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# A multiuniversity Internet course collaboration using case methodology : the University of Northern Iowa experience

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# A multiuniversity Internet course collaboration using case methodology : the University of Northern Iowa experience

## **Abstract**

One professor at the University of Northern Iowa decided to use a unique approach to teach her section of Elementary Curriculum. While five or six sections were taught in the traditional manner, one section, taught by Dr. Bonnie Johnson, and assisted by Dr. Dale Johnson, used an Internet-based, case methodology approach. In the Johnson class, students addressed issues that are facing teachers today; using technology, and communicating with students and faculty on other campuses. To accomplish this, students participated in an Internet course collaboration centered at the University of Virginia.

In evaluating the Johnson course, three questions were addressed. They are: Should case methodology be used in teacher education courses?, Should Interdisciplinary teaching be used as a focus for a teacher education course?, Should the Internet be used in teacher education courses?

A MULTIUNIVERSITY INTERNET COURSE COLLABORATION  
USING CASE METHODOLOGY: THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN IOWA EXPERIENCE

A Graduate Paper

Submitted to the

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Masters of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by Richard Gorman  
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USING CASE METHODOLOGY: THE UNIVERSITY OF  
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has been approved as meeting the research requirement for the Degree  
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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The University of Northern Iowa (UNI) has a distinguished history as an institution committed to the preparation of teachers. Every year, over 1,000 students graduate from UNI with an education major. One of the requirements for all elementary education majors is a course titled Elementary School Curriculum. In this course, students typically make bulletin boards, design learning centers, and develop resource files. Although these skills and projects have been used for years at the University of Northern Iowa, many additional demands have been placed on educators in American society. Teachers now encounter many more dilemmas than they did 20 years ago, so it is vital that teacher education programs reflect these changes.

To bring this course up to date, one professor at the University of Northern Iowa decided to use a unique approach to teach her section of Elementary Curriculum. While five or six sections were taught in the traditional manner, one section, taught by Dr. Bonnie Johnson, and assisted by Dr. Dale Johnson, used an Internet-based, case-methodology approach. In the Johnson class, students addressed issues that are facing teachers today; using technology, and communicating with students and faculty on other campuses. To accomplish this,

students participated in an Internet course collaboration centered at the University of Virginia.

In the fall of 1995, the course developers and coordinators, Professors Joanne Herbert and Robert McNergney of the University of Virginia, invited Dr. Johnson to join them, and professors at five other universities, in the Internet course. The seven universities participating in the Internet course were: University of Virginia, Hampton University, University of Calgary, University of Dayton, University of Minnesota-Duluth, University of Northern Iowa, and University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire. The primary focus of the course was interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

### Statement of Problem

Given the importance of preparing tomorrow's teachers it is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of the Johnson Internet case method course in introducing teachers to elementary teaching. The objective of this qualitative study was to gain insight into how to use the Internet, and how the use of case studies and Interdisciplinary teaching facilitate the preparing of preservice teachers. Data collection methods included literature reviews, interviews, journal entries, and class observations.

In evaluating the Johnson Internet case method course, three questions were addressed. They are: Should case methodology be used in teacher education courses?, Should Interdisciplinary teaching be used as a focus for a teacher education course?, Should the Internet be used in teacher education courses?

### Definition of Terms

Case study methods -- a research document, often presented as a narrative story that is based on a real--life situation or event.

Collaboration -- to work with another person or persons.

Computer -- a device that can store, receive and act upon instructions.

Critical thinking -- using one's mind to produce careful judgments.

CU-SeeMe -- point-to-point video conferencing via the Internet.

Database -- information organized in a manner that it is easy to retrieve.

Electronic bulletin board -- Internet web site that people post information concerning a particular topic.

Electronic mail -- (e-mail) communication between people via computers.

File transfer protocol -- (ftp) a method of transferring files among computers on the Internet.

Higher order thinking -- moving beyond the what questions to the why questions.

Hypertext transfer protocol -- (http) the most common computer language used on the Internet.

Interdisciplinary teaching -- uses real-world problem solving examples that reinforces education in different fields.

Internet -- a network connecting many computers together based on a common language.

Multimedia -- the use of a variety of media formats to present or learn information.

Newsgroups -- Internet discussion areas on any topic.

Posted -- composing materials for others to view via the Internet.

Preservice teacher -- a person pursuing a teaching degree to teach in K-12 classroom.

Quicktime movies -- movies that are shown on the World Wide Web.

Research -- a methodical inquiry into a subject in order to determine facts.

Teacher education -- college level courses that prepare preservice teachers to become teachers.

Uniform resource locator -- (URL) the address for a Web site.

Video conferencing -- communication which includes both sight and sound that occurs electronically over a distance.

Web browser -- a computer interface to utilize the World Wide Web.

World Wide Web -- a computer network that gives users access to a vast array of documents that are connected by the Internet.

### Summary

This paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction about the topic and defines the terms used in this research. Chapter 2 summarizes the literature review of case methodology, the Internet, and interdisciplinary teaching and explains the advantages of using these concepts in today's classroom. Chapter 3 studies Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course at the University of Northern Iowa. Dr. Johnson used case methodology, the Internet, and interdisciplinary teaching in her course. Chapter 4 examines the researcher's findings including; researcher observations, a summary of two surveys given to students enrolled in the Johnson Internet case study course and instructor observations. Finally, Chapter 5 state the conclusions and recommendations concerning the use of case studies, Interdisciplinary teaching and the Internet in teacher education.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

There are three categories of literature review in this article. The first category is case methodology, and the advantages of using it in education. The second category is the Internet and how it has impacted classroom learning. The third category is interdisciplinary teaching and how its use has created a more meaningful learning experience for students.

#### Case Methodology

Lacey & Merseth (1993) wrote that other professional fields, such as business and law have used case studies for over 100 years. Harvard University has been a leader in the use of case studies (Carter & Unklesbay, 1989). Case studies were first used at the Harvard Law School, in 1870, by Dean Christopher Columbus Langdell. In class, Harvard law students analyzed and discussed cases (Merseth, 1991). While using case studies, students learned how to analyze and make decisions.

At first, many faculties at other law schools were skeptical of the use of case methods, but over the next 30 years most law schools began to use case studies in their classrooms. By using case studies, students

were able to study a specific situation and generalize from it. By doing so, students gained a broader understanding of the law (Merseeth, 1991).

In 1908, Harvard established The Graduate School of Business Administration and began to use the case method of teaching. In 1919, Harvard appointed Wallace B. Donham dean of the school.

Donham developed what he believed were the necessary components for using case studies to teach law (Henson 1989). These components were:

(1) There must be a rich source of real cases; (2) the study must be approached systematically, not haphazardly; (3) there must be available books each containing a few carefully chosen cases; (4) the cases must contain facts, the limitations to an issue, the opinion of the court, and the decision; (5) the general principle involved in the case are developed through the discussion of concrete decisions of the court on problems that actually occurred.

(pg. 237)

According to Merseeth (1991) Donham strongly believed in the case method approach. Donham moved quickly to guarantee that it would remain there and be successful. To accomplish this Donham

realized that faculty needed quality teaching materials and supported the faculty so they would become proficient in using case study teaching methods. He expected faculty to create case materials and compensated them for their work both in pay and position.

Case studies also worked well in teacher education. Case studies provided students an opportunity to act like teachers and to use higher order thinking. By using case studies students realized that teachers had to make difficult decisions and must be considerate to those involved.

A great deal of research has been reported lately concerning the need for change in teacher education (Sudzina & Kilbane, Wassermann, and Clark & Lampert). Sudzina & Kilbane (1992) wrote that usually professors only taught education students a variety of theories concerning education. Unfortunately, most preservice teachers had little if any teaching experiences to be able to connect to the theories.

Wassermann (1994) stated that teacher education programs must prepare students how to act like teachers. If a major part of teaching was managing problems and dealing with uncertainty, then teacher education programs should reflect this (Clark & Lampert, 1986). Case studies provided students opportunities to both reflect upon their own knowledge and past experiences, and to discuss problems that they were likely to face as educators.

Many researchers (Merseeth, Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, Wassermann, and Clark & Lampert Henson) believed that one of the changes in teacher education should include the use of case studies. Merseeth (1992) believed it was important that students' learning needs were stimulated by higher order thinking; otherwise students would become passive learners only memorizing information presented to them by someone else. If students were passive learners, then there was a possibility that they would be only carbon copies of the teachers who taught them. This would cause little, if any, changes in the world of education.

Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann (1985) thought case studies examined problems in the classroom that teachers were likely to face and forced students to use knowledge and take action, which really was the purpose of education. Wassermann (1994) believed teachers must be able to make difficult decisions, and be thoughtful and sensitive to those involved. Educators also needed to trust their actions and evaluate the decisions that they made.

The seemingly simple, everyday decisions that teachers make could have long term consequences. For example Clark & Lampert (1986) wrote:

What one decides to do today has a great deal to do with what happened yesterday and what effects such a decision will have tomorrow, next week, and next month. A teacher might choose, for example, to let a young student play at the sandbox just a few minutes longer rather than pressing him or her to do the assigned phonics worksheet because the teacher knows that the student has just negotiated a complicated set of social interactions to get to the sandbox and will be better able to concentrate on phonics later. (pg. 29)

When using case studies, students began to understand the complexities of teaching. For case studies to be successful in the classroom, teachers must change their style of teaching (Harrington, Sudzina, and Merseth). Harrington (1990) stated that those teacher educators who used case studies in preservice teacher education programs acknowledged that using case methods was a far more challenging approach to teaching. One reason why the use of case studies was challenging was because learning had moved from teacher-centered learning to student-centered learning (Sudzina, 1995). Merseth (1992) wrote that the role of the instructor now included the additional roles of guide and mentor. Teachers had to encourage students to share

their thoughts and understandings (Harrington, 1990). To do that, instructors had to create a learning environment where students felt safe to discuss their perceptions concerning teaching. Instructors had to respect students' opinions and had to be willing to allow students more control of their learning than in a typical lecture style classroom. Instructors believed that the end results were worth their effort. Instructors were happy with the progress their students achieved when using case studies. Students were more able to clearly communicate their ideas and study complicated topics in more discriminating ways (Wassermann, 1994).

Research indicated that there were many advantages for students who learned from using case methods (Harrington, Sudzina, & Kilbane, Rutherford, & Grana, Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, Merseth, Sudzina, and Carter & Unklesbay). According to Harrington (1990) the first advantage was that case studies provided education students the opportunity to think like teachers. In doing so, students began to understand the intricacies of the teaching and learning process. When using case studies, students grew more confident in their own ability to pursue solutions to problems rather than waiting for the correct answer from the instructor (Sudzina & Kilbane 1992).

A second advantage of using case studies in teacher preparation classes was that students were able to discuss the possible results of their actions. Students who used case studies became more thoughtful, independent, broad-minded, and learned that there was more than one way of seeing a situation and responding to it (Harrington 1990).

Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski (1995) wrote that a third advantage of using case studies, was that students became critical thinkers. Harrington (1990) believed that students began an intellectual growth in which they recognized problems, understood them, reflected on them and then considered the possible results of their actions.

Sudzina (1994) believed that a fourth advantage of using case studies was that students learned to be objective when dealing with problems that occur in the classroom. Sudzina gave an example of how a former student applied what she learned from using case studies. She wrote:

As a fourth grade teacher, she used the objectivity gained through case analysis daily. In many instances, she was able to remove herself from touchy situations and make use of broader perspectives to view classroom occurrences as a third person

observer. This objectively removed her from highly emotional issues and allowed for more logical, reflective decisions. (pg. 10)

Sudzina (1994) wrote that a fifth advantage of using case studies was that students learned to collaborate with each other. Collaboration was an important skill needed as a teacher, yet few undergraduate teacher programs taught this skill. Although collaboration was a challenging process, the synergy created by the team was greater than any single person (Sudzina & Kilbane, 1992). Students realized the importance of team work and knew that it would be an important factor as future educators.

In summary, case studies have worked well in teaching preservice teachers. By using case studies, students have learned to understand the complexities of teaching. Students have also learned to be more objective and critical thinkers.

### The Internet

A second major change in education has been the use of the Internet and World Wide Web. The origin of the Internet began in 1969 by the Department of Defense. The purpose was to provide a safe and survivable communications network. Soon researchers and other academics began using the Internet. The Internet was first used for four

major purposes: electronic mail (e-mail), file transfer protocol (ftp), electronic bulletin boards, and newsgroups (Safra, 1997).

The development of the World Wide Web began in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee and his associates at CERN. CERN was an international scientific organization based in Geneva, Switzerland. They created Hypertext Transfer Protocol (HTTP) which established a uniform communication between servers and clients. Their text-based Web browser was available for the general public in January 1992. Finally people were able to use the same "point and click" graphic manipulations using the Web that had been available on personal computers. By the mid-1990s the Internet connected millions of computers throughout the world (Safra, 1997).

The use of the Internet in teacher preparation is very new, and there are few studies available on the use of the Internet in education methods and curriculum courses. Both teachers in the classroom and university faculty are still trying to decide how to use the Internet in the classroom. Much research and simple experimentation needs to be done in this area to better understand how the Internet impacts students and instructor interactions and attitudes of both students and faculty (Russett 1994).

The Internet has begun to have an impact on today's classroom. As Wilson (1993) said, "With integration of the Internet into schools, the traditional classroom is facing its greatest challenge since the introduction of the chalkboard in the mid-19th century" (pg. a19). Barker (1993) believed that the use of the Internet was growing more and more every day in classrooms and will continue to grow. Students had thousands of databases available to them on the Internet. For example, on-line libraries and encyclopedias are accessible to students who used the Internet.

Russett (1994) wrote that students could also e-mail many organizations for information. Most organizations usually responded to inquiries within 24 hours. With this much information available to students, it is easy to see why the Internet is gaining popularity in today's classrooms. Russett also noted that those preservice teachers who used telecommunications were more likely to use technology in their classrooms than those preservice teachers who had not used technology.

Merseth (1992) stated that using the Internet in education had three major benefits. First, the Internet allowed unseasoned teachers to electronically discuss with seasoned teachers. By using the Internet, preservice teachers were in contact with many skilled teachers

throughout the United States and even throughout the world. Second, the Internet allowed a more diverse group of participants in the discussions. Each member brought their own unique history and perspectives to the discussion. The discussion changed from specific problems to broader and deeper ideas that were behind the problem. Third, by using the Internet, the discussion of the cases went beyond the specific incidents to deeper understandings of the issue because there was a larger group of members in the discussion.

#### Interdisciplinary Teaching

A third change in education has been the use of interdisciplinary teaching. Interdisciplinary teaching became popular in the 1960s in the middle grades. Most interdisciplinary teaching focused on student centered learning and emphasized the application and synthesis of content and skills. Nagel (1996) stated that Interdisciplinary teaching used real-world problem solving examples that created a meaningful learning experience for students. Using interdisciplinary teaching also reinforced education from different fields.

Fogarty (1991) described ten models that teachers could use to integrate the curriculum. Fogarty believed that there were a variety of ways to use Interdisciplinary teaching. He stated that teachers could use

Interdisciplinary teaching within single disciplines, across several disciplines and within and across learners.

In the first three models Fragmented, Connected and Nested, teachers used Interdisciplinary teaching within single disciplines. In the Fragmented Model, students only focused on one discipline at a time. For example, the instructor made no direct link between math and science. The only connection between these two subjects was implicit. In the Connected Model, however, students began to connect one discipline to another. For example, the math teacher could have related the fraction unit to the multiplication unit. By doing that, the instructor was helping students make the connections between the two units. In the Nested Model, the teacher did more than connected two units. The teacher actually used the natural combinations within a unit. For example, in physical education class a teacher combined a running exercise with teaching students about heart rate. This combination helped students understand how exercise affects their heart rate.

In the first three models, educators were using Interdisciplinary teaching within single disciplines. In the next four models Sequenced, Shared, Webbed, and Integrated, teachers were integrating the curriculum across several disciplines.

In the Sequenced Model, instructors taught topics separately but arranged the topics so that they would correspond with one another. For example, a graphing class in math would coincide with charting the weather in a science class. Students were able to use the skills learned in the math class and apply it to the science class.

The Shared Model integrated two different subjects together to teach a unit. Whole-language is an excellent example of the Shared Model. A history and science unit may have centered around the Industrial Revolution. This would have given students the opportunity to learn about the Industrial Revolution from two different aspects.

While the Shared Model usually only integrated two different subjects, the Webbed Model usually integrated all of the curriculums around a theme. For example, for one week all of the curriculums of a school would focus their lessons based on the American Revolution.

The Threaded Model used higher order thinking throughout all curriculums. An example of this was using "prediction" in mathematics, reading and science classes. By using "prediction" in more than one subject area, students were able to see how they could use "prediction" in other subject areas as well.

Similar to the Threaded Model, the Integrated Model found overlapping skills used in different disciplines. For example, science,

history and mathematics classes all teach critical thinking. The difference between the two models is that students would use critical thinking inside the classroom, as well as outside the classroom.

While the first eight models took place within the school setting, the last two models, Immersed and Networked, functioned within learners themselves. In the Immersed Model, learning took place solely within the individual. For example, doctoral students focus on a particular field of study. A graduate student in education may specialize in learning disorders. This person would read as much literature as possible concerning this subject.

While the Immersed Model took place in the educational setting, the Network Model usually occurred both inside as well as outside the classroom. In this model, only learners could target what they want to learn. For example, while at school, a student who collects butterflies would gather any information about butterflies that he or she was able to find. At school this student would read and write about butterflies. While at home, the student would also have a butterfly collection.

In this chapter three categories of literature review were presented. The first category was case methodology, and the advantages of using it in education. The second category was the Internet and how it has impacted classroom learning. The third category was

interdisciplinary teaching and how its use has created a more meaningful learning experience for students. Chapter 3 examines Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course at the University of Northern Iowa. Dr. Johnson used case methodology, the Internet, and interdisciplinary teaching in her course.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MULTIUNIVERSITY INTERNET COURSE COLLABORATION

Three major changes in teacher education are presented in this paper. The first change has been the use of case studies. There are a number of benefits using case studies. Students have an opportunity to think like teachers (Harrington, 1990) and to use higher order thinking (Merseeth, 1992). Students also realize teachers have to make difficult decisions and must be considerate to those involved (Wasserman, 1994). Finally, by using case studies, students learn to be more objective (Sudzina, 1994) and critical thinkers (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 1995).

The second change that has impacted teacher education today is the Internet and the World Wide Web. Three benefits of using the Internet and World Wide Web in the classroom are: (a) the ability to communicate quickly with others, (b) developing a more diverse student population, and (c) generating a deeper understanding of the issues discussed in class (Merseeth, 1992).

The third change examined the use of interdisciplinary teaching. Three benefits of using interdisciplinary teaching are that it involves student-centered learning, it requires students to use higher order thinking, and it uses real-world problem solving examples that create

meaningful learning experiences for students (Nagel, 1996 and Fogarty, 1991).

In this chapter we will examine Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course at the University of Northern Iowa. As previously mentioned, Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course was part of a multiuniversity collaboration centered at the University of Virginia. Three professors, Drs. Johnson, Johnson, and McNergney (in press), who participated in the multiuniversity collaboration explain the Internet course this way:

The principal focus of the course is interdisciplinary teaching and learning. With this common emphasis, the courses offered on various campuses differ. For example, at the University of Virginia, the course is entitled, "Contemporary Issues: Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning;" at the University of Northern Iowa, the Internet students are enrolled in a section of "Elementary School Curriculum." Elsewhere, students are enrolled in educational psychology courses, technology courses and issues and trends courses. On each campus, therefore, the Internet class is approached and used in ways that meet each university's course objectives.

At each school teams were formed. Each team had between three and seven members. Every team choose unique names for themselves. For example three of the team names in the Johnson class included the Macintosh Mamas and a Papa, 2 Smart 4 U, and Case Busters. Each team wrote a creative team biography. Teams presented their biographies to the class in unique ways such as poems, songs and want ads. The teams also had a team photograph taken. Dr. Johnson sent the autobiographies, team pictures, and individual student e-mail addresses to the University of Virginia who posted the information on the class web site.

To communicate with other universities, the Johnson class used e-mail, video conferencing, and the class's web page. Students enjoyed using video conferencing because this technology gave students the opportunity to see and hear their Internet classmates in real time. Several times during the semester, Dr. Johnson and her class would meet face-to-face with their Internet classmates using CU-SeeMe video conferencing. Also, once a semester all of the universities participating in the Internet course meet for a session with a special guest. During this session, the special guest analyzed a case that the class had studied. The guest would give his/her opinion concerning the case and answer

any questions that students might have concerning the case or any other related topics pertaining to education.

During the semester students in Dr. Johnson's class analyzed five cases. Johnson, Johnson, & McNergney (in press) explain how students analyzed the cases:

Each case was analyzed by teams using a five-component procedure. First, the issues, facts and problems are noted and discussed. Second, the perspectives, points of views and values of the people in the case (e.g., parents, school board members, law enforcement officers) are considered. The next two elements of case analysis go hand-in-hand: knowledge and actions.

Knowledge consists of empirical, experimental, authoritative, or personal knowledge that our students need in order to propose actions that will, could, or should occur in the case.... The final component is consequences. Every action precipitates consequences, and these consequences might be positive or negative.

One Internet assignment in Dr. Bonnie Johnson's Elementary Curriculum class was the case study "All The News That's Fit To Teach"

(see appendix). Having the case study on the Internet had several advantages. One advantage of using the Internet was convenience. A second advantage was that the case study was in a multimedia format. A third advantage was that students could post their work on the Internet for the class to read and analyze.

The first advantage of using the Internet was convenience. Students could use a computer in the classroom, in a computer lab or even at home as long as the computer had an Internet connection. This flexibility allowed students to work on the case study at their convenience. To access the class's web page students, simply had to open up an Internet browser and type in the class's URL. Once at the web site, students located the case study "All The News That's Fit To Teach" and read the article.

A second advantage of having the case study on the World Wide Web was that the case study was in a multimedia format. The case study "All The News That's Fit To Teach" included quicktime movies, sound bites, and images. For example, in one quick time movie, Walter Heinecke, an educational evaluator at the University of Virginia, asked preservice teachers' questions about a scene that had just occurred. By answering Heinecke's questions, students learned different concerns that they will need to address as future educators.

Another multimedia feature in the case study was sound bites.

One of the sound bites included the characters of the story at a teachers' meeting discussing interdisciplinary studies. By actually hearing the discussion, the case study became more realistic to students. A third type of multimedia in the case study was images. In the case study "All The News That's Fit To Teach" images included the school newspaper, and pictures of the school's students and faculty. By having seen images, the case study became more genuine to preservice teachers.

Students gathered in teams after reading "All The News That's Fit To Teach," and discussed the case. Each team at the University of Northern Iowa had five students. The groups discussed the various issues in the case. After discussing the issues, group members chose which issues they wished to resolve. Students researched the issues and decided how they would solve the problems. Often the research included interviewing experts on the subject, or going to the library and using journal and books for reference. After doing the research, the group members met and wrote a paper describing the issue and how they would resolve the problem. Then students posted their paper on the Internet where their virtual classmates were able read the papers and post responses to them. By reading various points of view, students

quickly learned that there was more than one way of seeing a situation and responding to it.

After all of the groups' posted their papers on the Internet, the class discussed the case. By having the class discussion, students learned to look at all of the characters' perspectives. This discussion helped students to learn to be more objective when analyzing a situation.

This example clearly illustrates the advantages of using case studies on the Internet. Students were able to access information at any computer that had an Internet connection. Also, since the Internet was a multimedia platform, the case study became more interesting and realistic to students.

Another Internet assignment in Dr. Johnson's class was the case competition. Each team from all of the Universities competed in this event. Students prepared for the case competition by reading a case study and two analyses of the case written the previous semester. Then students examined two analyses using a rating sheet format that the judges used for their case competition. The rating sheet showed students the five areas and elements of writing style and accuracy that would be used in judging their work.

Once the competition case was posted on the Web, teams had only two weeks to post their analysis. During those two weeks, students

were only allowed six hours of time to work together, and were not allowed any help from their professors. Students wrote a 1,250 word analysis that used all five of the case analysis components. The team then forwarded their analyses to the University of Virginia to three judges for a blind review. Each team received a rating (superior, excellent, good, fair, or poor) and comments from the judges. The University of Virginia posted each teams case analysis, ratings, and judges' comments on the Internet.

Not only did students analyze other people's cases, they had the opportunity to write their own case study. Each student wrote their own case based on their own school experience or an experience of a close friend. The subjects of the cases varied. Some topics included harassment, child abuse, and alcoholism. Students posted their cases to the class's web page. Students were encouraged to read their classmates' cases and comments.

In summary, students enjoyed Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course. Students had the opportunity to work in teams and analyze cases and write their own case study. Chapter 4 describes the researcher's finding concerning Dr. Johnson's Elementary School Curriculum course.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

The following chapter is divided into three sections. The first section is a summary of two surveys given to five of the University of Northern Iowa students enrolled in the course. The second section is a summary of the professors' observations concerning the course. The third section is a summary of my observations of the Johnson Internet case study course.

#### Students Survey

Five students at University of Northern Iowa, during the Fall semester 1996, were randomly surveyed. Their feelings reflected much of what the literature had said concerning case studies and the Internet. When asked what they had learned in this course, one student replied, "Taking this class I learned about technology, computers, Internet, sharing ideas, and working together." When asked the same question, a second student replied, "Working on the Internet and learning through other styles other than lecture is very good for my learning. We do hands on case studies, discussions and interaction that helps build my knowledge and understanding of about real-life situations that teachers must deal with." Finally a third student replied that, "This class gave us all a chance to learn how the Internet works and it's vast usefulness for now

and the future. It gave us a very good way to learn through case studies while opening up to the Internet. Also by using the Internet we get to be in contact with many more schools and people, which helps us to draw more from others perspective ideas.”

All five students enjoyed having taken the Internet case method course, because of the unique structure of this class. Students admitted that they had learned a great deal by taking this course, generally their answers centered in three areas: thinking like a teacher, using the Internet in the classroom, and working in teams.

As mentioned earlier, Harrington (1990) wrote that one of the advantage's students had using case studies was the opportunity to think like a teacher. One student said, “Reading case studies, you encounter situations that I never thought about -- how to react to situations, situations that I would never encounter at my hometown.”

When comparing the Internet case method course to other classes at University of Northern Iowa, students realized that in most classes they were not given the opportunity to think like a teacher. One student said, “In other classes, you only have to memorize answers. In this case method class, you read, reflect -- and explain what you think. You have to understand what you are reading. This requires a deeper or higher level of thought.”

The opportunity to think like a teacher also allowed students to realize that there were many aspects to teaching. One student said, "Teaching is just not sitting the kids down at their desks and giving them the information." Not only did students have the opportunity to think like a teacher, they also had a chance to shared their ideas about teaching. One student said, "By sharing your points of view you get new ideas. You learn different perspectives on how to handle a situation."

The second area which students talked about was the Internet. Students enjoyed the diversity that the Internet allowed them and they recognized that the Internet would play a major role to them as future teachers.

All of the students preferred the fact that the Internet allowed for a larger and more diverse group of participants (Merseeth, 1992). One student said, "One of the greatest benefits of using the Internet is having many classmates and many instructors. The Internet allows for many different points of view to be heard and responded to."

Another student agreed and said, "By using the Internet I am able to give and receive comments about my case and other cases from students across the United States." Students also liked the aspect that the Internet allowed for experts from all over the world to evaluate their

work. One student said, "We also are evaluated by experts who will let us know the strengths and weaknesses of our evaluation."

Students also realized that they would be more likely to use the Internet as teachers, because they used it as preservice teachers. Students agreed with Russett (1994) that technology will play an important role for them as future educators. One student said, "I believe the Internet will play a huge role in education in the years to come. More and more schools are being equipped with computers, so it is necessary for me to know how to use the Internet so that I can more effectively help my students. The use of computers in schools is going to continue to rise. Teachers can not remain ignorant."

Students not only felt that the Internet would play an important role in the classroom, but as teachers, they felt they needed to use the Internet so that their students understand the importance of it. One student said, "I believe the Internet will play as important a role as I allow it to in my classroom. If I show my students the importance of technology, they will want to be involved with the Internet."

Students realized that the Internet was growing rapidly every day and that the amount of information available to them was also growing (Barker 1993). One student said, "I believe the Internet will be an important resource for the future. All information could someday be

accessed through the Internet verses using encyclopedias.” Another student said, “There are many resources available right there in front of you. You can also communicate with and get ideas from people at different schools.”

The final area that students talked about was working in teams. Students quickly realize that there were many benefits of working in teams (Sudzina, 1994). One student talked about the new skills that she learned by working in teams. One student said, “Working in teams helps you utilize information from all parties involved, and learn new materials. You also learn how to delegate responsibilities follow through with your responsibilities, and working effectively together. These are important life skills.” Students realized collaboration was also a benefit from working in teams and that it will be an important skill to them as teachers. One student said, “As teachers, we will be working in ‘teams’ often (teacher-teacher teams, teacher-parent teams, teacher-student teams).”

Another student said, “Working in teams gives people a chance to get a variety of answers and ideas. Working together is good socially, but also builds on each individual's strengths to make the project more meaningful and better for learning.”

A third student replied, “By forming teams we were able to put our heads together to come up with ideas we would not have thought of.

Each of the members of the team has some valuable skill to contribute. When we all work together we can overcome our weaknesses to create a great analysis.”

In summary students' feelings reflected much of what the literature had said concerning case studies and the Internet. All five students enjoyed having taken the course and learned a great deal.

#### Professors' Observations

The following is taken from a paper by Drs. Johnson, Johnson & McNergney (in press) concerning the multiuniversity course collaboration:

The course requires a different way learning for our students. As with learning anything new, we've noted that students go through stages. Initially there is confusion. A few think the course will be “an easy ride” because of the lack of traditional lectures and exams. Then there is a sense of insecurity and occasional panic when the first analysis is due. Eventually the students become familiar with the methodology, and there is a sense of pride in staying with the course and succeeding in something that was unfamiliar and a challenge.

We have noticed that our students are concerned about their writing skills. They know that their virtual classmates and professors will read and comment on their work; therefore, they are particularly careful about proper grammar, spelling, and the correct format for listing references. We also frequently have seen many of our students working in the library to conduct research for the cases.

Through the cases, we have observed our students assuming the role of educator as problem solver. Students are encouraged to view everyday classroom occurrences through multiple perspectives. One of our students said that the course has changed her way of looking at the world--a rather powerful statement for a twenty-year-old.

The course has encouraged our students to learn about and use community resources. They have interviewed superintendents, business owners, newspaper editors, school board members, ect.

The course is an example of cooperative learning at its best.

Students learn from one another and close to one another.

Members of our first class still meet for social gatherings.

One of the most significant benefits of this collaboration is meeting, working with, and developing friendships with new colleagues on other campuses. We view ourselves as team teachers and pioneers. We have come to respect the integrity, hard work, and sense of humor such collaboration requires. This has been a renewing experience for us (Johnson, Johnson, & McNergney, in press).

Clearly, both students and faculty who have participated in the Internet case study course believe that it is a useful method to prepare teachers. The opportunity for students to “think like a teacher,” work collaboratively with their class mates and to use the Internet are skills that they will use in the future.

#### Researcher Observations

The Internet case study class was a new experience for all of the University of Northern Iowa students. None of the students had ever been in either an Internet class or a case study course before. In the past,

Elementary School Curriculum classes at the University of Northern Iowa had been taught in the traditional lecture style. In these traditionally taught classes, students learned among other things how to make bulletin boards, how to design a learning center, how to develop a resource unit, and how to develop a resource file. Students in the Internet case study course were naturally apprehensive trying a completely different type of class, yet they enjoyed the opportunity to learn in a new way. The Internet case study class exposed students to many new opportunities. Three of the opportunities were to “think like a teacher,” to work collaboratively with their class mates, and to use the Internet.

The first opportunity was for students to “think like a teacher.” Most preservice teachers studied events that they had never encountered. The case studies that students analyzed tended to deal with minorities or students from lower social economic backgrounds. This was a great benefit to the Johnson class because most of these students came from small Midwestern towns with very little cultural diversity. Since many of the preservice teachers would end up teaching in a town that had a more diverse population than where they came from, this course helped broaden students' views about teaching.

In class, students discussed how they would manage a situation and what actions they would take to resolve it. Instructors and classmates

would question students about possible results of their actions. These discussions made students aware of the fact there were unforeseen consequences of their actions. Often students realized that their actions could create a larger problem. Students also learned that it was important to consider various points of views--parents, administrators, the school board, and other students. These discussions helped students become more objective thinkers, which was an important skill for any professional.

The second opportunity was for students to work collaboratively. Students knew that as educators they would be working with others, so they welcomed the opportunity to use this skill in the Johnson class. Students discovered both the benefits and the disadvantages from collaborating with each other. Some groups performed with little noticeable friction while other group members confided to me about the conflicts they had within their group. All of the students that I talked to, however, realized that the benefits of being part of a team outweigh the disadvantages. Two of the most common advantages were that, as a team, students accomplished more things in less time than they would alone, and that a group they could generate a wider variety of ideas than one person.

Probably one of the greatest opportunity students gained from taking the Internet case study course was the integration of the Internet into the classroom. Students learned that the Internet was a very useful resource.

Students were amazed at how much information was available to them on the Internet. Hundreds of thousands of databases were accessible to students on the Internet. Students could use the Internet to gather information on any topic. Students also used the Internet's e-mail to communicate with each other and to contact experts in seeking information.

The Internet also allowed the Johnson class to have a variety of classmates throughout the United States. For example, most of their Internet classmates were graduate students. Many of these graduate students also had teaching experience, so the University of Northern Iowa students were able to take advantage of their classmates' experiences. Another university, Hampton University, was a traditionally African-American university. Since few of the students at the University of Northern Iowa are African-American, both universities gained from this cultural diversity.

The Johnsons' roles as instructors were more of guides and mentors rather than that of lecturers. They made sure that all of their

students felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings about the various subjects. The Johnsons also seemed to enjoy using both the Internet and the case study method in their classroom.

The Johnsons rarely lectured the whole class period. Usually they gave students a brief introduction what they were going to do that day. Then students worked in groups or individually. During this time, the Johnsons were available for any questions that students had. At the end of the class period, the class discussed what they worked on or asked any questions they had about the assignment.

Students always appeared to be comfortable discussing their thoughts with their classmates. The Johnsons always gently prompted students to share their thoughts and expand their ideas. Students never seemed embarrassed by what they had said, or felt intimidated by the feedback given to them, by either the instructors or their classmates.

The Johnsons embraced technology with a great deal of enthusiasm. They liked the fact that their students were posting their work on the Internet. One reason was because their students' classmates throughout the United States could read the analyses and respond to them. The Johnsons also realized that the Internet was the way of the future in education. By using the Internet, their students would gain a

huge advantage over other preservice teachers that did not use the Internet.

The Johnsons were also excited about using cases study method to teach elementary curriculum. They realized the advantages of using this teaching method. Two of the advantages were that students realized the complexities of teaching and learned how to become critical thinkers.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The use of case studies, Interdisciplinary studies, and the Internet can provide mechanisms to reform and improve teacher education programs. The literature review and interviews with students at the University of Northern Iowa who have taken the Internet case method course support these changes. Students at the University of Northern Iowa who had taken the Johnson Internet case method course were active learners. These students did not simply listen to lectures. They discussed ideas, research and analyzed problems, learned to collaborate with others, and how to integrate the Internet into the classroom.

The case study method was an excellent way for preservice teachers to learn about teaching. Students discussed situations that they were likely to face in the future. These discussions gave students the opportunity to think like teachers. Students also learned that as teachers they needed to be objective thinkers. Preservice teachers realized that an important component of being an objective thinker was to consider various points of views. By using case studies, students also used higher

order thinking skills. They could not simply memorize facts and use recall thinking skills. Case methods required students to research, analyze and synthesize information.

Interdisciplinary teaching used real world problem solving examples that created meaningful learning experiences for students. The use of Interdisciplinary teaching reinforced what students had learned in other classes and apply it in the Johnson class. In the Johnson class the combination of Interdisciplinary teaching and case studies created meaningful learning experiences that students could use as teachers.

The use of the Internet in education is growing. Each year more universities are teaching courses over the Internet. One reason for this growth is convenience. Students can now attend classes over the Internet that they might not otherwise be able to because of distance or cost. This convenience also helped create a more diverse class because it was easier for students to attend class. Another advantage of using the Internet is that preservice teachers are more likely to use the Internet in their own classrooms as teachers. Since technology is growing at an unbelievable pace, it is important that teachers prepare their students on how to use technology.

There has been a strong demand for the improvement in the preparation of teachers. The use of case studies, Interdisciplinary

teaching and the Internet are three powerful changes that can help prepare tomorrow's educators.

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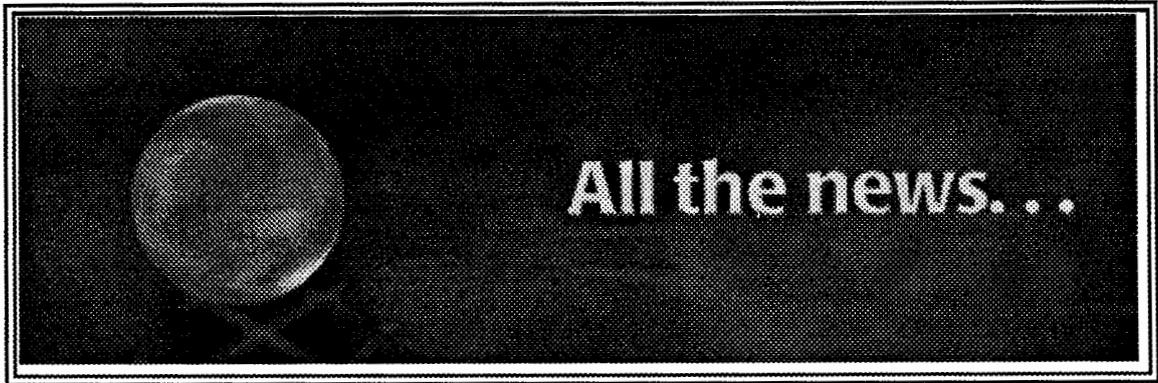
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## Appendix



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## ALL THE NEWS THAT'S FIT TO TEACH

Robert McNergney

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### CONTENTS

**Note: Please wait for this entire page to stop loading to your machine before clicking on any of the scene links below.**

#### Scene 1

Steve Keegan (history teacher) talks with Brian Beecham (newspaper editor).

#### Scene 2

Keegan talks with Pat Wilhelm (math teacher) about collaborating on a newspaper unit.

#### Scene 3

Team of teachers--Steve Keegan, Pat Wilhelm, Harry Shabanowitz (science teacher), and Ruth Sorensen (English teacher)--begins unit. Shabanowitz challenges a student's story.

#### Scene 4

Teachers discuss interdisciplinary issues over pizza.

#### Scene 5

A team of students experiences conflict.

#### Scene 6

Teachers and principal meet with Brian Beecham to discuss grant proposal.

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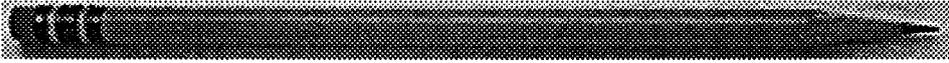
### SCENE 1

**Scene: Steve Keegan (history teacher) talks with Brian Beecham (newspaper editor).**

Iran into Brian Beecham, editor of the local newspaper, in the men's restroom of my favorite restaurant, two days after he had written a scathing piece on our school. More to the point, the article was a rambling condemnation of public education , and our school just happened to be a handy target for his wrath.

"Oh, Mr. Keegan," he said, seemingly embarrassed by the encounter. "I've been thinking it over, and I was wrong to be so harsh on your school. I want to apologize, right here and now."

"Okay, Mr. Beecham," I said. "But next time I wish you would insult me in the men's room and apologize in your newspaper."



Beecham never explained his change of heart. And I didn't take time to ask. I had no way of knowing, of course, but I couldn't help believing that Beecham's distress over the story, and maybe even my high-handed response to his apology, had helped stimulate the newspaper's partnership with our school system. Before we started working together, *The Scottsville Herald* had never done anything for the school system other than run the scores of the football and basketball games.

About six months after my encounter with Beecham, *The Herald* published locally produced articles by our students in their special section for young people. It sponsored a year-round newspaper education program providing newspapers to our schools at reduced rates. The newspaper had even started an internship program for the high school students. The partnership had begun to produce some tangible results. Nonetheless, I would have traded my '88 Oldsmobile and thrown in my Minolta binoculars for a way to pull Beecham and *The Herald* into some kind of deal with Garfield Junior High.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

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## SCENE 2

**Scene: Keegan talks with Pat Wilhelm (math teacher) about collaborating on a newspaper unit.**

I had been teaching for three years in Scottsville, a city of 90,000 people, and each year I had tried to encourage my eighth-grade history students to develop a routine of reading the newspaper. My students spanned the socioeconomic strata of our community, yet I believed they needed to experience the sensation of being part of a bigger world that you can only get from reading the paper. I got that feeling for years by reading the national, state, and local news, or the sports (depending on the season); Ann Landers and the comics; the personals and an occasional obituary. I never read the advertisements, except for the car ads. I always finished with the international events, the editorial, and a couple of op ed pieces.

If I were lucky enough to have a free-standing tabloid from a Sunday edition when I was caught in traffic in nearby Pittsburgh, I could transform frustration into at least passable boredom. Eighth graders, of course, didn't comprehend the true importance of all of this, but I was amazed at just how much they did learn to appreciate this window on the adult world.

"Hey Steve!" I heard Pat Wilhelm call from across the parking lot. "I talked to Harry last night, and he's with us."

Pat Wilhelm, the math teacher, grew up

Pat Wilhelm, the main teacher, grew up playing baseball, the only girl in Little League. She read the box scores religiously and spent inordinate amounts of time with newspapers and racing forms handicapping the horses. She also possessed what seemed to be a never-ending source of ideas for teaching "newspaper math"--calculating revenues from advertisements sold by the word, by the inch, by the color, by the placement in the paper; predicting numbers of likely subscribers based on past subscription records and surveys of leisure-time activities; examining proportions of space devoted to news versus that given over to advertising; and in turn, posting odds and taking bets on the date when advertisement would hit 90%. Pat was a whiz and a delight to be around.

### Phillies 6, Mets 2

PHILA					NEW YORK				
	ab	r	h	bi		ab	r	h	bi
Mndni 2b	5	0	1	2	RyTpsn cf	5	1	2	0
Duncan 1b	5	0	2	1	Alfonzo 3b	4	0	2	1
Esnrich rf	2	1	0	0	CrJones rf	2	0	0	0
De... c	3	0	0	0	Orsulak rf	1	0	0	0
...b	4	0	0	0	Bonill	4	0	0	0
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"Great!" I responded. Harry Shabanowitz, the science teacher, was just the kind of person we needed to make things happen. "We'll round up this band of frustrated journalists and start ourselves a newspaper."



#### Professional Perspective:

Access evaluation questions suggested by Walter Heinecke.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

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### SCENE 3

**Scene: Team of teachers--Steve Keegan, Pat Wilhelm, Harry Shabanowitz (science teacher) and Ruth Sorensen (English teacher)--begins unit. Shabanowitz challenges a student's story.**

When we finally rolled back the accordion walls of our four classrooms in the west wing of Garfield Junior High that September, and assembled our 80 students, we were deep into production of the first issue of *The Garfield Gazette*. Harry served as managing editor.

Harry Shabanowitz was about 50, although it was difficult to tell, because he had the energy of an 18-year-old. Harry could wax on for hours about things he had read in the newspaper. He seemed to read everything, but he never missed a stock market report or a horoscope. He even drove 36 miles roundtrip on Saturdays to take his old papers to the recycling center. I think he hated the idea of dumping them in the garbage can. The fact that he knew that more than 58 percent of all old newspapers were recycled last year seemed to impress the others, but, to be honest, it kind of depressed me--Harry's fascination with details took the mystery and romance out of a good story.

they knew and cared about. Judy took seriously her responsibility for constructing the image of the man.)

LeRoy (student): "Gretchen Vanderkellen. Astrology. Twelve pages."

Shabanowitz: "LeRoy, this is supposed to be the science section, not the comics. Are you trying to roll in a story on the occult?"

LeRoy: "You said we could identify a topic we were interested in, Mr. Shabanowitz. Astrologers predicted the future based on the mathematical positions of the sun, moon, stars, and planets. They also kept track of the movement of these bodies. Astrologers were practically worshipped by people. I think they were respected as much as our scientists are today. I read that astrologers even diagnosed diseases and prescribed medicines for the sick."



LeRoy: "See here, Mr. Keegan showed me how to take some things astrologers might say and to prove that their ideas are not that different from other people's ideas today."

LeRoy pulled a story outline out of his backpack and laid it on Harry Shabanowitz's desk. ([Click here for the story outline.](#))

Harry: "Look, LeRoy, that's all very interesting. I think I understand where you want to be going with this piece, but it does not belong in the science section. We can't have our readers thinking you believe astrology has the same credibility as physics or chemistry, or even as some social science."

LeRoy: "But Mr. Shabanowitz, I believe people thought about astrology and astronomy almost the same way for many centuries. You can even find astrology on the World Wide Web. I got this address from my older sister." (LeRoy put a scrap of paper on the desk that contained the following address:  
<http://marilyn.metawire.com/stars>)

Harry: "Sure, sure, LeRoy, but I think you had better find a new topic or try to convince Mr. Keegan to put your story in the entertainment section."



#### Professional Perspective:

Access evaluation questions suggested by Walter Heinecke.

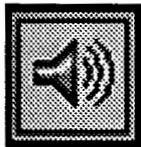
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#### SCENE 4

Scene: Teachers discuss interdisciplinary issues over pizza.

Harry, Pat, Ruth Sorensen (the English teacher and fourth member of our team), and I met one night in early October for pizza and beer. We had been passing each other in the halls for weeks saying we had to get together and work out a few things, but we never seemed to have time to do so. No question about it, we were making things up as we went.



[Click here for a sound file from the teachers' meeting \(259K\).](#)

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### Transcript of conversation:

Pat: "We need to decide what we mean by interdisciplinary studies? Why is it different from what we are already doing?"

Harry: "One way it could be different is if all of us are involved in every piece."

Pat: "But not pieces separate."

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Supposedly our common task was to build an interdisciplinary unit using the newspaper as the basis for our curriculum. I was to be responsible for the history component of the project--overseeing hard news, the editorial page, book reviews, and the entertainment section (because nobody else would take it). Harry would be our science person and double as managing editor--making sure everything got done on time, fit together, and got printed and distributed. Pat would handle the math, running the business side of *The Gazette*, and she would oversee the sports desk. Ruth would direct the copyeditors and develop the features. We vowed to review assignments at a later date, but hadn't even had time to think about them since we started.

When we had agreed to work together last spring at the urging of our principal Mr. Lelich, our spirits were high. We didn't really know what to expect, but we thought we could handle just about anything a bunch of eighth graders could throw at us. But now, we seemed to be barking at each other more than normal, healthy adults typically do.



I was sure this was the most important teaching endeavor of my professional life, but I worried the others didn't see the project in quite the same way.

"Our task is more than teaching our subject matter in interrelated ways. The kids come in here not knowing what they are going to do with their lives. They are too young really to know. But some are already failing--they are goofing up their chances for any kind of academic success in high school and probably for later economic success in life. Others are college bound. These students and their parents just naturally assume they will succeed. I think our work should suggest that interdisciplinary studies can help students connect with each other and link school work to real life. Some kids, like Leon Johnson, for example, are smart as hell but poor. This is the best chance he's going to get to make something of himself."

Pat reacted to my comment about Leon. She said, "Leon? That kid has such a chip on his shoulder. I don't

Harry: "I think the most important connections we need to help students make are in their own minds. I have watched them go through general science and biology, and in elementary chemistry, without understanding why they are here. They can't explain how an experiment relates to a concept in the text, or how a scientific concept in the text relates to a practical example of the concept in our lives. They just go through the motions--even the bright students. The other thing that worries me is their lack of general knowledge and the absence of pride in their work. They can't even keep a lab book so I can read it. Sloppy handwriting. Lousy grammar. They exhibit a casual disregard for self discipline that would prevent them from ever being admitted to a decent college or university, let alone getting and keeping a job."

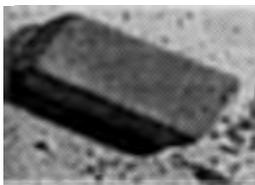


Ruth: "I know what you mean Harry, but I think about all those raging hormones, and I can't help but believe that the time will come when they will settle down and get to work. They are only eighth graders. I think Steve is on to something. What we really want to do with this newspaper unit is to give all the students some sense of ownership, so they will take responsibility for keeping the publication going. They have to solve their own problems. We can't do everything for them. When they get out of junior high and high school they will have to solve problems all their lives."

Pat: "I usually don't have any trouble dreaming up fun ways to use math, particularly when I tie it to the newspaper. And certainly Harry and I can integrate our subject matter -- we really do that all the time anyway. But the other night when I was telling my mother about our work together, I was sort of stumped for an answer when she asked me what I meant by 'interdisciplinary studies.' I know it's no big deal, mom's going to love me regardless of what I say; but I started thinking later that I sure don't want to be stumbling around in front of parents or the school board trying to explain what we mean by 'interdisciplinary studies.' I would like to be able to tell people how our work is different from what I used to do."



Steve: "I know what you mean. I have the feeling we are running around with different ideas about how our areas might fit together. I wonder how much of our individual visions are shared by the others in the group."



Harry: "This may not set well with you guys, but I think we need to explain what we mean by the term 'interdisciplinary.' Define it. Even draw a picture of what we envision as an 'interdisciplinary newspaper unit,' maybe something like this concept map. Maybe you guys should try to draw one too, and we could come up with a group consensus about what we are trying to do. ([Click here for the concept map.](#)) If we don't, we might run into Pat's mother and tell her something different from what Pat said. "

Pat: "Real funny Shabanowitz. You jerk."



#### Professional Perspective:

Access evaluation questions suggested by Walter Heinecke.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

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## SCENE 5

Scene: A team of students experiences conflict.



Just as I was about to head down the hall to a meeting of the history club, I heard angry voices coming from a work area in Pat's room. I stuck my head in the room to see what was going on.

A team of two reporters, a photographer, and an editor were arguing over their assignments and their responsibilities. When the faculty reviewed student records to make team assignments, they tried to make the groups heterogeneous. This particular team had one outstanding student, Leon, and three average-to-weak students--Peggy, William, and Kenny. The team was supposed to cover the Bulldogs' football game. Everybody had an assignment, but from the sound of the argument, only Leon had completed his work.



[Click here for a movie of the students' meeting \(2.2MB\).](#)

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#### **Transcript of movie:**

Leon: "Kenny if you weren't so dumb, we'd be done by now. Just because of you, we're going down 25 points before Ms. Wilhelm even looks at our stuff."

Kenny: "Calm down, Leon, just because you did all the work on this assignment, doesn't mean you're better than us. If I hadn't used the computer, I would have been done already."

Peggy: "Yeah Leon, Kenny was just doing what Ms. Wilhelm said he should do. I'm not that great at using the spreadsheet and the drawing program, but I'm sure we can have it done in time."

---

Pat might have been right about Leon being hard to deal with, but I had to hand it to him. He was definitely from the wrong side of the tracks, yet he was an exceptionally bright kid. I was always leery of the term "gifted," because people often threw it around without being clear on their criteria. If our school had a truly gifted student, however, it would be Leon. He had incredible natural ability, and he worked hard to complete all his assignments, even doing extra work on many occasions. But it seemed like he was caught in a downward spiral. He worked to compensate for what he didn't have--money, status, friends--but the more he did, the less the other kids appeared to like him. He wanted so badly to be accepted by the others, but they didn't give him the time of day. I wondered how I would have reacted in his situation.



[Click here for a sound file of a student reacting to the conflict \(224K\).](#)

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#### **Transcript of student's comments:**

"I'm not so sure this is what Ms. Wilhelm meant by solving our problems. If you work on a newspaper, you're supposed to work as a team. Why would they hire people if they are just going to work by themselves?"

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As I moved inside the room, I sensed it was time for me, or someone, to intervene, and I didn't see Pat anywhere around. "Lighten up you guys! This is supposed to be fun--you sound like a bunch of teachers trying to figure out whose turn it is to take lunch duty."

Peggy: "Mr. Keegan, will you help us? Kenny and Leon are being a pain."

No sooner were the words out of Peggy's mouth than Kenny leaped out of his chair and grabbed Leon around the neck. The room erupted in cursing, spitting, and screaming as the two of them wrestled one another to the floor. "You sonova...!"... "Dammit...!" They were rolling all over the floor, crashing into chairs, and hurling expletives like there was no tomorrow. Peggy looked terrified, but some of the other kids in the room were cheering them on.

I managed to grab Leon just as he was about to smack Kenny for a second time on his ear. Leon was only 13 or 14, but he was as strong as I was, or so it seemed as I tried to restrain him. Kenny was so angry that he was crying and yelling some kind of jibberish. I don't think Leon hurt him, and the adrenaline would probably have staved off the pain anyway, but Kenny had just lost all control. If it hadn't been for Peggy, I might never have been able to stop them.

Peggy had come to as I was struggling with Leon, and she jumped in front of Kenny. She got right in his face and screamed at the top of her lungs, "Stop it!" Her voice was so loud, even above the din of the two warriors, that she scared me, too. Despite her size, Peggy had the makings of an NFL referee or a managing editor if I ever saw one.

"Hey you guys!" shouted Pat Wilhelm as she entered the room. "What's going on here? I want you three out of here NOW! Head straight for the principal's office. I'll be right behind you."

Pat whirled toward me. "This is the third time this month I've had to deal with Leon. And now the trouble is spreading to others. He's overbearing. He can't sit still. He has to be running his mouth all the time. I just don't think he is the kind of kid who can deal with this learning situation. He needs more structure. Sorry you had to get involved in this mess."

I could tell Pat was upset, and I could see this was not the right time to talk. I decided to ease my way out of there and talk with her later when everybody had cooled down.

[Click here to return to the Table of Contents.](#)

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## SCENE 6

**Scene: Teachers and principal meet with Brian Beecham to discuss grant proposal.**

I had spent the last six weeks surrounded by confusion about *The Gazette*, but at the same time, I had witnessed some incredibly inspired teaching. Harry could be maddeningly linear, yet he taught with real fire in his belly. Ruth's passion for language was obvious, but her spirited harangues on word usage came more often and with greater intensity, threatening to wound anyone standing in the line of fire. Despite the fact that Pat and I seemed to talk past each other at least as often as we communicated, she was really fun to work with. Clearly I was the most sane among them, but at times I wasn't even sure I liked myself. There was no denying, however, that we had the kids working, and even appearing to care about the fortunes of *The Gazette*.

As I walked down the hall on my way to the principal's office, I couldn't help but wonder why Mr. Lelich had called this meeting. Pat Wilhelm and Ruth Sorensen were standing just outside Lelich's door when I got there. Harry came puffing up behind me. "Steve! What the hell is going on? Why did Lelich call this meeting?" Harry wheezed as he stuffed a handkerchief into his pocket.

"Beats me, Harry," I whispered, as we all moved into the inner sanctum.

As we entered, I saw Brian Beecham standing on the other side of the coffee table--looking wealthy. I was reminded immediately of Hemingway's comment: "The rich are very different from the rest of us. They have more money." Beecham stood as testament to the fact. Without those expensive clothes, he would have been one mighty average-looking guy.

"Ms. Sorensen, Ms. Wilhelm, Mr. Keegan, Mr. Shabanowitz," Beecham extended his hand to each of us as we entered. "Pleasure to see you again, Keegan."

"Thanks, Mr. Beecham. Good to see you too," I said with only minor reservations.

Lelich got us all seated and then began to explain why he had called us in. "Thank you all for coming on such short notice. I know some of you have to get ready for parent conferences tonight, so I will get right to the point."



"As you know, Mr. Beecham has taken a keen interest in our school system. Our partnership with *The Herald* is unique in this part of the country, and we have already begun to see some real payoff for students. As of last Friday, 22 students from the high school had done internships at the paper. Another 10 will start next week. Garfield students are getting *The Herald* free of charge, and I know you four have been using it to help guide your work with our own newspaper," Lelich droned on, I thought, without getting to the point.

"But I didn't invite you here to discuss the past. I want you to hear what Mr. Beecham has to say about the future. More specifically, I want you to consider an idea he has offered to strengthen Garfield's role in the partnership with *The Herald*. Mr. Beecham, please, you explain."

Lelich then deferred to Beecham in what I thought had to be one of his more personally graceful moments, considering the fact that he looked like a rumped troll next to the editor of *The Herald*.

"Thank you very much, Mr. Lelich. I appreciate your willingness to hear me out," he said, looking at all of us seated around the circle. "I have been following your efforts with *The Garfield Gazette*, and I am quite impressed. In fact, I'm so impressed, I have come to make you a proposal."

## GARFIELD JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL, 1995

**M**ichaela Walker has proven herself a smart, street-smart performer again in *The Herald*. She, so she might survive the

script very—*to say*. There's some level of risk in the events we see—the script is adapted from a scenario by the real scouting journal—but it all plays like pure Hollywood as you. The script ab-

discrete, uplifting package. The script celebrates her toughness; it puts it even polished for our education, instead of just treating it as part of her character. Well, her strength is *The Herald's* *Adler*.

Beecham leaned forward in his chair and removed all doubt about the purpose of the meeting. "I am prepared to offer Garfield Junior High School \$80,000 over the next two years to strengthen and extend the work of your newspaper," he said, stopping to read our reactions.

Ruth blanched as she turned to Pat and mumbled something I couldn't hear, because Harry started sputtering and wiping his nose. Lelich was absolutely beaming.

"That's fantastic!" I said, instantly and silently chastising myself for ever doubting the sincerity and ruddy good looks of this benevolent capitalist. "You said a 'proposal,' Mr. Beecham. What do we have to do to get the money?"

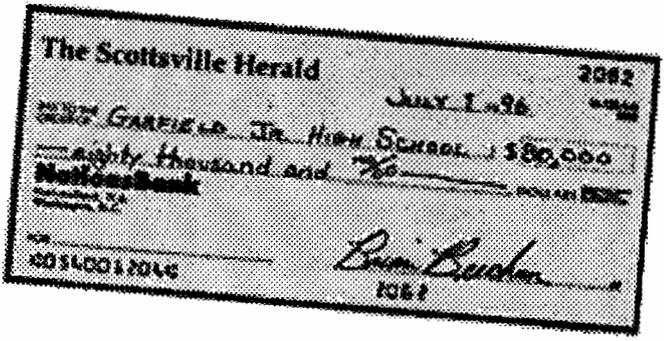
"I like that in a man, Keegan. You cut right to the chase," said Beecham, as he warmed to the task.

"I'm a businessman. My life is profit and loss. When I'm long on profit and short on loss, I can be a generous businessman. My wife used to be a teacher. My mother, too. I have known for a long time that you have to catch kids when they are young to maximize your influence on them. But I gradually forgot how important education can be. I lost my bearings for a while. But when we ran that negative story about public education some time--you remember the one, Steve--I was embarrassed to realize how crotchety I had become. Keegan, here, made me wonder if I had been hanging around with too many old rich guys--the ones who have a jaundiced view of today's generation. Since then, I have watched the high school interns work with us downtown, and I like what I see. But I am also convinced that if we worked with young people sooner, say in junior high or maybe even elementary school, we could do a lot more for them."

Keegan: "Are you suggesting we start an internship at *The Herald* for our students?"

"No, I'm not sure what we would do with them down there. I don't really know exactly how to help them. What I'm suggesting is that you show me how. You are the teachers. You have the expertise, the knowledge of children, of content, of teaching. Show me how you can collaborate to help your junior high students perform in ways that will make them successful adults."

...we needed to figure out how to show...  
others that we were succeeding with this venture.  
More important, we had to demonstrate that students  
were getting as much or more out of their work with  
*The Gazette* than they would from traditional classes.  
Maybe we had not truly faced the tough issues as a  
team about our conceptions of the newspaper unit.



Professional Perspective:

Access an evaluation plan suggested by Walter Heinecke

[Return to the beginning of this case](#)

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[Return to Contemporary Issues home page](#)