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(Author/HTH)

# The Challenges and the Rewards: A Study of Teachers Undertaking Their First Projects

Sylvia C. Chard

## Abstract

This paper looks at some of the commonly experienced challenges and rewards reported by teachers who have reflected in writing on their first experiences with the Project Approach. The work of two groups of teachers is reported here. One group consisted of 12 teachers in Texas, who implemented the Project Approach in their classrooms following a one-day workshop. The workshop took place at the beginning of the school year and was organized by the school district for all elementary school teachers. The second group consisted of 9 teachers in Canada who were teacher-members of a graduate course on the Project Approach. From the different stories emerged some interesting issues for teacher educators to consider as they help teachers in the early stages of adopting the Project Approach and establishing it in their classrooms. Some teachers found that their current practice and educational philosophy allowed them to take to project work with ease and enthusiasm. Other teachers who were keen to adapt their teaching to include projects had difficulty making the considerable adjustments they found were necessary to make child choice and decision making a part of regular practice in their classrooms. Many of the concerns and delights of working this way with children are shared by teachers everywhere.

Teachers face significant challenges when they make changes to the way they teach. The easiest response to these challenges would seem to be a return to more familiar ways of teaching. However, many teachers persist with new ideas and overcome the difficulties that arise. What are the incentives to continue with the new strategies in the face of challenge? For what reasons would teachers take on the difficulties of changing their practice? What are teachers saying about their efforts to teach differently?

This paper looks at some of the commonly experienced challenges and rewards reported by teachers who have reflected in writing on their first experiences with the Project Approach. Issues that emerged from the teachers' accounts of their experiences indicate areas for teacher educators or administrators to consider as they help teachers in the early stages of adopting the Project Approach.

## The Teachers

The work of two groups of teachers is reported here. One group consisted of 12 teachers in Texas, who implemented the Project Approach in their classrooms following a one-day workshop. The workshop took place at the beginning of the school year and was organized by the school district for all elementary school teachers. The second group consisted of 9 teachers in Canada who were teacher-members of a graduate course on the Project Approach.

As the school year progressed, 20 of the teachers in Texas met weekly to share their experiences and to support one another throughout the process of developing a project. Halfway through the year, 12 of these teachers volunteered to write about their first project experiences. The writings of the Canadian teachers were recorded on a WebBoard discussion facility used throughout their 13-week course. In this paper, the teachers' writing is paraphrased and quoted under the headings of themes common to both groups.

## Minimal Change

Several of the teachers in this study committed themselves to project work thinking that not much would have to change in their classrooms. They were under the impression that the way they already worked with children was quite compatible with the Project Approach and that they would just implement a few strategic adaptations before being able to claim that they were doing what their school board or course required of them. However, transferring what is learned in a course or workshop to the classroom involves more adjustments than teachers or teacher educators sometimes anticipate (Stein, Smith, & Silver, 1999, p. 265).

Some teachers did indeed find that their current practice and educational philosophy allowed them to take to project work with ease, enthusiasm, and a sense of affirmation. Other teachers who seemed just as keen to adapt their teaching to include projects had some difficulty. One teacher wrote in the early weeks of the course:

> Throughout my teaching experience, I have always taught using themes and units. I always thought that this was the only way to teach. As I read through the material and participate in discussions, I realize more and more how limiting themes can be. Themes do allow for the teacher to think of creative ways of introducing and exploring curriculum, yet do not allow the children to have a voice in where their learning is going. We usually brainstormed and mapped out our entire unit with little if any input from children.

## Selection of a Topic of Study for the Project

At first, both groups of teachers thought about how this new way of working would fit with their existing practice. For some teachers, the adjustment was easier than for others. Some of the difficulties were circumstantial, and some resided within the teacher herself. The Texas school district teachers had the advantage of being in a school where everyone was encouraged to do projects. However, of the teachers in the Project Approach course, some teachers taught in schools where they were expected to continue to work in partnership with other teachers who were not

taking the course. Teachers in these circumstances were often not free to choose the topic of study but had to fit in with commonly planned themes of study. For example, one third-grade teacher was faced with the topic "oceans" far from any ocean coastline. She solved the problem of the topic by selecting the topic of "boats" as a focus for her combined grade 1-2 class in Canada. There were local rivers and lakes where boats were used (although it was still a problem for her since it was winter, and as the lakes and rivers were iced over, the boats were all still stored away for the winter).

Another teacher described how she decided on her kindergarten project topic to fit with a school tradition: "We had already planned our annual field trip to the fire station, so my co-workers and I decided to start there. I realize now that this might not be the best way to start a project, but I had to begin somewhere."

Because of the different contexts in which they worked, it was important for teachers to see different ways to incorporate project work into their programs. "There is no single way to incorporate project work into a curriculum or teaching style; the significant feature is that some time is allocated to experiences in which children make careful observations and inquiries into worthwhile topics over a sustained period of time" (Katz & Chard, 2000, p. 3).

## Professional Goals

For many teachers, it was important to feel that their own beliefs about teaching were affirmed or underscored in the new approach. One teacher wrote, "As I began to research the Project Approach, I noticed that the students were more involved in their own learning. I have always believed that the students need to be more responsible for their own learning, and this was a good way to begin."

At the beginning of the course, teachers were asked to review their professional development and articulate some goals for themselves. One teacher wrote:

> I run a day care center and teach kindergarten half time. My in-basket is always full! I want to enjoy the challenges ahead without being anxious.

Second, I want to enjoy observing my children interact in learning that they take charge of. I have no idea what to expect. Third, I wish to facilitate the parents' involvement in our kindergarten class. It will be so great having parents and family members coming to class as experts!

The goals that teachers wrote about most frequently included the following intentions:

- to increase the amount of choice, decision making, and self-direction given to children;
- to help children develop their interests;
- to respond to children as individuals (not only as members of a group);
- to assess and demonstrate children's learning; and
- to document the project as a whole.

## Planning to Begin Projects with Children

The teachers planned to develop project work through the three phases proposed in the practical guide books (Chard, 1998a, 1998b). The three phases in the life of a project are designed to help teachers develop a structure for openness in their classrooms—openness to children's ideas, interests, questions, individual learning styles, and competencies. Recommended for the first phase is a list of processes that develop in a complementary way. The teachers are encouraged to listen to the children's accounts of their prior experiences of the topic and to invite the children to represent their experiences in a variety of ways. The teachers help the children to explain their experiences and to wonder about questions they have about the topic. The teachers are asked to develop a topic web based on the experience and knowledge of the children and to write to the parents informing them of the project. It was also suggested that they begin planning for the second phase of the project with possibilities for fieldwork and invitations to experts to visit the classroom.

## Phase 1: Getting Started with the Projects

To help them prepare to invite the children to talk about what they knew, teachers in the workshop and class were encouraged to imagine the kinds of

experiences of the topic individual children in their class might have had. It was also suggested that they might model telling a personal anecdote by sharing with the children a relevant experience of their own. Several teachers had not shared personal experiences with children before. These teachers were surprised at what they learned: "It has been fascinating watching the children explore and share their experiences with each other."

One kindergarten teacher described how she imagined what the children's experiences with the topic might be, and this process of prediction led her to think of experts in the community who might help with the project:

> While thinking of all the ideas linked with my topic, I realized how the process had widened my scope of thought. I imagined being a child at the park and saw it through a child's eyes. That was really interesting and exciting. Then I started thinking of potential experts and additional field visits. For me, the enthusiasm began to blossom during this stage. Possible expert visitors include: a city worker responsible for trimming trees (s/he could demonstrate the tools), a snow plow operator, owners of a snow clearing company, a snow expert (a student's father), a finishing carpenter (a student's mother).

Even when constrained by curriculum requirements to select topics that were far away and not in their firsthand experience (such as "space"), teachers noticed a change in the responses of the children. In the first phase of the project, the children became more interested and involved with the topic than usual. The teachers generally attributed this higher level of interest to the effectiveness of the new strategies they were using to develop the children's interest in the topic.

A teacher of a grade 3-4 class studying "space" wrote, "I began by listening to the students telling their personal stories about what they had experienced with looking at planets, galaxies, and constellations. I was amazed to hear all the questions the students had about the planets."

An initial discussion of holiday customs by a second-grade class just before Christmas gave rise to a

spontaneous shift from making a topic web with words to writing questions on a list to be investigated later. The teacher wrote:

> We began a word web with Christmas as our starting point. Comments exploded! We added to the web, reorganized, and grouped words into various categories. Questions followed. "I wonder why or from where?" was coming from everyone. That led us to listing all the questions on the board. Some examples were:

> 1. Why do we have Christmas trees? Why do people decorate them?
> 2. Are reindeer real? Where do they live?
> 3. Why do we give gifts?
> 4. Why was mistletoe hanging all around, and where does it come from?
> 5. What did people use as lights on trees before electricity?

> Angel wanted to know: "Why do people put angels on the top of their Christmas trees?" Many more questions were asked, and they were all listed.

## Growing Interest and Momentum... How All the Children Became Involved

The teacher of the first-grade project on boats in Texas wrote:

> They each then shared their experiences of seeing, hearing, and being on a boat, and we found some had never been on a boat. After sharing their personal stories, they wanted to write them down and make a class book. When they shared their stories, they began to realize that they had been on different kinds of boats and for different reasons. We began listing the different kinds of boats. The children were so excited about learning the different kinds of boats and their uses I could hardly keep up. We organized our webbing on kinds of boats, and then I let the children choose which kind of boat study group they wanted to work in.

The letters that teachers sent to parents explained how the children would be doing things a little differently from their other work as they engaged with the project. For instance, the work would be kept in school and not sent home until the end of the project,

and the parents would be invited to help share their expertise in the school as well as helping their children with homework. Teachers commented on the parents' appreciation of this approach:

> I wanted to inform the parents about what we were going to be doing. I sent a letter home explaining the topic we were going to be studying. All the project work was to be done at school. I wanted this to be the students' work and not the parents'. I would send home books for the parents to help read to the children, but this was all I sent home for project work. Parents loved this and started coming and being very involved with the project. They would send things and were always eager to help.

There were teachers who started with small-scale examples of project work who did not get any further than these for several months. Getting started in earnest required a considerable degree of trust, faith in the unknown, confidence in one's own ability to meet the as yet unimagined demands of children who would become proactive in their learning. One teacher describes how she started what she hoped would become a project but that was still a theme: "I was leading my class in a project on the subject of pets. In the middle of my carefully planned developments, I noticed that my kindergarten and first-grade children were exhibiting symptoms of extreme boredom as opposed to fascinated interest. I said to myself, 'This Project Approach is just not working.'" Then after a weekend, this same teacher experienced a memorable event that proved to be the beginning of her most authentic experience of project work. A child who had been to the ocean a long way from the school brought 10 hermit crabs and tipped them out into the sandbox. At this point, the teacher quickly learned how projects were different. She wrote:

> To my surprise, I heard a few really perceptive questions in amongst the chatter over the crabs. I decided to get a tape recorder so the children could take turns speaking their questions into the recorder, as they understood the process of turn taking at the recorder better than they understood exactly how many questions I could answer at one time. Besides, I did not have answers for many of their questions, and I did not want to miss any good ones. The tape recorder enabled me to sift their questions and also provided the

opportunity to later investigate the various questions so that we could all benefit from the knowledge found. I was thrilled to notice that many of their questions were carefully considered and of a higher level than they normally displayed.

The story of her project work unfolded on the basis of this single day during which she experienced most of the features of good project work in an accelerated and condensed form.

Many teachers experienced the willingness of children to talk about the topic. They shared experiences, knowledge, and questions in a more naturally conversational way than the teachers had usually heard in class discussion. The teachers were able to take a step back and listen to the children talking and listening to each other without the level of teacher direction in the discussion process that usually characterized attempts to get the children to talk about what they were studying. One teacher whose kindergarten class was studying birds wrote:

> In the midst of all the talking about the children's experiences with birds, one of the children asked if maybe one day he could bring his bird. I said, "Sure, I'll talk to your mom about it." (In reality, I was thinking he would bring his bird within the next couple of weeks, after I had talked to his mom about the arrangements.) The next day came, and I had a bird show up in my room first thing in the morning. The little boy was so excited about bringing his bird that he couldn't wait another day. As the children walked into the room, they circled the bird cage and began to ask many questions. I let the little boy talk about his bird then pass it around as we held it. Before I knew it, children were telling stories about times they had seen birds at their home, pet stores, and outside. As days went by, I had children bringing in bird feeders and bird houses. There was even a day when we walked outside, and I could hear children telling each other to listen to the birds and observe the nests that were between buildings and in trees. I was beside myself; I had nothing to worry about—the children took control of "the bird project."

## "Giving up Control" or "Taking on a New Role?"

In many cases, the teachers experienced the children's willingness to take responsibility for their

ideas as the starting point for the momentum that developed in their projects. It seemed that the teachers' experience of the children's growing sense of ownership warned them to "give up control" as part of their role in supporting the children in their learning. Most teachers who share information about how their teaching changes as a result of teaching with the Project Approach use the expressions "letting go" or "giving up control." On further examination of what is meant by these phrases, they appear to refer to the traditional role many teachers of young children accept, that of directing what the children do.

The goal of this teacher direction appears to be that all children achieve similar benefits from any activity. The teachers have to exert "control" in order to direct the children's activity. Once this directing role is relinquished, it seems the teacher is free to listen and respond to children's own styles of speaking and their own original things to say. Divergent responses, rather than similar ones, are encouraged and valued for the additional information they provide. The responsibility of the teacher then becomes one of facilitating the children's conversations about the topic, listening and responding to their expressions of curiosity, wonder, and questioning. The teacher can help the children to investigate their questions and to represent what they learn by themselves or together with other children. The role is not that of a director but a support, model, advisor, coordinator of ideas, and provider of means to achieve intentions. As the teacher of the kindergarten and first-grade class said:

> I was fascinated that the questions were coming naturally from the children's curiosity and were not manufactured, nor had they been led in any way. What a rare learning opportunity to explore an interest the children had genuinely expressed on their own. Learning about the crabs was their idea and that made it far more meaningful to them. This had become *their* project; I just took advantage of the opportunity that presented itself.

## Children's Ownership of Project Work

This teacher sensed that her willingness to give up control or to change her role from director to facilitator gave the children a sense of ownership of their project work. In order to feel ownership, people have to feel that they have some say in the way things are

done. In order for children to feel ownership of a project, they have to be part of the planning and to see evidence that their ideas help to shape the way the work is planned. They have to authentically influence the directions of the investigations and the selection of representations that are used to document the knowledge, skills, and processes that have been learned in the study. For example, in the progress made in the first phase, children can contribute to the development of the project through the quality of the experiences they describe and represent. They can see the influence on the project of the interests they bring to the study. They can see how the limitations of their own abilities to explain their experience in response to the questions of others can lead to specially planned investigations.

The activities recommended for the first phase of a project can all be carried out in a way that is responsive to children's ideas. The teacher can feature the interaction among the activities throughout the first few days of the project and show the children how their ideas contribute to plans for the investigation of various aspects of the topic. This process is difficult for some teachers, especially for those who are used to planning separate teaching tasks and for whom a narrative account or "story of the children's learning" is not the way they have been accustomed to thinking about their teaching. However, here is the writing of a teacher who has been able to see how to put together all the different parts of the first phase of the Canadian project on boats (with grades 1 and 2):

> It has been fascinating watching the children explore and share their experiences with each other. Since I introduced the topic of boats on our schoolwide Beach Day, the children have been engaged in drawing, writing, constructing, and discussing boats. A lot of dramatic play has been occurring in and around the puppet theatre and big blocks.

> Many of the children are bringing in items from home to add to our classroom displays. A fishing net full of toy sharks is our Shark tank for the deep sea fishermen. The children have also hung up or displayed their representations in a variety of places in the classroom. Interest is high, and we are compiling a list of questions. Our topic web is growing as the children add bits each day.

An observer in this same classroom wrote:

> The teacher and her class made a display out of netting, seashells, and stuffed sea creatures, which the children are very proud of. What a wonderful environment to get the kids thinking and learning about boats. A person could not walk into the classroom and not know and feel the children's enthusiasm for learning about boats.

In a kindergarten/first-grade class beginning a study of the "human body," the teacher wrote about a naturally evolving sequence of events linking the first and second phases of the work. In her journal, one child, Rita, had begun to write about the human brain. The teacher offered her a tape so she could record her ideas and questions more efficiently. Here is the teacher's account of what happened next:

> She began describing all the things she had learned so far and started asking questions that she wondered about and wanted answers to about the brain. Rita knew, for example, that all living creatures have brains and that different parts of your brain control different parts of your body. She wondered what part of your brain controls certain parts of your body, and what part of your brain controls what you can do. John was listening. He said that he would like a tape too because he was interested in the heart. He spoke into his tape about his interest in the heart and that he knew that everyone had a heart, that it pumps blood, and he wanted to know how the heart worked with the brain. Then Brent offered to be partners with John because he wanted to know about blood and said they could work as a team since blood was what the heart pumped.

It sounds on the one hand as though these children all wanted to have a turn at using the tape recorder. This motive may have been a factor, but it is interesting that they knew that the teacher was interested in the information they would share by means of the tape. They seemed to understand that representing their knowledge was useful for helping them formulate the questions they would later investigate in the second phase of the project. These children were showing not only an interest in tape recording but in the process of studying a topic in depth. They were talking about the aspects of the topic they were particularly interested in and how and with whom they were going to represent what they knew. The

description shows the children's willingness to become actively involved with the planning of investigative work and collaboration.

As the project gathers momentum, the children can all become involved. The questions can provide a springboard for the work of the second phase. The first phase representations of experience remind the children of the variety of means of recording, which they can use in the second phase. The parents can offer access to field sites, personal expertise, or other support for the developing study. Even the topic web can continue throughout the life of the project to provide a location in the classroom where newly encountered technical terms can be recorded and related to earlier knowledge.

## Phase 2: Fieldwork and Firsthand Investigation

By the end of the first phase, the teacher, the children, and the classroom environment can all be ready for the firsthand investigation of questions about the topic of study. In many cases, the teachers wrote about the field visits they had made with the children to field sites. The teachers had been prepared in the workshop and course to help the children take field notes on their visit. The best way seems to be to let children take a few sheets of blank paper and a pencil fastened to the clipboard. Several teachers expressed a little skepticism about the young children's ability to make good use of the clipboards. The teacher whose class did a project on birds wrote about her kindergarten children:

> I was even a little worried about letting them take clipboards to our first field trip to the Nature Center. I just knew that the clipboards were going to be a distraction; I didn't think they were going to be able to handle the responsibility. To my surprise, the children were so busy taking field notes I absolutely did not have any problems. I even had children who hated to write labeling their sketches.

The kindergarten teacher with the fire station project wrote:

> I found the clipboards to be a very strong motivator. I was short one or two, and when one

little boy put his down to go to the restroom and returned, someone had left his paper, but taken his clipboard. He was heartbroken, so I called the office and borrowed enough for everyone.

## Responsive Planning by the Teacher and Responsible Children Working

The work of the second phase of the project continues to involve responsive planning. Once the children return from the field, they can undertake further investigations or observations in the classroom if the topic allows for these activities. Otherwise, visiting experts can be invited to provide additional information. Books also become very important to children for doing independent research when they are old enough to read. Project work is found by many teachers to be so motivating to children that they will struggle and persist with difficult reading material in order to gain the information they seek. They are after all responsible for making their research findings available to their classmates for them to learn from. They are expected to teach what they learn, and their learning is additionally valued through this responsibility (Tracy & Glaser, 1999, p. 6). The teacher with the sandbox full of hermit crabs acquired all the books she could from the library for the kindergarten and first-grade children in her class. She wrote:

> We huddled in small groups poring over the books we collected from our school library to find out all the information we could about hermit crabs. As the children found new information, they came up and spoke their findings into the tape recorder and asked new questions that their research had prompted like, "What is a hermit anyway?" and returned to the books for more research and investigations. The children were excited in a more subdued manner than I was accustomed to them displaying. I believe that the use of the recorder and the books, some of which were filled with big and intimidating technical words, made the children feel like they were doing something important, something grown-up. Plus, they all realized the responsibility involved, as these were living creatures.

One of the Texas projects, with a sixth-grade class, began with unsuccessful lessons on fractions and became a stock market contest. This experienced teacher wrote:

I had my students research and buy stocks accordingly. They listened to professionals come inside our classroom and give financial lectures. They proceeded to create PowerPoint presentations with graphs, reports, analyses, etc., to be shared with everyone. They were astounding! I have never seen better work. Several of their presentations were used by the students as entries in our local Multimedia Creativity contests. Most important, the kids could now easily tear apart a complex fraction in any way you wanted.

The following description of second-grade project work in full swing gives an impression of the energy and purpose shown by the children:

> The children chose things they were most interested in, and the research began! We visited the school library and the Internet looking for information. Some children worked independently; some chose to collaborate in a group. Others chose to work in parallel, exchanging ideas. The children completed their products and quickly moved on to learn more. Some of the children worked on more than one product, depending on their interests. The products of their work varied. Some chose constructions, posters, and dioramas, with written documentation.

This kind of work is difficult for teachers to plan for if they are not comfortable with divergent activities going on with multiple and developing outcomes. Sometimes these activities even emerge spontaneously from the children's growing sense of the potential of their work.

With younger children, it is easier to see this development when there are more adults to help the children as they work. The kindergarten teacher with the bird project wrote:

> We had many bird experts come and visit and even incubated baby chicks. As the weeks went on, I was just in awe with what the children were doing and learning. The neatest thing was that I had parents, grandparents, co-workers, and community members all involved in our bird project. I even had parents from my previous year helping out. I saw children's eyes light up and gleam with excitement every time we did anything with birds. I saw children do nothing but exceptional work on their research and representations.

The kindergarten/first-grade teacher with the crab project wrote:

> Some of the children spent considerable time drawing pictures of the crabs, while others studied the actions of the crabs themselves. Still others studied the books with unaccustomed intensity. Learning had become a joy that they actively pursued in their own ways. I, relegated to the post of observer and head research facilitator, watched the process by which they pursued gaining information and learning without my lead.

This teacher describes her role as one she was "relegated" to. In some ways, this description suggests that her role was now less important. Yet in my experience in this study and others, the new role she assumes, that of "observer and head research facilitator," requires just as much skill and strategy as her former directing role.

The new role was indeed challenging in many ways for the teachers, especially early on in the development of the projects. However, the concomitant rewards have been written about with conviction and a deep recognition of the value of the new ways of relating to children in the classroom. It appears that most teachers feel themselves energized and animated as they see the children's responses to the willingness of the adults to take children's ideas seriously, to value their experiences, and to help them develop their interests.

## Phase 3: Concluding the Projects

In the third phase of the project, the work has to be brought to a close. A culminating event or opportunity for the children to formally share their findings and their achievements with their families was arranged in most of the classrooms. The teacher with the bird project describes arriving at the moment for concluding the work:

> As the weeks went by, the children continued to make representations and research birds. I had parents telling me they couldn't stop talking about birds at home. The children would go home and want to continue to make bird houses, nests, and write stories. After about eight weeks, I asked the children if they were ready to show what they had learned to their parents.

## Conclusion

This paper has been particularly concerned with the process of developing projects with children from the teacher's point of view. More of the challenges seem to have been felt at the beginning of the projects, especially for teachers working this way for the first time. I remember one teacher, embarking on her fifth project, who told me that she always felt a certain heightened sense of anxiety in her anticipation of starting a new project. About three years later, when she told me she was beginning a new project with her kindergarten class, I asked her about her anxiety. She answered, "Oh no, I just look forward to seeing the children so focused on their work." She did not remember what she had said earlier about anxiety. She is a teacher who has been working this way consistently now for eight years and says she would not now teach without including projects in her planning.

I would like to finish with the words of teachers. At the end of their first and second projects, the teachers in the study wrote more powerfully about the rewards than about the challenges of doing project work. They mentioned their own satisfaction in the children's enjoyment of their work. They mentioned the children's willingness to work to high standards. They mentioned the amount of learning they saw taking place in all the different activities going on in the classroom. They mentioned their own growing interest in the topic of study as they learned from the experts alongside the children. For the teachers, these rewarding advantages of the Project Approach to teaching provided the energy and determination required to continue to learn how to develop and document successful projects:

> Project work is my favorite time of the day as well as the students'. They are able to work at their own pace and ability level. The children are happy and are learning in an environment that is based on what they want to learn and are enjoying. As I have seen how well the students progress doing project work, I am convinced that this form of teaching is very powerful and positively works with all children! (kindergarten teacher)

> I think I was the one who learned the most from the bird project. I learned to have faith in children.

Children will learn, if we as teachers learn to let go and allow for their creativity and imagination to run like the wind. (kindergarten teacher)

As I look back on this first project and as I learn more about the Project Approach, I realize I made many mistakes, but it was a beginning point for me. Our next project took off like a storm when a student brought a pet rat to school! This time I was prepared for the "wondering" that took place, and this time it was not my wondering but theirs. (kindergarten teacher)

I have noticed other changed behavior. As we all progress on the path of learning together, I have noticed that even my rough and tumble little boys now hold my hand in front of their friends on the playground (a major breakthrough), and they are eager to bring up questions and ideas about our new and upcoming investigations. There is a new trust level and a new partnership that has taken place in our classroom. The children now see me, not just as a teacher, but also as a companion on a fantastic journey of learning. This is what I always imagined teaching should be. I have searched for years to achieve this symbiotic relationship with my learners. I don't think I could ever go back to my old style of teaching now. (kindergarten/first-grade teacher)

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