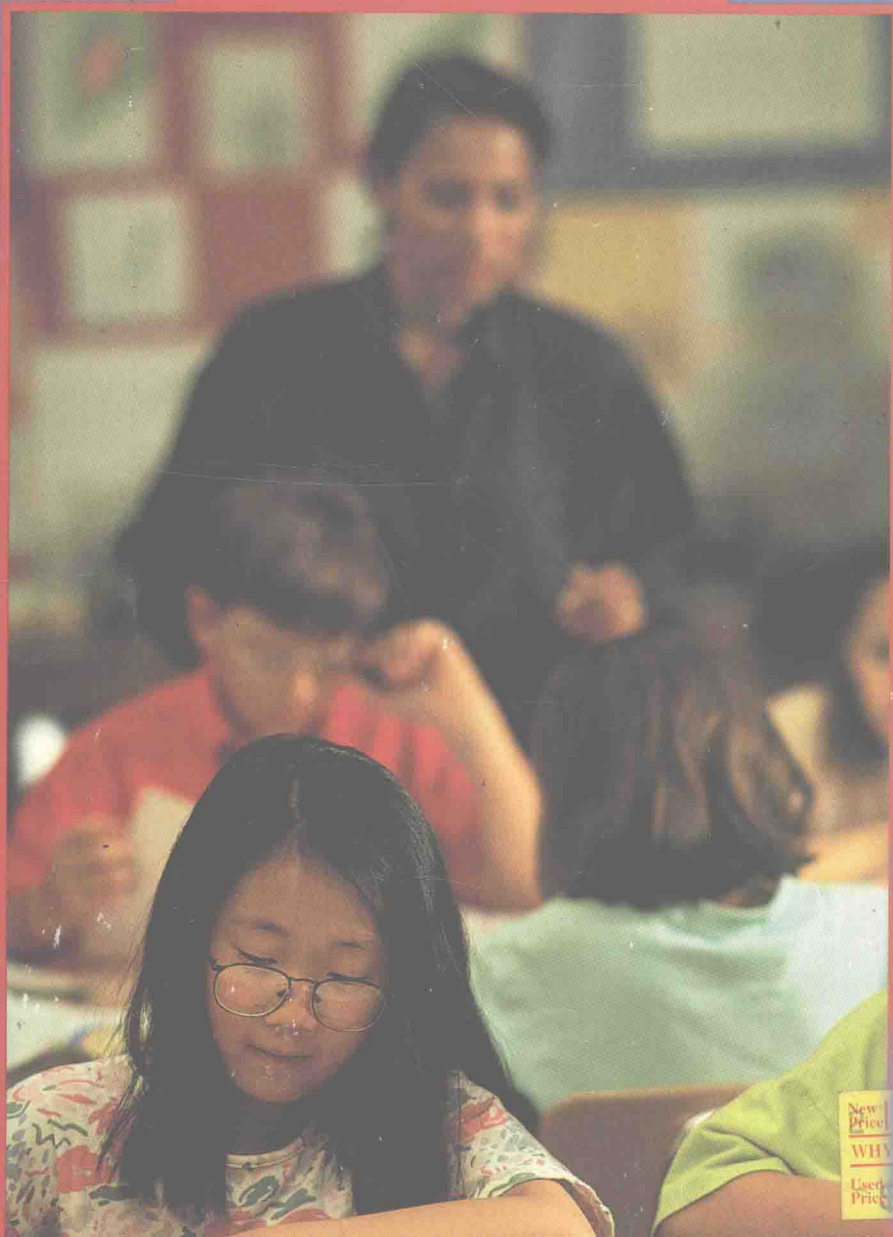
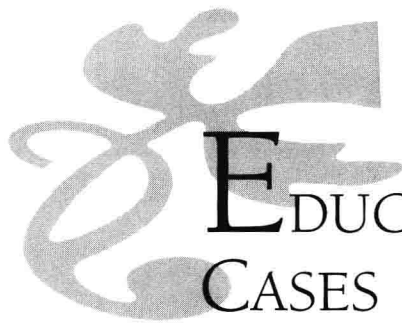


# Educational Psychology Cases for Teacher Decision-Making

GORDON E. GREENWOOD  
H. THOMPSON FILLMER



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# EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY CASES FOR TEACHER DECISION-MAKING

GORDON E. GREENWOOD

H. THOMPSON FILLMER

*University of Florida—Gainesville*

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*We wish to dedicate this book to the key people in our lives:*

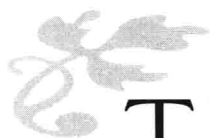
*To our wives, Patti Greenwood and Dorothy Fillmer, for their sustaining love and support*

*To our parents, Annette and Arthur Greenwood and Henry and Vera Fillmer, for their wisdom, caring, and guidance*

*To our children, Joe, Richard, and Don Greenwood, and Susan Burchfield, Connie Bell, and Tom Fillmer, who give us love as well as hope for the future.*



# PREFACE



This book is the product of a conversation in 1995 during which Kevin Davis, Senior Editor at Merrill/Prentice Hall, asked me if I was interested in writing a casebook that would parallel the content of educational psychology textbooks published by Merrill, as well as that of other major textbooks in the field. The result was a content analysis of such textbooks, the outcome of which is presented near the end of the Introduction, inside the front cover, and in Appendix A. Later I contacted my good friend and colleague, Dr. Tom Fillmer, with whom I have written a more general casebook for Merrill, *Professional Core Cases for Teacher Decision-Making* (© 1997) and asked him if he would co-author this book.

The cases for this book were drawn primarily from the extensive case material collected from teachers in the field as well as those returning for graduate work since 1970. In addition, we drew cases from our respective teaching careers. I taught middle and high school in Michigan and Indiana for seven years, and Dr. Fillmer taught middle and high school for four years in Ohio and has supervised interns since 1960. We both have been professors in the College of Education at the University of Florida since 1967.

Case material is presented in a variety of formats. For reasons which we enumerate in the Introduction and in Appendix B, we prefer the written dialogue format. Also, all of our cases are left open-ended, problem-centered, and unresolved in order to provoke stimulating discussion, analysis, and decision-making. We agree with a growing number of educators, such as Harry Broudy ("Case studies—Why and how," *Teachers College Record*, 91, 449–459, 1990), who see cases as a means of establishing a professional knowledge base in teacher education. We view cases as application vehicles that serve as a middle step between coursework and actual teaching experience.

Although the cases in this book are intended for use in educational psychology courses, we made no attempt to extract the problem situations presented in the cases from the real world of teaching in order to focus in on context-free psychological issues such as those related to learning, intelligence, or measurement. Education in the public schools occurs in the context of a school, and teachers working in such an environment need to deal with major stakeholders such as administrators, support staff, parents, and other teachers, as well as students. It is too bad that learning in the public schools can't consist of "Mark Hopkins sitting on one end of a log with a student sitting on the other end." Education occurs as a social event in an institution with norms, role-definitions, power alignments, and dysfunctions, just like any other large-scale human endeavor. To portray it otherwise would be unrealistic.

## **KEY FEATURES**

This book contains a number of features that will make it useful to the educational psychology instructor.

1. Appendix B contains information on how to use cases in the college classroom. It is our experience that many college instructors have had little experience using cases and are not sure where to obtain such information.
2. Each case begins with a listing of the psychological theories and sets of principles that may be especially useful for analyzing and resolving the case. This may help the instructor select which cases are most relevant to the content being taught.
3. At the end of each case is a series of questions, each of which focuses on the case from the perspective of a different psychological theory or set of principles. These questions will help to stimulate discussion and analysis of the case.
4. Appendix A presents a theory guide that indicates which psychological content areas, theories, and sets of principles are especially useful in analyzing and resolving the cases.
5. Near the end of each case is some additional material relevant to the case. This may take the form of a student cumulative record, sample test items, or background data on students such as grades, parents' occupations, and so forth. Such information will add further information for case analysis and promote realism.
6. The Contents contains a brief overview of each case. This feature may be of value to the instructor and to students when selecting cases.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The production of a book like this requires the help of many people. The authors wish to especially thank Daniel Sanetz and Patti Greenwood for their excellent work in preparing the manuscript. We also thank the many teachers, too numerous to name, who contributed case material. Most of the cases in this book are actually composites from several cases and represent the real-world experiences of more than one teacher. It is our hope that these common problems will serve as realistic application tools for the education of future teachers.

Finally, we wish to thank the reviewers of this manuscript: Margaret Anderson, SUNY, Cortland; Scott W. Brown, University of Connecticut; Peggy Dettmer, Kansas State University; Lee Doeblar, University of Montevallo; Gregory Schraw, University of Nebraska, Lincoln; and Dale E. Schunk, Purdue University.

*Gordon E. Greenwood  
H. Thompson Fillmer*



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# CONTENTS



## **Introduction**

**1**

Educational Psychology and Teaching	1
Case Studies and Teacher Education	2
Sample Case	3
Analyzing Cases	9
Sample Case Analysis and Decision	10
Critique of Sample Analysis and Decision	15
Organization of Cases	17

## **PART 1**

### **INTRODUCTION TO EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

#### **1 Science or Art?**

**19**

An educational psychologist is employed as a consultant by a school district to assist in the development of a merit pay plan for teachers. When he meets with the school district planning committee of administrators, teachers, and parents, questions arise regarding the relationship between educational psychology as a science and teaching as an art.

#### **2 Quality Control**

**27**

The educational psychologist in Case 1 has been awarded a contract by the school district to develop, implement, and train school personnel in the procedures for evaluating teachers for merit pay purposes. When he meets with the school district development committee, he finds them divided on such issues as the nature and measurement of effective teaching, the value of process-product research methodology, the use of classroom observation procedures, and the strengths and weaknesses of using standardized achievement tests on a pretest-posttest basis as a measure of student learning.

## **PART 2**

### **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT**

- 3 To Retain or Not to Retain? 35**  
A first-grade elementary teacher and the building principal meet to make a promotion-retention decision about Juan Rodriguez, a physically small, somewhat emotionally immature boy from a large Hispanic family in which English is a second language. Juan has difficulty reading and writing English, and his father becomes upset when he learns that they are considering retaining Juan.
- 4 Splitting the Differences 41**  
A Math 8 teacher attempts to deal with a class somewhat evenly divided by ability level by working with pupils in homogeneous groups. The teacher is not sure what to do when this creates hostilities between the groups, evaluation problems, and upsets some of the parents.
- 5 Baiting the Hook 51**  
The Math 8 teacher in case 4 tries to figure out why a student who has an IQ of 128 only makes C's and only does those assignments that interest him. The teacher finds out that the boy has no close friends, no clear vocational goals, but enjoys fishing with his father and has become something of an expert on casting and lures. How can this teacher use this information to motivate the boy in class?
- 6 Through Thick and Thin 60**  
A junior high school social studies teacher becomes interested in the close friendship between two fourteen-year-old girls, one of whom is thin, frail, and somewhat introverted, while the other is physically attractive, popular, and a cheerleader. The teacher later finds out that one girl is anorexic with an abusive mother, while the other is bulimic. She wonders what she can do to help.
- 7 Honesty or Maturity? 68**  
An elementary teacher observes a third-grade boy from an upper-middle-income home cheating and stealing in class. She wonders how to handle the situation when the boy tries to lie his way out of the situation and his parents see him as merely going through a phase that he will grow out of.

## **PART 3**

### **CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

- 8 Potpourri 77**  
An eighth-grade social studies teacher seeks advice about the best way to teach a U. S. history class that is very diverse in terms of IQ, cognitive style,



academic achievement, socioeconomic status, racial/ethnic origin, and mainstreamed exceptionalities. The teacher is not sure what to do when his efforts to work with the students in heterogeneous groups seem to be ineffective.

**9 The Computer Generation 88**

A sixth-grade middle school teacher experiences feelings of inadequacy when the classrooms in her school receive new computers for classroom instruction. She is unsure how to handle the situation when it becomes clear to her that her knowledge of computers is woefully lacking compared to that of her students.

**10 Double Trouble 98**

A fourth-grade elementary teacher is surprised when two boys, one diagnosed as having a behavior disorder and the other as having attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, are mainstreamed into her class. Neither she nor the special education teacher assisting in her classroom is sure how to handle the boys when they evidence severe discipline and learning problems.

**11 My Brother's Keeper 108**

Following the defeat of a local tax referendum, a high school building principal asks his teachers of exceptional and gifted students to attend the next meeting of the school advisory committee, where the main issue will be whether the special education program should be pared back to legal minimums financially in order to salvage the program for gifted students. The principal seeks the advice of the teachers about what to do when a straw vote of parents indicates that the majority favors the cuts even though they will seriously curtail the functioning of the special education program.

**PART 4**

**LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION**

**12 Remembering Stuff 117**

A beginning high school history teacher changes the way that he presents material and tests when he realizes that his students are having trouble memorizing isolated facts. The chair of the social studies department pressures him to return to an emphasis on important facts and giving multiple-choice-type tests to prepare students for taking the SAT.

**13 Learning the Lines 127**

Two high school English teachers in a small rural school district agree to co-direct the senior school play. However, they soon find that the students are having trouble learning their lines, and the two teachers must decide on the best strategy for helping them.

- 14 Making Connections** 136  
The students in a tenth-grade world history class see little relevance between events of the past and those of today. How can the teacher change the way he is teaching the course so that the students are motivated to make connections between the past, especially ancient history, and their lives today?
- 15 The Problem With Problem-Solving** 146  
Two sixth-grade teachers attend a workshop on problem-solving and attempt to integrate problem-solving activities into their teaching. One of the teachers has to decide how to apply what she has learned when she is faced with a classroom management problem.
- 16 Which Is Higher?** 154  
A social studies curriculum director chairs a committee of teachers to revise the secondary world history curriculum. His problem is to get the committee off dead-center when two teachers polarize the group around two different approaches to teaching: one emphasizes the learning of facts through lecture-discussion teaching methods and objective testing procedures, while the other argues for higher-order learning through small-group problem-solving methods and essay-type tests.
- 17 Teamwork** 163  
A middle school principal encourages four of his teachers to implement cooperative learning procedures in their classrooms. He and the teachers have to decide how to handle problems that develop when some of the students and parents become upset with the way the cooperative learning classes are operating.

## **PART 5**

### **MOTIVATION AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

- 18 The Little Engine That Couldn't** 174  
A beginning sixth-grade teacher becomes frustrated when the students in his culturally diverse class do not believe they can learn the material and seem unmotivated to try. He begins to question his ability as a teacher when some of his classroom teaching strategies fail and his students' parents do not seem to value learning either.
- 19 The Ins and Outs of Discipline** 183  
Two elementary teachers who are close friends and teach the same grade in the same school attend a workshop on classroom management. Although they decide to implement different classroom management models (Teacher Effectiveness Training and behavior modification), they do such good jobs that the building principal has a hard time deciding which one she should choose as the school's nominee as "Teacher of the Year."

- 20 The Comedienne** 193  
A seventh-grade science teacher has to decide what to do about the antics of a female class clown. Her classroom disruptions have reached the point where they not only interfere with student learning but have begun to encourage imitators.
- 21 Family Values** 203  
A seventh-grade English teacher in an urban middle school with a culturally diverse population notices that students from low-income and certain racial/ethnic backgrounds have different values regarding physical aggression and learning than do students from other family backgrounds. The teacher not only has to decide how to teach such a diverse population of students in his classes but how to help a middle-income white student who is being bullied by a gang.
- 22 Parents as Partners** 213  
The seventh-grade middle school English teacher in Case 21 convinces the building principal to employ two low-income mothers of students in his class to work as teacher aides. Although the two teacher aides, one African-American and the other Hispanic, help facilitate learning and discipline in the teacher's classes, the principal becomes upset when they become active in parent advisory committee and school board activities.
- 23 Delisha the Disrupter** 223  
A third-grade teacher in her second year of teaching has to decide how to handle a disruptive African-American girl in her class. The teacher, the building principal, and a school psychologist ponder what to do based on observation data that the school psychologist has collected on the child.
- 24 Involving Parents** 232  
A beginning elementary principal who is a strong believer in parent involvement encourages her teachers to involve parents, especially low-income parents, as classroom volunteers and teacher aides, as participants in parent advisory committees, and as teachers of their own children at home through home visits. However, by the end of the school year, the principal and teachers have to decide whether to end or revise the parent involvement program due to a number of problems that have emerged.
- 25 Motivation or Control?** 244  
A consultant conducts a workshop with a high school faculty with the intention of helping the teachers agree upon and implement a common classroom management model. However, a problem develops when the teachers split into two groups regarding their core beliefs about classroom management—whether the first priority is getting control of student behavior or motivating students by determining and capitalizing upon student interests.

**PART 6****ASSESSMENT, EVALUATION, AND TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS****26 Teaching to the Test 252**

The school board in a large west coast city expresses its concerns regarding the poor performance of its eleventh graders on the basic skills portion of the state standardized achievement test by mandating that all teachers become teachers of the basic reading, writing, and math skills in their courses and give monthly practice tests which contain items like those on the state tests. A math teacher and a history teacher at the high school in the school district which has performed the poorest on the state test become concerned about the effects of such “teaching to the test” policies upon student learning and meet with their building principal to express their concerns.

**27 Ignoring the Test 261**

It is two years later, and the high school in Case 26 has fully implemented the school system’s standardized testing focusing on the basic skills of reading, writing, and math, although without much success since its students still make the lowest scores in the school district on the annual state standardized achievement test. This creates a problem for the history teacher in Case 26, who will be coming up for tenure at the end of the school year, since his students scored below average on the basic skills portion of the state test. The building principal also has a problem because the history teacher is considered an excellent and extremely popular teacher by his students, parents, and fellow teachers but refuses to “teach to the test” on the grounds that the state test does not measure real learning.

**28 Grading the Teacher 269**

A beginning high school world history teacher becomes quite popular with her students and parents when she uses teaching and evaluation procedures different from those of the other teachers. However, a problem develops when the other teachers begin to complain that she entertains her students “instead of teaching them something of substance” that will prepare them for college.

**29 The Change Agent 278**

The social studies teacher in Case 28 now has tenure with seven years of teaching experience and a master’s degree and is considered a good teacher now by everyone. When she is appointed to a school district grading and report card committee, she sees an opportunity to function as a change agent with regard to teaching methods and evaluation procedures, especially in the social studies area. She is unsure how to proceed, however, when she surveys the social studies teachers and finds that the majority favor lecture-discussion teaching methods and objective testing methods.

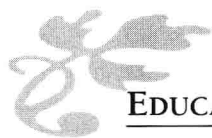
**30 Who's the Best? 288**

A school district selects three teachers to serve on a committee to choose the "Teacher of the Year." The committee finds the decision to be a difficult one as they sort through the survey, classroom observation, and student achievement data that have been assembled for their use.

**APPENDICES****A Theory Guide 295****B Using Cases in College Teaching 298**



# INTRODUCTION



## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY AND TEACHING

What is the science of educational psychology, and how does it relate to the art of teaching? The first chapter of most educational psychology textbooks usually explores the parameters of the field of educational psychology, its history of development, its research methodology, and how its theories, models, and principles are relevant to the educational practitioner. Although a few experts, such as B. F. Skinner, have argued that teaching can be reduced to a technology, the majority seem to agree that teaching fits Gage's (1985) definition of an art as "any process or procedure whose tremendous complexity . . . makes the process in principle one that cannot be reduced to systematic formulas" (p. 4).

One very common explanation of the relationship between educational psychology and teaching is that effective decision-making is the basic skill underlying good teaching and that the research, theories, models, principles, and techniques derived from educational psychology allow teachers to become better decision-makers. Ormrod (1995) points out that "above all, we are *decision-makers*: we must continually choose among many possible strategies for helping students learn, develop, and achieve. In fact, two researchers (Clark & Peterson, 1986) have estimated that teachers must make a non-trivial instructional decision approximately once every two minutes!" (p. 4). Gage and Berliner (1992) add that educational psychology has especially contributed to teacher decision-making in five areas: (1) instructional objectives, (2) student differences, (3) learning and motivation, (4) teaching methods, and (5) evaluation.

How do teachers use such empirically derived knowledge from the field of educational psychology as they make decisions? Eggen and Kauchak (1997) cite an example: "Should teachers wait longer to give students time to think through a question fully, or will long pauses result in choppy lessons that drag? Research doesn't provide a precise answer, so teachers must use their professional judgment and decide how much wait-time to give and how quickly the lesson should be moved along" (p. 13).

## **CASE STUDIES AND TEACHER EDUCATION**

Many programs and techniques have been developed over the years to prepare preservice and in-service teachers for the real world of teaching. Systematic observation instruments, microteaching, competency-based programs, parent involvement techniques, and protocol materials in various forms have all been used, to name a few. In recent years case studies have become increasingly popular as application and discussion vehicles in training teachers, and many, if not most, educational psychology textbooks now contain brief cases as a regular feature in each chapter. Additionally, a number of casebooks, such as this one, have been written, and some college instructors build an entire course around the use of cases rather than the usual lecture/discussion approach.

What is a case, and what is its role in teacher education? Eggen and Kauchak (1997) define cases as “segments or samples of students’ and teachers’ experiences in the teaching-learning process and other professional events” (p. 11). Cases may take a variety of forms. While most are based on actual events, they can vary considerably in length, format, and the degree to which they are strictly objective reports as opposed to more fictional representations of reality. They may also differ considerably in focus. Some can focus on an individual student’s problem, for example, whereas others might concentrate on a teacher working with an entire class. Although most cases are written, some may be in other forms, such as audiovisual, computer software, and demonstrations and role playing.

The case format we have used in this book is the written dialogue format similar to that used in movie scripts or screenplays. We prefer this format for a number of reasons. First, such a format is familiar through the influence of TV, movies, and the like. Second, it is the kind of “reality” that students experience when they observe in schools or even see themselves teaching through videotaping such as is done in techniques like microteaching. Third, the dialogue format more naturally lends itself to activities designed to follow up case studies, such as role playing, sociodrama, and the videotaping of students “acting out” the courses of action they recommend to the teacher in the case. Fourth, a number of state teacher certification programs involve the direct observation of teacher behavior using observation instruments during the first year of teaching. The dialogue format more closely portrays the kind of behavior observed. Fifth, the behavior in the dialogue can be used as “behavioral evidence” by the students to support the interpretations made when they analyze a case. What people say and do is more a directly observed behavior than a summary of facts or incidents or a paraphrasing of events. Finally, since we see the use of case studies as a middle step between coursework and actual teaching experience, the more closely the case format resembles events actually unfolding in schools, the better. In short, we view them as more realistic vehicles for the analysis of behavior and the generation of courses of action in the real world of teaching.

Whatever form cases take, they may be viewed as application tools that have the potential of helping preservice and in-service teachers develop and shape their metacognitive decision-making abilities. Case studies may be viewed as mediators between traditional courses and workshops and actual teaching experience. Broudy (1990) has argued that the use of cases in teacher education may even help teaching truly become a profes-

sion. Noting that “a professional professes a body of concepts that structure its field of practice” (p. 450), he observes that “teacher education has not developed a set of problems that can legitimately claim to be so general and important that all who are qualified to teach and to teach teachers should be familiar with them and their standard interpretations and solutions” (p. 452). He further contends that such a professional core of problems in education should be identified and presented to preservice and in-service teachers in the form of case studies, as has been done in such professions as medicine and law.

The thirty cases presented in this book were selected because they are especially suited to the typical content presented in an introductory educational psychology course. A content analysis of current educational psychology textbooks revealed that most of them cover the following six areas of content: (1) introduction to educational psychology (the nature, history, and methods of educational psychology, as well as its relationship to teaching); (2) child and adolescent development; (3) student diversity; (4) learning and instruction; (5) motivation and classroom management; and (6) assessment, evaluation, and teacher effectiveness.

## **SAMPLE CASE**

The following case is entitled “And If They Don’t All Want to Learn?” It was described by the teacher who submitted it as a problem involving the motivation of “disruptive eighth graders from low-income backgrounds in the case of a beginning social studies teacher teaching in an inner-city school.” The case will be presented in its entirety, after which strategies for analyzing and resolving the case from an educational psychology perspective will be considered.

Waterford Junior High School is located in a poor, high-crime section of a major metropolitan area in a Midwestern state. Two decades ago, the surrounding neighborhood was made up of small, well-kept homes belonging to middle-income families. Today, the neighborhood reveals the ugly scars of creeping urban blight. A few neat, well-maintained homes remain, but they are outnumbered by those that have fallen into disrepair. Unkept yards, wrecked cars in driveways and on the streets, and spray-painted graffiti on fences are testaments to the decline that has swept over the area.

The school, a three-story warehouse-like structure built at the end of World War II, also shows signs of deterioration and abuse. For years the building’s yellow brick walls have been the target of graffiti artists. Nearly a dozen street-level windows are boarded over, an admission by the school’s maintenance crew that it can no longer keep up with the destruction of rock-wielding vandals.

Nearly one-quarter of the students who attend Waterford are from families where English is not the primary language, and more than half are from families on some form of public assistance. Rightly or wrongly, Waterford students have a reputation throughout the city for below-average achievement, absenteeism, and chronic misbehavior.

It is 7:45 A.M. on the fourth day of school, and five teachers are seated around a table in the lunchroom having coffee. Sue Adams, a first-year social studies teacher and a recent



graduate of a private liberal arts college in another state, walks up to the table. William Hanover, a mathematics teacher in his fifth year at Waterford, is the first to notice Sue.

**WILLIAM** Morning. *[Standing up and extending his hand to Sue]* You must be the new social studies teacher. William Hanover, mathematics.

**SUE** *[Shaking his hand]* I'm Sue Adams. You're right, it is social studies. I'm replacing Mrs. Watkins.

**WILLIAM** Right, she retired . . . great lady. *[Pointing to the others in the group, who, one by one, stand and shake hands with Sue]* This is Betty Franklin, English. Mildred Hawkins, English. Frank Burns, mathematics. And this fellow on my right is David Sharp . . . *[with exaggerated respect]* science teacher extraordinaire. *[Everyone in the group laughs.]*

**SUE** *[To all]* I'm very pleased to meet you. *[She sits down.]*

**FRANK** So, how'd you end up at Waterford?

**BETTY** *[Slapping Frank on the shoulder]* That's a terrible way to put it!

**FRANK** *[Playfully]* Come on, now. Everyone knows Waterford's reputation.

**SUE** Well, I just graduated last year, and, believe it or not, I wanted to teach in an urban school.

**MILDRED** I guess you know that Waterford's had its share of problems.

**SUE** Well, not really. Is there something I should know?

**MILDRED** It's just that the school's gotten a lot of bad press in the past.

**BETTY** Some teachers feel the kids are really hard to handle, but I haven't found them to be that bad. *[Pausing]* I mean, look at the homes a lot of our kids come from. Some of them have gone through things that we couldn't even imagine: parents involved in drugs, child abuse, unemployment—

**FRANK** *[Interrupting]* Right. You name the social problem, you'll find it well represented at Waterford.

**SUE** *[Uneasily]* Well, just how bad is it? You can teach the kids, can't you?

**BETTY** *[Laughing]* What a terrible introduction! We've got you all worried. It's not really that bad. A lot of the kids really want to learn.

**FRANK** *[In a serious tone]* Betty's right. Plus, it's hard to generalize. Some teachers have problems, others don't have many at all. It's hard to say. . . . Some people just seem to adjust better than others.

**DAVID** You should remember one thing, Sue. If you ever want to talk to someone, we're always here. We may not have any answers, but we're always willing to listen.

---

Four weeks later, Sue is standing at an overhead projector in front of twenty-eight eighth graders in her sixth-period social studies class. Her students, thirteen girls and fifteen boys, are seated in five parallel rows. Projected on the screen behind her is a multi-colored outline map of the world.

The students seated near the front of the room appear to be involved in the lesson. They are either looking directly at Sue or writing the names of countries on the outline map of the world Sue has just passed out. Many of the students seated in the back half of the room, however, squirm restlessly and exhibit a variety of off-task behav-