

IMPLEMENTING AN ETHIC OF CARE IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

### IMPLEMENTING AN ETHIC OF CARE IN A KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM (May 2007)

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This study uses autoethnography as the method to investigate the results of a teacher's desire to implement an ethic of care in a kindergarten classroom. Noddings' (1984, 2003) work serves as the basis for the teacher's interactions with students, parents, and co-workers. A layered account (Ronai, 1992, 1997; Jago, 2002) is utilized as the method of presentation with reliance on story (Coles, 1989) to connect the personal to the cultural.

Undertaking the implementation of care in a kindergarten classroom reveals both expected and unexpected results. Awareness of the present educational climate with the resultant curriculum and accountability "shovedown" leads to a presupposition of difficulty in engaging in appropriate practice. This presupposition was confirmed. The researcher's self-awareness of her human-ness forewarned times of failure to implement care. The need for additional self discovery and the necessity of developing more-productive thinking strategies were not expected.

This work details a framework for CARE developed with the aim of making Noddings' (1984, 2003) ethic of care more transparent, easier to understand, remember,

and apply in the kindergarten classroom. The framework provides a foundation for sharing insights into caring behaviors with kindergarten students. Focus on the framework also counteracts some distractions that occurred due to the researcher's entry into a new and different culture. The establishment of a teacher vision and the engagement in effective reflection also support a redirection of focus to caring behaviors. Investigation into literature related to the issues that surfaced - developmentally appropriate practice, rewards, classroom management, and dynamic conservatism - provides insight regarding the impact of these concepts upon caring behaviors. The researcher discovers and utilizes a variety of creative methods in an attempt to counteract various negative effects related to these issues. Investigation into the literature of deconstructive criticism and into the literature of communities of practice reveals the positive aspects of incorporating these concepts into the practice of the ethic of care. This study includes an autoethnographic account of the results of attempting to engage in these practices.

Richardson (1994) believes that writing is a method of knowing. This dissertation critically and analytically narrates the reality of writing as a process of inquiry, an inquiry that reveals, not only the acquisition of knowledge, but the transformation of thought. The acquired knowledge and the transformed thoughts aid in the development of traits in a teacher who is now more likely and able to implement care in a kindergarten classroom.