. I still placed the desks in co-op groups. I met with first grade teachers to discuss the curriculum, their plans for the year, their themes and units that they implement.

The main reason I wanted to loop and experience two years with the same group was that I felt that 10 months with a group was fleeting. You are just getting to know the kindergartners' and it is time to stop with them.

That rapport that you have formed with them has to be broken in a short period of time. Building a good relationship and bonding take time and they need to continue over a longer period of time. At the beginning of each year I do a lot of assessments and diagnostic things to see where my students are academically and developmental stages. Once I establish this, I go about developing lessons and activities to meet the individual needs of my students. To see this go on and stop in June saddens me. I know that in some classrooms this is not done and they all start on the same page of the same book. They usually pick up at a certain spot whether the children are there or not. I know they (the teacher) do screening and testing, but that does not guide their instruction.

I really wanted to see these students continue with this type of multi-modal, developmentally appropriate, interdisciplinary instruction for two years because they were just getting started in Kindergarten.

The only drawback was the 'too comfortable' attitude. This lead to some slight discipline challenges. The students can become so comfortable with the teacher and classmates that it becomes a 'family affair'. Sometimes I felt I had become invisible. When I would ask them to put their eyes on me, it took them longer to respond. It was not as immediate as it had been in Kindergarten. When you get a new group, you usually establish your class rules and classroom procedures. They are new to the students, therefore, the students tend to conform quickly. I have never had a problem with classroom management or discipline. When you have been together for two years, there are some changes that need to take place as far as discipline. I needed to change gears the second year because the children had established cliques within themselves and this problem had to be addressed. I don't know how many other teachers

experienced this and would want to learn more about how they handled the cliques. The students and I had discussions regarding respect, communication and fulfilling ones contract academically and behaviorally. We also worked with the guidance counselor a lot on issues as far as when cliques were discovered in the classroom. We discussed how to be respectful of others' feelings and be inclusive.

I really noticed a gain in instructional time the second year. I already knew where my students were academically. I did not have to do all those primary assessments. I picked students up where they had left off in kindergarten. The beginning of first grade was a breeze. I already had their portfolios in place. I already had the developmental word knowledge on each child, developmental spelling analysis and we were off and running into our program of studies. I did not see much loss of content during the summer. I know sometimes it seems as if they have, but that was not evident as I started my second year with the same group. I think that maybe it seems as if students have regressed because of a new environment in the yearly moves. The new teacher could be asking questions differently and may have a different approach to their instructional strategy. I think that coming back to the same classroom environment knowing the expectations and knowing the teacher helped students retain just about everything they had learned in kindergarten. I was pleased!

Parents were overwhelmingly pleased with the looping program. I had several parents interested in the three-year loop. This school was not interested in it. I could see growth. That growth was in areas that a paper – pencil test could not measure. How do you measure self-esteem, confidence, social skills, and relationship skills? I know they gained a lot in thinking and reasoning skills, problem solving and cooperative learning. I think they gained a lot by being taught at their own developmental level. I think that in the (K-1) classroom where we were looping and doing portfolio assessments, the children really understood the continuum of learning and where they are going as well as where they have been. They see others in the classroom at different stages and they respect that. I guess that's what was so magical about this classroom... They worked together so well and encouraged and supported each other.

I would encourage other teachers to try looping. More teachers need to really look into this philosophy of learning. We are getting away from what is really good for children with the Standards of Learning. We need to focus on the children and how they learn.

Summary

Claytor Land Elementary is a traditional school with students sitting in rows and moved from teacher to teacher each year. There was a gleam of hope for a new innovative program as one teacher convinced her principal to allow her to loop with her class since a third teacher was needed at the next level (K to 1st). The principal agreed but was not able to get any other teachers at the school to try looping. The principal saw learning take on a new face. Students were in co-op groups, worked on long-range projects and experienced multi-modal instruction

as students worked on developmentally appropriate assignments and activities. The teacher was a loner but she focused on the children as they reaped success.

The principal supported the looping teacher's efforts and parents were well pleased. He declares that the success of the program lies on the shoulders of the teacher. The teacher should meet students where they are and structure a developmentally appropriate program for each student. The teacher must vary her instructional strategies and make curriculum changes to meet student needs.

The teacher and principal pointed out the following benefits of looping:

- ◆ Learning never stops
- ◆ Saves time (beginning of year 2)
- ◆ Learning more developmentally appropriate
- ◆ Long range activities
- ◆ Accommodated special needs students
- ◆ Good pacing of instruction
- ◆ Strong bond
- ◆ Family-like relationships
- ◆ Comfortable environment

The teacher cited the following as teacher observed gains:

- ◆ Self esteem
- ◆ Confidence
- ◆ Social skills
- ◆ Relationship skills
- ◆ Thinking & reasoning skills
- ◆ Problem solving
- ◆ Cooperative learning

Both the teacher and administrator felt that this looping program placed the focus back on children.

Appendix G

Topics that Emerged with numbered question(s) that match

Principles Matched With Questions

1. Getting Ready to Loop
#s 1, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Purpose for Looping
#s 2, 7
3. Challenges from Looping
#s 8, 14, 10
4. Benefits from Looping
#s 9, 12, 13
5. Instructional Strategies
11

VITA

Melva H. Belcher

Born: Franklin County, Virginia

Education: B.S., Virginia State University, Elementary Education

Petersburg, Virginia, 1972

Master of Arts in Education
VPI & SU, Elementary Curriculum
Blacksburg, Virginia, 1982

Management Institute, Roanoke City Public Schools
Roanoke, Virginia, 1987

Advanced Graduate Studies, Curriculum
and Instruction, VPI & SU
Blacksburg, Virginia, 1998

Endorsements: Administration and Supervision, University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia

Elementary Supervision, VPI & SU
Blacksburg, Virginia

Gifted and Talented Education

Elementary Principal

Middle School Principal

License: State of Virginia: Post Graduate Certificate

Experiences: Elementary Classroom Teacher, Roanoke City, 1972-1982
Gifted/Talented Program, Roanoke City, 1982-1987
Resource Teacher, Roanoke City, 1980-1982

Administrative Intern, Roanoke City, 1986-1987
Middle School Assistant Principal, Bedford County, 1987-1989
Specialist for Elementary Education, Bedford County,
1989-1992
Coordinator for Gifted/Talented Program, Bedford County, 1998-1992
Elementary School Principal, Bedford County, 1992-1998
Currently Elementary School Principal, Franklin County,
1998-

Professional
Development:

Researched and Coordinated the Middle School Concept
Bedford County

Planned, Developed and Coordinated the Summer
Enrichment Program
Bedford County

Coordinated Staff Development for Beginning Teachers
Bedford County

Liaison for Regional Governor's Schools
Chatham, Roanoke, Lynchburg

Professional
Organizations:

ASCD
Society for Developmental Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
Virginia Association of Elementary School Principals

My Philosophy
Of Education:

Every child can learn, therefore, the differentiation of the content, process
and product is important to spark that spirit
of inquiry that inspires learning and uncovers unique talents.
It is the mission of educators to provide a multiplicity of avenues to meet
individual needs and to increase student learning and achievement as the
desire to learn becomes a lifelong endeavor.