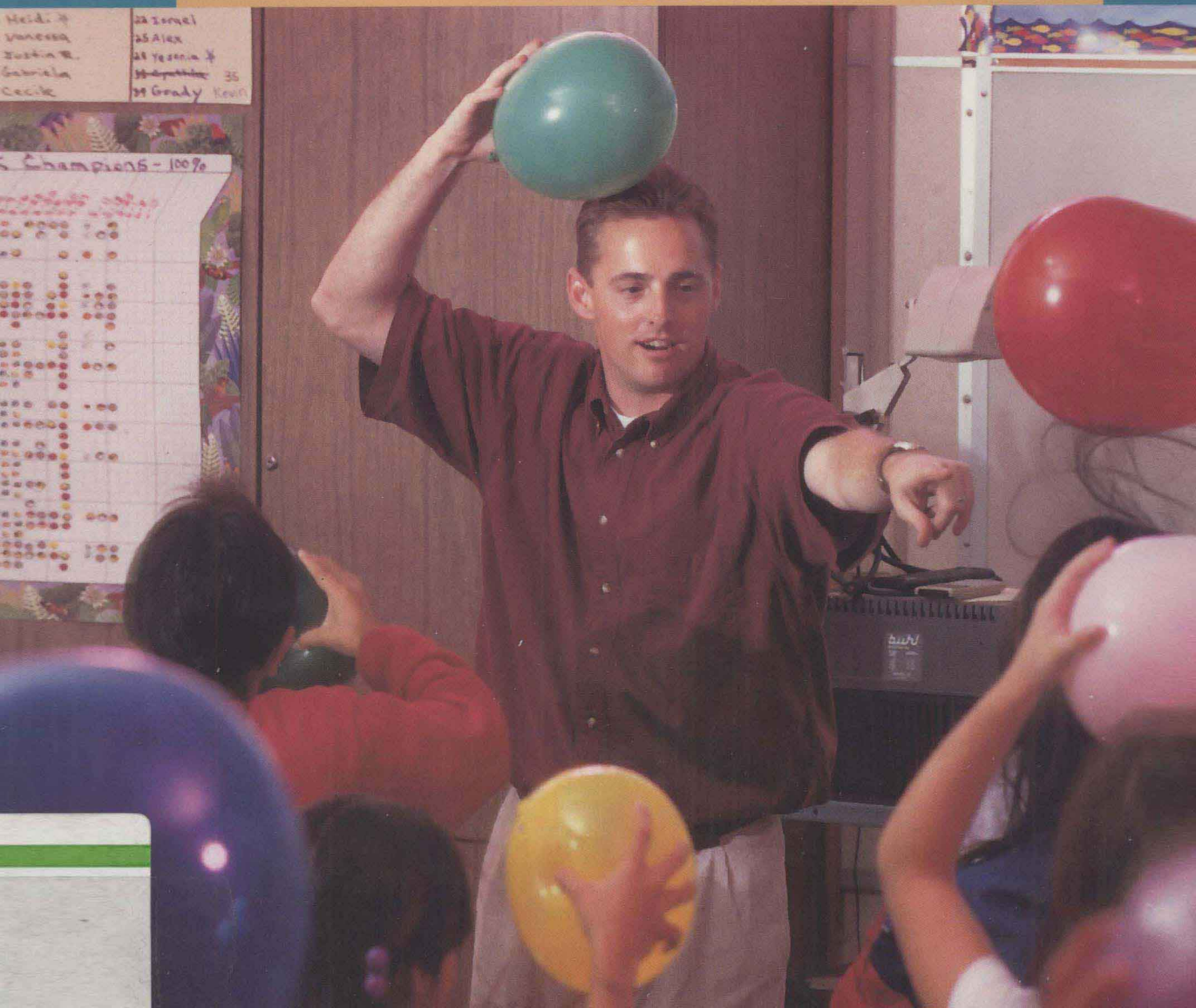
DONNA L. WISEMAN STEPHANIE L. KNIGHT DONNA D. COONER

BECOMING A TEACHER IN A FIELD-BASED SETTING

An Introduction to Education and Classrooms

Second Edition



Becoming a Teacher in a Field-Based Setting

An Introduction to Education and Classrooms

SECOND EDITION

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Compositor: TBH Typecast, Inc.
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Printed in Canada
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 05 04 03 02 01

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Wiseman, Donna L. (Donna Louise)
Becoming a teacher in a field-based setting : an introduction to education and classrooms / Donna L. Wiseman, Donna D. Cooner, Stephanie L. Knight.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0-534-55918-2
1. Student teaching—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 2. Teachers—Training of—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. 3. Education—Study and teaching (Higher)—United States—Handbooks, manuals, etc. I. Cooner, Donna D. (Donna Danell) II. Knight, Stephanie L. III. Title.

LB2157.U5 W57 2001
370'.71—dc21 2001017982

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Preface

Teaching teachers, like teaching children, is not a morally neutral affair. It is the discharging and instilling of obligations, the primary one of which is discovery and growth in what can be termed the learning process. . . . What we owe children, we owe teachers.

—Sarason 1993, p. 135

Teaching in today's classrooms is quite different from what you may remember about your own early school experiences. The profession has changed dramatically and has acquired multiple and complex dimensions. Some understandings will develop as you gain experience and practice new teaching skills. However, experience in the absence of reflection will not guarantee growth. Reflection, both individually and as a shared process, is an important part of your development as an educator. Discussions with peers, teachers, mentors, university professors, and elementary and secondary school students will enable you to reflect on your experiences through different lenses. As you mature as a teacher, reflecting on your experiences will allow you to effectively interface with colleagues and professionals who work with children and families, deliver instruction to diverse learners, use technology in classroom instruction, and create an environment of mutual trust between you and your students.

This text is designed to introduce you to the education profession—its history and current contexts, the complexities of teaching and learning, and the dynamics of the classroom. What you learn about teaching during your university experience is only the first step in becoming a teacher. We cannot give you a set of skills that will assure your success throughout your teaching career, but we have provided some ideas and experiences that will introduce you to the profession.

Your needs as a beginning teacher will be quite different from those of experienced teachers. The first steps of learning to teach are both exciting and daunting. As you become a teacher, you will need to realize that you are not the first to experience insecurities and challenges.

One of the best places for you to learn about teaching is in a school environment, and we hope your preparation program includes several opportunities for you to work in schools and with students. The experiences you have in the schools are planned by university professors and classroom teachers through a partnership that has been formed between the school and the university. The school–university partnership that accompanies your teacher education program connects university- and school-based perspectives. Recognizing the contribution of university-sponsored research and theory while integrating the practical knowledge that teachers have gained from their own classroom experience is the best way to learn to teach (Zeichner, 1992). Sometimes theory and practice collide. The things you read in your textbook and talk about in class may not match what you are seeing in the classroom setting. When this happens, it is important to talk about the differences and establish a balance between educational theory and classroom practice. Some educators ignore the role of theory and feel that practice is the best way to learn to teach. We believe both aspects of teacher training are important. You may become impatient with university coursework and focus more on your field and clinical experiences. But to be a professional, you must understand both the theories and the practices of teaching.

To help you understand the ideas of teachers as you learn about becoming a teacher, we have included examples and descriptions written by beginning and experienced teachers to illustrate the ideas in this text. The Voices sections in each chapter are designed to provide an "insider" account and let you hear the sound of teachers' voices (Shulman, 1992). These classroom narratives evolved from interviews and written responses. When appropriate, the views of children, parents, principals, and others are included. The stories provide clarification and interpretation for some of the topics presented in the text.

You will become a professional by observing, doing, inquiring, and reflecting on teaching and learning. Each chapter has suggested activities and guidelines for discussions with classroom teachers, your peers, and university instructors. Cultivating interactions with others and sharing ideas will enable you to solve prob-

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lems collaboratively. If you want to know more about a topic presented in the text, the InfoTrac College Edition activities in each chapter provide a good place to begin your inquiries.

The Field-Based Activities in each of the chapters encourage you to become involved in reflecting on what you see when you are in the classroom. Some of the activities encourage development and collection of portfolio artifacts. Your supervisor or university professor will help you select and personalize the activities most useful to your professional growth. The portfolio activities are more than course requirements—they are designed to engage you in the important process of reflection and will serve as a measure of your growth in this important first phase of becoming a teacher.

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Acknowledgments

We continue to be indebted to the many teachers and principals who collaborate with us as we restructure our own roles to include a school–university perspective. The teachers who work with us in school–university partnerships have made a commitment to preparing new teachers, and their schools are usually changed as a result of their efforts. The ability of teachers to reflect on their own practice, continue their own professional development, and guide new teachers' first attempts at teaching provides many new lessons about collaborating, teaching, and researching.

We owe a special debt of gratitude to Angela Vogeler at Northern Illinois University who patiently worked with our editorial scribbles and helped communications between the three of us go more smoothly. She is now a veteran of both editions of this textbook.

We would like to thank the following reviewers for their suggestions: Janet Byrne, Roane State Community College; Mary C. Clement, Berry College; Mary Dean Dumais, Kean University; John R. Zelazek, Central Missouri State University.

The Wadsworth editors and staff provided support and encouragement to help us complete this project. Dianne Lindsay encouraged us to begin a second edition, and Dan Alpert guided us through the process of updating and making changes to the text. Vicki Moran, who was in charge of the final production phase, deserves a great deal of credit for her efficient guidance. Many thanks to all of these people.

Donna L. Wiseman
Stephanie L. Knight
Donna D. Cooner

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CHAPTER 1

Developing a Personal View of Teaching

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **Impact of Personal Biography on Teaching**
- **Reasons for Becoming a Teacher**
- **Characteristics of Good Teachers**
- **Teaching as a Lifelong Learning Process**
- **The Formal Steps of Learning to Teach**
- **Learning to Teach in a Field-Based Setting**

I remember every teacher I ever had. I say this not to boast about my memory but to illustrate just how powerfully my teachers influenced me. Some of them I knew quite well, particularly the ones in the elementary school, because of the intense relationship between elementary school teachers and their students in their self-contained classrooms and because they lived in my community and were a part of my life outside the classroom. Others I knew only as teachers. I had no idea what their lives were like outside the school or even if they had lives outside of school. The story of those I knew well could be the subject of a book unto itself. Memories of the others provoke a series of questions for me. Who were you really? What did you care about? What did you think of me? Did you even know who I am?

—Gloria Ladson-Billings, *The Dreamkeepers**

*From *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African-American Children*, by Gloria Ladson-Billings (pp. 26–27). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1997.

Good teachers touch learners' lives and captivate their students' attention, motivating them to learn and encouraging them to do their best. They can demonstrate passion about a content area while caring for and respecting their students. At the same time, teachers are capable of critiquing their schools and understanding the impact of state and local requirements on classroom instruction. Teachers interact with parents and community leaders from all walks of life. They play an important role in the community and know how to use the resources available to them to benefit their students. They are able to understand five-year-olds' explanations of important life events or adolescents' defense of their favorite rock music. In sum, they are lifelong learners who focus their varied skills and abilities on working with young learners.

The teaching profession is complex and challenging. To meet these challenges, future teachers need experiences that will help them acquire and later refine their skills and abilities. The reflection encouraged in your formal teacher preparation will serve as a model for learning throughout your teaching career. This chapter will help you consider and answer these questions:

- Why do I want to be a teacher?
- What experiences have shaped my ideas about teaching?
- What is a good teacher?
- How do teachers learn how to teach?

Impact of Personal Biography on Teaching

Teachers' past and present life experiences have an impact on their attitudes and definitions of teaching and create important influences on their identities as teachers (Knowles, 1992). Personal and professional biography becomes a rich source of information that helps clarify teachers' dispositions and behaviors and accounts for some of their ability to be socialized into the world of teaching. Childhood experiences, early teacher role models, teaching experiences, personal knowledge and beliefs, and significant or important people make important contributions to an individual's definition of and approach to teaching (Calderhead, 1996; Crow, 1987; Knowles, 1992).

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