Suzanne Holzhausen Oct 27 2015

Cedar Hill Elementary School

Kindergarten teacher

C: It is October 27 2015. I’m in Cedar Hill Elementary School with Suzanne Holzhausen and when I came in 2008 you were in a different building.

S: Hopkins Elementary.

C: Hopkins Elementary. Same school district. Gwinnett County. And this is your 9th year teaching?

S: Yes.

C: Ok, let’s start off. First question: Two parts: Same question to begin that I asked first time around in 2008. How do you define success in teaching and do you believe that GVSU prepared you for success in the classroom?

S: You know most of my career has not been real big accolades whenever you do something spectacular, but what I feel is if the kids are succeeding, not only academically, but socially, and I think that’s a big thing in kindergarten is getting them adjusted to being little social beings because a lot of them come here and they don’t have any experience being out with real other people. So, Grand Valley, I think, I told you this the last time, that I thought they did an awesome job. I’ve never, ever said that I wish that they would have done this differently. I see so many other people, and I don’t know if it is just from the schools that they went to down here, I just don’t feel like they were as well prepared as we were, and when I tell people that we had two semesters, basically…I don’t know that is the way you guys still do it?

C: It’s still that way. (One semester for teacher assisting, one for student teaching)

S: I just thought that was the best thing even though when I was going to school…

C: I remember that well.

S: I thought, “Oh, my gosh. I just want to be done. Why do I have to do two semesters?” But I think it was well worth the time and the effort put into it.

C: No one after they have been out in their own classroom has said that was a bad thing to do and they appreciated the fact that it was a different placement too.

S: Yes.

C: Michigan State, still, they place you for a whole year in the same classroom and one of the people in this study is now a principal over in Grand Ledge and he said Grand Ledge hires Grand Valley students because they turn out to be more successful. He said they…and they (Grand Ledge) are sitting right outside of Lansing where MSU is.

S: When I did my student teaching I was in Muskegon Public Schools and they had some student teachers from Michigan State and they hired them in right away but, even though there weren’t any jobs at that point, and that was kind of depressing but now that you say that they probably weren’t quite as well prepared as we were hopefully they (Muskegon Public) have learned that message and they are hiring more Grand Valley students now.

C: I think we stand up well against U of M, MSU, CMU. It’s worked out well.

S: Good.

C: I do remember, after I visited the last time, you won an award for “Rookie Teacher of the Year”? Or something like that?

S: Yes. I did. “Outstanding First Year Teacher” or something like that and I got to go to this conference with other teachers from Gwinnett County and they interviewed us and took pictures of us and put us in the brochure that they gave out to new teaches that were coming in.

C: That must have been nice.

S: Yeah. That’s probably the only big thrill, acknowledgment of anything from Gwinnett County, other than pay or whatever, but that’s not why I got into teaching anyway.

C: No, right. What do you view as the biggest challenges in your career?

S: Probably, and I don’t know if kindergarten, this is a big thing in the schools that I have been in, poverty is a big thing and parental involvement. We started a new program here this year. I don’t know if you want me to talk about that right now?

C: Sure.

S: It’s called APTT. I forget what the “A” is for but “Parent Teacher Team”… “Academic Parent Teacher Team” and instead of regular conferences in the Fall we had this meeting where we got all the parents together and we told them this is what they need to know and “we need your help”. And we had parents set goals on what they were going to have done by December and we are going to have another meeting in December to see if we met those goals and we also going to add in some goals for the parents. So we need to get them involved and I think that will help a lot. Being down here in Atlanta you see a lot with inner city schools and I’m sure everybody knows about all the trials and tribulations that have happened in Atlanta Public Schools (huge test cheating scandals. Grades altered.) because of the testing and stuff.

C: Right. Big scandal.

S: It’s…to get the parents involved will help a lot. Poverty is the big thing. Parents are more worried about feeding their kids than they are helping them academically.

C: So the parents have reacted pretty well so far?

S: I had…I think I only had 4 parents who didn’t show up and of those, one of them came for a ‘make up’ thing and the other ones I just scheduled conferences, regular, normal conferences. So instead of the normal, two-day, all day long parent teacher conferences we had the parents…I only had 5 conferences because it’s just for the kids that you are concerned about or the parents that didn’t come to the APTT Night. That made those days easier, but then, of course, we had more professional learning. (She laughed, like that wasn’t a good trade-off to less conference time but more PD time.) Instead of working in your room, getting ready for a new semester. That goes with the territory.

C: ‘Rob Peter to pay Paul’ (You only have so many contracted days so if you take away something you have to add somewhere else and vice versa.) There’s only so much time. So do you feel, and a lot of these questions blend together, do you feel like the school district helps you in dealing with the poverty issues? Is there support? You mentioned APTT as a way to work around that or help with it. (6:09)

S: That, I think, and we have a parent liaison, she will work with the families, and the social workers. We have two social workers, one for K-2 and 3-5 and they do a lot with the kids and try to help them out. I know at this school they get donations from the community and there are some families where every Friday our counselor will go around and she will give kids bags of food to take home to make sure they have food for the weekend and stuff. They don’t per se pay utility bills for them, you know because a lot of parents will come and say they don’t have money for that. They will give them like a $100 gift card at Walmart so they can buy food that way they can use the other money to pay their utility bills or whatever. I’m in charge of the coat and hat drive this year and we don’t…we have people donate old coats but we don’t keep them here. We switch them with another school so we don’t have somebody say, “Oh, that’s my old coat.” So they don’t really know the kids that don’t have that stuff.

C: And there’s quite a bit here too.

S: It’s not as bad as my other (school)…not bad, but not as prevalent here as the other school.

C: What methods have you adopted to deal with the stresses of a challenging career? The caveat I always throw in is “nondestructive”.

S: This is only my second year at this school so I don’t have quite the little group that I had at my other school (group of friends) but my friends at the other school, we still get together and try to get together at least once a month and just vent and unwind at a local establishment. We call it our “meeting” night. Music is really good. My travel time is not as large as it was at the other school but my husband still watches all the political stuff and I keep telling him, “There’s nothing you can do about it. Just listen to music and relax.” So music and friends, I think.

C: That’s good to have. How about support or social contacts out of education? Is there much of that or…? It’s probably a little bit…even though you have been here for 9 years, it’s harder.

S: It’s kind of like we talked earlier when you have kids, it’s a lot easier to get to know more people. We know people at our church and we do things with them and stuff but other than that…my husband’s job…we are going to a Halloween party on Friday, but it’s mostly work people or church. Not really a lot of social things.

C: Question 4 then: How are you motivated to best serve your students? What keeps you charged up?

S: Moving to the new school really helped a lot because I was pretty burned out and when I moved here I told my friends at the other school that I really loved teaching again. So I think that helped a lot. This team of teachers here is really awesome (9:21) and they work together and share things and get along well. The other school was so large, the grade level was so large. We had three different pods of people that stuck together and this group wanted to do this but this group didn’t want to do it so it made it hard. But here, everybody is on the same page and, of course, our principal, we know what is expected of us so that helps a lot. And the kids…I just love the little ones so. I remember when I was in your class and you said, “You are just a kindergarten teacher.” (Not an insult but a recognition of Suzanne’s character and personality.)

C: I hope I didn’t…

S: No, you didn’t say it like that. No, not “just”. You…I forget how you said it exactly, but I always thought I would teach 3rd grade but then you said that and I thought, “Yeah, I do kind of like the little ones.”

C: What’s not to like, except dealing with the problems they bring to school but that is true with any grade level.

S: And the first two months of kindergarten are really hard because you get kids that are afraid to ask to go to the bathroom and you have accidents all of the time and kids throwing up on you. I remember the very first year, this little girl came up to me and she is dancing around and I said, “What’s the matter?” And she said, “I have to go to the bathroom” and whoosh, all over my shoes. So, you know, you get that stuff, but it’s worth it. They are just so sweet.

C: All of them were smiling at me this morning so that’s…

S: We talked about that they are going to get a special treat if they are good today. (She bribed them! ☺)

C: So you bribed them?

S: Yeah. Bribed them. I said, “You don’t want Dr. Cooley to think Georgia kids don’t behave.”

C: Well, I’m glad I was of service to you today. What changes, if any, have occurred in the strategies and methods you use in your classroom and I don’t know if you had a Smartboard in the other building. (She has one in this classroom. She shook her head, “no”).

S: No, we didn’t. We eventually got a [Mimio](http://www.mimio.com/en-NA/Products/MimioTeach-Interactive-Whiteboard.aspx), but we didn’t have a Smartboard so this was kind of intimidating when I first came here, but now it’s, “Gosh, I can’t imagine not having a one.” It’s just so many things and now we have a “[Ladybug](http://www.lumens.com.tw/product_1_1.php?new_id=14)”. We had those at Grand Valley. The professors had those where you can project something up on the screen from your desk. Ours is called a “Ladybug”.

C: Oh, right. Oh, I thought that was a lamp. That’s a doc cam.

S: Yeah, and that is awesome, especially for the little ones. At the beginning of the year because most of the stuff we do is all together and so I can just do it up there on the big board and they can see it easily rather than try to explain it to them. Every year we have something new that they give us to do. This year we are adjusting to this [FIP](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GeorgiaFIP.aspx). I forget what that stands for but we are actually breaking down the…we call them AKS here…Academic Knowledge Standards…and we have to break down every single one and where it fits on spectrum, what we are teaching the kids. Every year we have to do something new.

C: I think I remember from the last classroom, too, on the board, in the morning, you had an “essential question”.

S: Yeah, we still do that too. We have Common Core Standards up there (she pointed to her main board) and then I’m also doing a lot of “[close reading](http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/dec12/vol70/num04/Closing-in-on-Close-Reading.aspx)” (12:47) this year, which is something new for me, but I went to a conference last summer and they talked more about close reading so on “[teachers pay teachers](https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/)” I found this packet and I’ve been using close reading. Today I’m going…every day we do something different with the book and today is vocabulary day, so you will see that later when we do that. But every year is an adjustment. Last year we got all new math manipulatives and we really don’t have a math series that we (use)…I mean they gave us some things to guide us, but mostly we are just using the manipulatives. They don’t really like paper and pencil anymore so…

C: So that’s a change too. (No paper and pencil)

S: Because for a while there they gave us workbooks every year for the kids’ use.

C: Now along with the Common Core what grade levels are the kids…I mean I’m assuming there is standardized testing some place.

S: Um, hmm. In Georgia we have [GKids](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GKIDS.aspx), which is the standardized test for kindergarten.

C: They have a standardized test for kindergarten?

S: But it is mostly observational stuff for the teacher. They have a list of all these elements and I can show you the list later if you want to look at it.

C: Sure.

S: It breaks down all the…basically, it lines up with the AKS that we teach each 9 weeks. (14:07) We don’t have to double test like we had to in the past.

C: Really?

S: Yeah. But they just finished some testing…I think it was Iowa something? Standardized Testing or something at 2nd and 5th Grade I think. Last week they had that. They just changed the Georgia…I don’t remember what it was called because I didn’t have to do it, but now it’s called the “[Georgia Milestones](http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Georgia-Milestones-Assessment-System.aspx)” and it used to be that the kids couldn’t advance to the next grade if they didn’t pass but I don’t know what they are (now). And that’s when they would have summer school.

C: And that would be at the end of the year exam? Like a comprehensive thing?

S: And they would have the results back before the end of the year. They always did it in April and now they don’t have the results back until October so they can’t really hold the kids back so I don’t know what they are doing about that. Sorry that I don’t pay much attention to the upper grades.

C: No, that’s fine. I still can’t wrap my head around the fact that, really, if you going to have a separation between the time you give the test of months until you find out the results then it’s not really a diagnosis thing that you can go back and immediately remediate, just like you said.

S: Because summer schools were packed. Kids didn’t have to pay for them here. I don’t. I know my son had a friend that went to summer school at Reese-Puffer and they had to pay to go and they used to have summer school for kindergarten too, but they found that they really didn’t have the funds so I think K-2 usually doesn’t have it. It’s usually 3 and up.

C: Yeah. There’s no money anywhere now. So, basically, to encapsulate what you said, it’s like constant change every year. It’s something new.

S: And if you’re not ready to adapt you are going to be miserable.

C: So you better be flexible. Just walk in expecting (something to change.) When does school start here, August?

S: This year we started late. We started, I think, the 10th, if that was a Monday? It was August 10th or something. That was late for us.

C: Oh, wow!

S: Usually, we have usually started…I don’t know if the kids started in July but we have started in July before.

C: Really?

S: And the kids, the 3rd of August usually.

C: And then done by the end of May?

S: The Wednesday before Memorial Day we are usually done.

C: Ok. What types of evaluations, both informal and formal, are used to assess your classroom teaching and how are those evaluations used to better your teaching? And you mentioned before that at first you were, if I remember this right, you were (17:01) evaluated three times a year, then once a year, and now it’s 6 times a year.

S: Yes. When I first started for the first 3 years it was 3 times a year and then it would go down to once (a year). But now they have, I don’t know if it is because of Common Core or we are also part of [IE Squared](http://center.gachamber.com/education-workforce/georgias-local-school-system-governance-options/) which gives Gwinnett County the opt out of whatever is expected by the State of Georgia because Gwinnett County is a ‘world class’ school so they have all kinds of different rules and regulations. I mean they expect everyone to be on top of their game. So now we have, at first they wanted to have student evaluations too and how do you do that in kindergarten? I mean you can say, “I’m bringing cupcakes if you give me a ‘smiley face’. I mean that just doesn’t work so one year they had this and they took all the kids to the lab and they had your picture up on a screen and they said, “This is your teacher. Click the smiley face if…” and we weren’t allowed to stand there so I don’t really know the questions that they asked the kids, but that only lasted one year. Now we have, every semester we have two 10 minute and a 30 minute observation and here at this school the four 10 minute ones. We have 4 administrators so each one is a different administrator.

C: Oh, ok.

S: So that way it is not your ‘best friend’ watching you in your classroom. And the two long ones, usually it is your AP (Assistant Principal) but I know a couple of the other kindergarten teachers are having our principal watch them this time.

C: What is the feedback been over the process over your career?

S: And it’s all in the computer so once they put it in the computer it will send us an email saying that you are evaluation is up and you go in and look and they will comments in there, things that they have noticed, but you can request a conference if there is something in there that you are not sure about or you didn’t think was correct, like I don’t think here, but I know my friends at the other school would say that they would have a comment in there like, “We didn’t see your lesson plans.” Sometimes you are told that some administrators say that you don’t have to print them out and have them on your desk. You can just have them on your computer, and if they didn’t notice that they were on the computer or whatever… I usually have two sets printed up. I have a big binder that I keep them all in and then I have one on my desk so it’s there but at this school I have never had anyone look at them. No, I take that back. My last 30 minute (evaluation) last year, two administrators came in because they were practicing this new thing that they want to do called the ‘[paired observation’](https://www.nesacenter.org/uploaded/conferences/FLC/2014/handouts/Lynn_Sawyer/Paired_or_Group_Observation_Protocol.pdf) where they are both in at the same time and they take notes and then they compare their notes. So they came and found my binder with all my lesson plans because I was like freaking out when they came in because it was the only week that I didn’t print my lesson plans so didn’t have them printed, the current ones on my desk and afterwards I said to my administrator, “I’m so sorry I didn’t have my lessons…” She said, “No. We found those other ones and, in fact, we gave you an “exemplary” because they were so awesome. You know, all the information I had on there.

C: So is the feedback in the form you get it helped you?

S: You know basically it is just what they observe. Maybe if you were not getting good marks maybe there would be some information to help you improve but we have so many grade level meetings with the administrators in there that they are telling us exactly what they expect to see and what they want and unless you are pretty lazy I don’t think you would get really bad marks on there. One of my friends at the other school, she is ready to retire and they are always on her case all the time so. (Sounds like the administrators at that school are trying to drive that teacher out.)

C: So for the most part it has been helpful?

S: Yeah. Yeah. I mean… I’m sure… Well, I’ll tell…a lot of times they will give a blanket statement to the whole staff like, “Everyone needs to do this” even though it is only like two people who aren’t doing it…

C: That’s pretty normal. (I have witnessed administrators do the exact same thing many times over the years. They don’t want to single anyone out, but they also want to send the signal that they are not going to allow some behaviors to continue.)

S: Even in the business world, I think that’s…(normal).

C: Right. What types of mentoring were provided for you both at your first school and this one, if that is part of what your career has been and how would you characterize the results of the mentoring that was provided for you?

S: When I started at…of course that was my real, first real teaching job…and the lady that they assigned me was my next-door neighbor (taught next to her) and she was there whenever I needed her. She would help me if I needed help but basically I had enough training from Grand Valley, plus being a parapro for 9 years I kind of knew what to do so she really didn’t have to do a lot. She enjoyed being my mentor. And then when I came here I asked if I could get a mentor because I knew every school, the politics or whatever, just the make-up of the school is different so the girl that was our grade chair last year she was my mentor but basically I would just ask her, “When is this due? When is that due?” I really didn’t need a lot of help, but we do a lot of grade planning together in this group here. Not like the other school. Basically…we are all on [Planbook.com](https://planbook.com/). I don’t know if you have seen that before.

C: I have heard of it. (I can’t remember where I heard it.)

S: We can go on there and if you just don’t know what to do for math plans, you can go in and you can import someone else’s math plans into your lesson plans.

C: That seems to be really helpful.

S: Yeah. It is because the way they expect us to teach math…I would be more comfortable doing it another way so a lot of times I will borrow someone else’s math plans just so I know exactly what they want us to do.

C: Good teachers know how to ‘steal’. You mentioned politics and several of the people (23:23) so far in the study have mentioned that they wished Grand Valley had helped them understand what school politics are all about and I always feel guilty when they say, “You should have taught me about this”, but someone else said, “Well, school politics vary so much from building to building and community to community that beyond just talking about it, until you get involved with it you really…) (don’t know the particular details, so it would be hard to prepare for all the possible contingencies).

S: Right.

C: So I don’t know if that is something that I should bring back to the department and the other people that work in Social Studies or just say, go to my classes, like in the Capstone, and say, “There are politics within schools. Here are some examples.”

S: Yeah, I don’t how you could really have a class about that. I mean you could mention. Every school you that go to you are going to adapt to whatever the…

C: leadership.

S: …principal at that time…

C: At what is going on with everybody in your faculty. Have you pursued continuing ed(ucation) and you talked about the fact that you have a Master’s through Grand Valley?

S: Yes.

C: …either in the form of a graduate program or professional development and how has this education influenced your success in the classroom?

S: Well, I think, because I have my [Early Childhood Master’s](http://www.gvsu.edu/coe/grad/programs.htm?id=5EF6704F-ED90-E6D9-B9386FBBCE2942B7) it has helped me to stay in kindergarten. I know that.

C: Did you ever have a desire to teach 3rd grade?

S: Well, I thought it did because the first semester of teacher assisting I did 3rd grade that year.

C: In what grade level were you a para?

S: A para? I did a lot of different (grades). The first year I was in first grade and third grade and then I moved to a different school in Reese-Puffer. All of my para was in Reese-Puffer. Then I think I stayed in first grade and third grade until I went to the middle school and then I worked with Title 1 kids with reading at the middle school. And one year, not even a whole year, I was a one-on-one para with an autistic boy and then I went, they opened up a pre-school program in Reese-Puffer and I got to be the para there. And then I was actually at the high school and my job, I job-shadowed the kids when they went out in the community and worked in…the handicapped kids. (CBE?)

C: So you were like K-12 almost?

S: Yeah. I’ve had lots of experience at different grade levels.

C: And you still love kindergarten, obviously.

S: Yeah. I can’t imagine (teaching another grade level), especially with all the testing they have in the upper grades. I don’t know. One of my friends went from kindergarten to third grade a couple of years ago and she was scared to death with the testing things.

C: Well, yeah. Some of the people who are Secondary Social Studies they are teaching in their minor in part because they are afraid of teaching in their major. One of the guys who teaches Psych or Econ, though Econ is part of the Social Studies test, his class (Econ) does not give any tests. Same with Psych, so he said openly, “It’s a lot less pressure because I don’t have to do that.”

S: Yeah.

C: It’s sad. But you said, basically, your Master’s has helped with a…?

S: Some of the classes I had when I had my Master’s I kind of thought that is what I would have been doing undergrad because they taught us about…the testing that we did, the one class with Dr., what’s that gentleman’s name that is in the Early Childhood (Program)? I just read my Grand Valley Magazine the other day and he was in there. But, anyway, I had a class with him and we did all the different kinds of testing that they do and the class was like Pre-K through 8 year old or something like that, but that was really interesting to me and I know with Julie Chlebo, we had a lot of classes where people would bring in all these lesson plans and we would made these big binders with them and that was really helpful too.

C: How about professional development since you have been here? Have you found that pretty rewarding or…?

S: It depends. We have stuff here at school that we are required to do and a lot of that is, “Oh, my god! Get me out of here!” (27:58) but in the summer they have a lot of things at our…It’s called an ISD, I don’t know.

C: Like an ISD in Michigan?

S: Yeah. This past summer I went to two different things. One was technology and I had this really good class on [Symbaloo](https://www.symbaloo.com/home/mix/13eOcK1fiV). I don’t know if you know about Symbaloo and we have an eClass page now where the kids can go on at home and parents can get on there and we can post games and stuff that the kids can play and you get your Symbaloo on there and they have all these links on there that they can just go right to the page that has games on it and stuff.

C: Do you have a feeling that the kids take advantage of that?

S: Some of them do. I still have some kids that don’t have computers at home.

C: Right.

S: But it’s not so much here as it was at the other school. They are getting so they are thinking if we have snow days now, they are not going to be snow days. They are going to be cyber days and we have to put stuff on there. We did a practice one last year. It was a work day for us but we built it up so the kids would go on eClass and we posted a special assignment for them and we gave them an incentive to do the assignment and stuff. Our superintendent wants to make it so we don’t waste (5:58) days.

C: How did that go?

S: I had, probably, about 50% participate so that was pretty good for the first time that we had that.

C: First go-around, yeah.

S: This year I think they plan on doing that if we have any snow days.

C: Email me. I want to hear how that goes because that is…I have heard that in other schools, that is what they are looking at doing, so that will be interesting to see how that goes. “Pearls of Wisdom” question: And this is the same question from back in 2008: What would you tell current students to make sure they know before they start teaching, in other words, what do you wish you knew before you left GVSU?

S: I don’t really know what you guys are doing now, but I didn’t know a lot about TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) and that is so important. In fact that was what I did my Master’s paper on, making sure that everyone is TESOL endorsed when they graduate from college. I know there are school districts where that is not an issue but if you are going to move to some place like here, it’s important and if you can know at least one other language would be awesome.

C: How is your Spanish?

S: You would be surprised some of the things I can come up with. I don’t really like to speak to the parents because I’m afraid that I will…

C: Mess up. Sure.

S: Not say something appropriate or something, but the kids, all the time, and it’s hard. I have that little boy who only speaks Vietnamese. I want to say something to him in Spanish because I’m used to that, “cut this” or whatever, but I can’t because he wouldn’t understand that either.

C: Is there any support in the district for him?

S: Actually I think there is a student teacher who speaks Vietnamese but there is a little girl in 4th grade that comes down every day for a half an hour and she will sit with him and if I have anything…and one day, the first day, they can only buy ice cream once a week here at this school and he, I wasn’t in the cafeteria that day, but he was so upset that other kids got ice cream and he didn’t that he was crying and he made himself throw up. So we went and found Heidi right away. “Heidi, tell him why he didn’t get ice cream.” We just felt so bad for him but she’s been really…and she comes in here and she is like a little teacher. She goes around and she’s, “You should be doing this and you should be doing this”. It’s really fun to watch her. She’s really good. He doesn’t talk to her but he listens to her when she tells him stuff and he smiles when he sees her come in. I can see him smiling, but I ask her, “Does he ever talk to you?” “No.”

C: But it looks like he is adjusting as well as he could be?

S: (She shook her head “yes”) Yeah. He’s not going to have any problem.

C: We have a number of people who minor in another language, Spanish or whatever, a lot in Spanish, but one of the things that they are looking at doing is increasing the number of hours, not for graduation, but in the major, keeping the overall package the same because there is a new teacher certification test out now and…did you take Michigan history?

S: I think so.

C: Ok. You can be an elementary major without taking it.

S: Was there a Social Studies test? I might have taken that.

C: Now they have a separate Elementary and Secondary Social Studies test, but basically what the Super Major will do is…there will still be an Elementary Major but it will force people into taking things so that they are prepared for the certification test. Like all the continents, so you will have to have a Latin American class and a (African and Asian class) not so much for Elementary, more for Secondary, but it may make it more difficult for people to have a language minor. I am sort of, “Ok, that’s good” but there is a trade-off always. Beyond the ESOL though, any other suggestions for beginning teachers?

S: Of what they should know?

C: Yeah.

S: Just be ready for anything, I think.

C: You mentioned flexibility before because things are changing.

S: And one of the reasons I moved down here compared to (Michigan)…because I had a job in Arizona and one down in Florida, more than one in Florida, but Jeff’s (her husband) lived over on the other side of Atlanta so that was one of the reasons we came down here but Gwinnett County limited kindergarten classes to 20 per class and you had a full time parapro. That’s going by the wayside so just don’t expect whatever you were promised is going to be there forever.

C: “They giveth and they taketh away.”

S: Because at the other school (where she started) they are down to half-time paras.

This principal at this school thinks it is very important to have a full-time para. In fact the paras, when the kids are at specials, they are in first grade helping them with reading. So she (the principal) takes advantage of every minute, which is…at the other school the paras would just sit around and cut and paste or whatever during (specials). This is so much more productive to have them help with the first grade. But it depends on your principal and some schools don’t have them (paras) at all because they don’t want to spend the points.

C: Keep your eyes wide open.

S: Yeah.

C: And prepared for change.

S: Yeah.

C: Is there any other information that you would like to add about your teaching career that I didn’t cover in the questions?

S: Not that I can think of. (I did thank her for her continuing involvement in this study but I cut the camera off before I said that to her.)