

THE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS OF LOOPING  
IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

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THE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS OF LOOPING  
IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Department of Education

School of Arts and Sciences

Biola University

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Education

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by

Michelle L. Pecanic

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## ABSTRACT

### THE EXPERIENCE AND EFFECTS OF LOOPING IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

Michelle L. Pecanic

Looping is the practice of a teacher staying with the same group of students for two or more years. It may also be referred to as multiyear teaching, teacher rotation, multiyear placement, and a variety of other names. This thesis examines the experience and effects of looping in the elementary classroom. An overview is provided of historical and international examples of looping, followed by a summary of the literature focusing on the advantages, disadvantages, and spiritual basis of looping as an alternative teaching method. Research conducted in three elementary school classrooms is summarized, which included 3 teachers, 22 parents, and 17 students. Research methods involved interviews of teachers and students and a parent questionnaire. Parent, teacher, and student perspectives are examined. Teachers, parents, and students in this study held mostly positive opinions of looping. Recurrent themes among the three groups included: increased comfort with school during the looping cycle; having closer relationships among teachers, parents, and students; using more consistent and established discipline and management systems; students receiving academic benefits; and having a better ability to meet students' needs, both academic and social.

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## LOOPING

Looping is the practice of a teacher staying with the same group of students for two or more years. In the most common model two teachers team together, one teaching a lower grade while the other teaches the next grade. For example, a first and second grade teacher may team together. At the end of the year, the first grade teacher will move up to teach the same group of students in the second grade, while the second grade teacher moves down to teach first grade with a new group of students that she will keep for two years. Looping may be referred to by a number of other names: persistence teams, clusters, student-teacher progression, teacher rotation, persisting groups, persistence learning, multiyear placement, multiyear assignment, and multiyear teaching (“Multiyear Assignment,” 1997).

### Historical and International Examples of Looping

Looping is not a new concept (Forsten, Grant & Richardson, 1999; Hanson, 1995; “Multiyear Assignment,” 1997). It dates back to the one-room schoolhouse in the United States and the Waldorf schools that are based upon Rudolf Steiner’s educational philosophy. It is also a common practice in one form or another in countries such as Germany, Jamaica, Japan, and China (Grant, Richardson & Forsten, 2000). However, Simel (1998) states that looping is “a movement for which there is no historical precedent” (p. 330). Simel views the one-room school as a necessity rather than a choice and thus does not consider it a historical precedent for looping. She suggests that other forms of looping in countries such as Japan and Germany and in the Waldorf Schools be

considered influences on the looping movement in the United States, but points out that the U.S. model has varied from these models.

Forms of looping outside of the United States include German schools that use a multiyear grouping strategy that allows teachers to become familiar with the students' prior knowledge, learning styles, behavior, and interests. Heterogeneous groups are formed in the first grade and students remain together for the next four years. German educators believe that this type of grouping facilitates the social construction of knowledge. "Long-term relationships result in an emotional and intellectual climate that encourages thinking, risk-taking, and involvement" (Zahorik & Dichanz, 1994, p. 75). Another form of looping found in Germany is the West-German-based Koln-Holweide education system. This system utilizes a "Team-Small-Group-Plan" in which 85-90 students are taught by a team of six to eight teachers for a six-year period. Student cooperative learning teams are formed with five or six students working as individuals to contribute to group success (Little & Little, 2001).

The Waldorf approach is discussed throughout the literature as a form of looping. The Waldorf Schools were originally founded by Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian educator, for the children of the workers of the Waldorf Cigarette Factory of Stuttgart, Germany just after World War I. With more than 650 Waldorf Schools throughout the world, these schools are the second largest private school system in the world. Waldorf Schools follow a humanistic approach to education. Waldorf teachers focus on highlighting the individual talents and capabilities of the children. The children are together with the same teacher from first through eighth grade. This practice is based on Steiner's belief that

children need to be guided and mentored by one individual during the early years of their education (Little & Little, 2001; Ogletree, 1974).

Other countries that utilize various forms of looping are Japan, Israel, Sweden, Italy, Jamaica, and China. In Italian preschools the children stay with the same teacher for three years, and parents are expected to take an active part in their children's education (Reynolds, Barnhart & Martin, 1999). In Jamaica the elementary schools are organized into divisions and the students remain with the same proctor and classmates throughout elementary school (Wynne & Walberg, 1994). China's multiyear teaching program groups students together for first through sixth grades, seventh through ninth grades, and tenth through twelfth grades. During each time span the same classmates stay together, moving to a new classroom each year. Teachers specialize in a subject and move from class to class during the school year, while the students remain in their own classroom. So, for example, students will have different teachers for the various subjects, but will have the same math teacher throughout the multi-grade span. Because the same teacher is with the same students for three or more years they are able to participate in more long-term planning and there is greater accountability for both teacher and students. Less able students have a chance to catch up during the longer time span (Liu, 1997).

The rural schools and one-room school houses of the early United States often kept the same group of children together with the same teacher for two or more years based upon necessity. Since that time, the educational system in the United States has constantly been reformed in both large and small ways. In the 1840s Horace Mann faced the task of educational reform due to the increased population in cities. The result "was a state-supervised, tax-supported, and rigidly organized school system" (Forsten et al.,

1999, p. 15). Shortly after this, in 1913, the U. S. Department of the Interior issued a memo discussing the issue of looping in urban schools. The Department questioned whether children should move to a new teacher every year or if they should remain with the same teacher for two, three, or four years to allow teachers to get to know the children and build on the knowledge of the previous years. In the 1950s and 60s small schools were consolidated into larger schools and the concept of a new teacher at each grade level became commonplace. Most teachers taught at a single grade level for their entire career (Grant et al., 2000).

Deborah Meier first implemented the concept of looping currently used in many U. S. schools in her elementary school in New York in 1974. She wanted students and teachers to get to know each other well, so they stayed with each other for two years (Goldberg, 1990; Hanson, 1995). The Attleboro Public School District in Attleboro, Massachusetts was one of the first U.S. school districts to widely implement the two-year model of looping in the early 1990s. Other U.S. schools and school districts have followed their looping model and have implemented looping as an alternative teaching method (Grant, Johnson & Richardson, 1996), however, looping practices are still limited in the U.S.

#### Looping as an Alternative Teaching Method

There is a continual search for ways to improve education and student achievement in the United States. The government continues to call for higher standards and higher quality education, as seen in the recent campaign to end social promotion and President Bush's policy to "leave no child behind." The question remains, "How can we affectively reach all children?" Educators have begun looking at alternatives to the

traditional method of education to answer this question. Looping may be part of the answer.

### *Advantages of Looping*

There are clear advantages for all those involved in looping: teachers, students, and parents. The first advantage is that of time. Looping creates an opportunity for increased instructional time, which can lead to increased student achievement (Burke, 1996; Evans Brandt, 1998; Grant et al., 1996; Hanson, 1995). Teachers in looping programs create an academic bridge between the first and second year by assigning summer homework to students. The summer assignments are a follow up to first year activities and connect to second year learning standards. This ensures that students will not forget skills over the summer and will be ready to begin academic work on the first day of the second year. Teachers may also plan summer tutoring programs for struggling students to help them prepare for the next year. Since the teacher has worked with these students for an entire year, and knows them well, he/she is able to create individualized programs to meet their specific needs.

In addition to summer learning, looping essentially adds an extra month of learning time to the school year (Burke, 1996; Hanson, 1995). Most of this extra time for learning comes at the beginning of the second year. Teachers generally spend three to five weeks at the beginning of the school year assessing students, getting to know their personalities and learning styles, and establishing classroom management procedures. This is not true of the second year looping classroom. Teachers and students are already familiar with each other, with each other's learning and teaching styles, and with classroom procedures. Because of this, teaching and learning can begin on day one of the

second year. Some extra learning time is also added at the end of the first year. Instead of spending the last weeks packing students up and getting them ready to move on, teachers can spend time laying the foundation for the second year's learning.

The extra help students can receive over the summer and at the beginning of the second year gives developmentally delayed youngsters the chance to catch up to the rest of the students as they develop and mature (Little & Dacus, 1999; Reynolds et al., 1999). Looping also allows teachers to postpone high stakes decisions such as retention and referrals to services for learning disabilities (Grant et al., 1996; Reynolds et al., 1999). Teachers have more opportunities to meet the students' individual needs, and students have more time to catch up developmentally before they are retained or labeled as learning disabled. In the meantime, instructors are able to try various alternatives before making these decisions. The Attleboro School District in Massachusetts, which loops all of its students, supports these claims. Since they have been providing multiyear assignments to students in first through eighth grades, the district has reported increased average daily attendance, improved staff attendance, a decreased retention rate by over 43 percent, and an over 55 percent decrease in special education referrals (Grant et al., 1996).

Student-teacher, parent-teacher, and student-student relationships all benefit in the looping structure ("Multiyear Assignment," 1997). Looping classrooms generally provide a strong community or family atmosphere that is especially beneficial for shy students, students who do not adapt well to new or changing situations, and for students who have unstable home lives (Denault, 1999; Simel, 1998; Vann, 1997). Evans Brandt (1998) found that students in looping classrooms had less anxiety about school and showed

greater emotional stability. According to results from her parent questionnaire, 19 of the 20 parents felt their children were more comfortable with school because of the looping program. Johnston (2000) also found primary looping students to have a more positive attitude toward school. Parents of students in looping programs have stronger relationships with their children's teachers, and parent conferences are often more productive in the second year of the looping program (Burke, 1997; Denault, 1999; Johnston, 2000; Simel, 1998; Skinner, 1998). In addition, individual student's needs are met more often because their teacher knows them better. Students feel more comfortable and connected and, therefore, are better able to learn than children who are not happy or comfortable in a given situation (Evans Brandt, 1998). More learning connections are made and the teacher and students have more opportunities to build on prior knowledge, which can lead to increased learning (Denault, 1998; Denault, 1999). Swanson (1999) points out:

Looping allows the teacher to meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of the individual, rather than attempting to meet the needs of the whole class. The one sure way to improve student achievement is to know each student and work collaboratively with parents to meet that student's academic needs (p. 44).

The structure of the looping classroom is effective in providing opportunities for improved academic achievement. In addition to increased time on task, teachers are better able to meet student learning needs since they have more time to observe the students and analyze their learning needs and learning styles (Johnston, 2000; Reynolds et al., 1999). Teachers also have the opportunity to cover an advanced curriculum. As the first year curriculum is mastered teachers can begin to delve into the content of the second year

with students, then continue in the second year by expanding on this knowledge and studying these areas more in depth (Evans Brandt, 1998; Grant et al., 1996). Finally, teachers can build on the students' prior knowledge and previous experiences from the first year, a critical component in brain-compatible teaching methods (Skinner, 1998).

Looping is a low-risk, low-cost reform that encourages teacher accountability and professionalism ("Multiyear Assignment," 1997). Looping teachers use a wider variety of teaching methods and assessments to better meet the needs of their students (Denault, 1999). Students in looping classrooms have a better understanding of teacher expectations, and discipline routines are better established, especially in the second year (Little & Little, 2001; Skinner, 1998). In addition to all of the advantages discussed thus far, the Hawthorne effect, which states that positive or desirable behavior may increase because those involved have a strong positive view of the situation and expect it to succeed (McMillan, 2000; Vann, 1997), may also contribute to the positive effects of looping (Vann, 1997). Teachers, students, and parents may be aware of all of the advantages associated with looping, and this may cause them to view the method in a more positive light.

#### *Disadvantages of Looping*

Despite the vast number of advantages to looping, there are also some disadvantages. Perhaps the biggest concern is that a child may be placed with a weak or ineffective teacher (Evans Brandt, 1998; Grant et al., 2000; "Multiyear Assignment," 1997; Vann, 1997). Teacher weaknesses may be due to a variety of factors. Perhaps the teacher is a new, inexperienced teacher or a teacher new to the grade level. Instructional time may be lost while the teacher tries to master the new curriculum (Skinner, 1998;

Vann, 1997). The teacher's ineffectiveness may also be attributed to stress or anxiety caused by the looping situation. Perhaps the teacher really did not want to loop, or, if the teacher did choose to loop, he/she may still be feeling excessive anxiety because of the responsibility that comes with teaching the same students for two years (Hanson, 1995; "Multiyear Assignment," 1997). It is also possible for the teacher to be ineffective with one or more students simply because the teacher's teaching style may not match the student's learning style (Vann, 1997).

Other disadvantages are connected to how the students and teacher interact within the classroom setting. Looping classrooms may be seen as a beneficial setting for students with various difficulties; however, if too many students with special needs are placed in one classroom, the class may have too many added stressors, thereby minimizing the advantages of looping (Hanson, 1995; Little & Little, 2001). Teacher-student personality conflicts may also arise. If these conflicts cannot be solved within the first year, they have the potential of becoming large problems the second year when chronic problems can become irritants to everyone (Evans Brandt, 1998). It is also possible that students who are teased and disliked by peers may find themselves in an extremely negative situation during the second year if the teacher has not found a way to eliminate this problem (Vann, 1997). Finally, if a teacher does not take the initiative in trying new teaching techniques, students may find themselves facing boredom due to the familiarity of the teaching techniques ("Multiyear Assignment," 1997).

Looping may not be beneficial for highly mobile student populations since students do not remain in one location long enough to reap the benefits of being in a looping classroom. Looping can also be challenging for students who enter the program

in the second year, and especially difficult for all involved if the number of new students exceeds five (Hanson, 1995; Simel, 1998). This is because the new students will not know the classroom routines nor will they share the same prior knowledge and experiences with the rest of the class. New students, or students who move away at the end of the first year, could also be negatively affected if the curriculum in the looping class is viewed as a two-year approach (Vann, 1997). If the teacher plans the curriculum over two years instead of teaching the grade specific curriculum each of the two years, the students who are not in the class for the full two years may be left with gaps in their education. Students with learning disabilities may also be at a disadvantage. Although looping allows extra time for intervention and a delay in making decisions regarding retention or special education referrals, the looping teacher may end up putting off the decision for too long and the child will miss getting the help he needs.

Looping may not be as beneficial to students in later elementary grades as it is for primary students. One study found that while primary students in looping classes had more positive attitudes toward school, this was not true of students in looping classes in the intermediate grades (Johnston, 2000). Also, over-familiarity with the teacher and peers can potentially invite problems for students in the later elementary school grades. The students know what will set others off and who is likely to go along with them if they want to cause trouble (Simel, 1998).

Finally, the separation at the end of the two years may prove to be extremely difficult for both the students and the teachers. There is the possibility of becoming overly attached, and this can make it very difficult for the students to go on to a new class and the teacher to begin with a new group of students. Teachers and students both will

need to work through the extra adjustments they need to make to the new class after being together for two years (Evans Brandt, 1998; Hanson, 1995; “Multiyear Assignment,” 1997; Simel, 1998). In some cases, teachers have looped with their classes for three or four years. This will postpone separation, but it will still be difficult at the end of the three or four years, perhaps even more so because of the length of time spent together. Also, while remaining together may be beneficial for some students and teachers, it can also be a disadvantage because students are influenced by the same teacher and student strengths and weaknesses for a longer period of time and this can become more of a disadvantage than an advantage if the students begin to develop the same weaknesses. Familiarity with one another and problems related to this are also magnified in a looping program of more than two years (Forsten, Grant, Johnson & Richardson, 1997).

#### *A Biblical Basis for Looping*

One of the most important aspects of looping is that of relationship-building. This is something that is clearly illustrated in the teaching ministry of Jesus throughout the gospels. To begin with, He chose a group of twelve men with whom He would spend time teaching, encouraging, and preparing to minister to others. He kept this same group of twelve with Him throughout His three years of ministry. He got to know them well and understood their personalities. He was able to teach the same concepts over again when needed, and could use different methods and examples as needed. Since Jesus was observing the disciples so closely and knew them so well, He was able to decide the optimum time to teach them something new.

Jesus also built relationships with others He encountered in His ministry. An example is when He ministered to the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:1-30. When Jesus first met her, He did not begin teaching immediately, instead He first addressed her personally. He knew her need to be valued, and gave her a task she could accomplish, that of getting Him a drink of water. In doing so He allowed her to get beyond her own problems and focus on someone else (Schimmels, 1999). This is much like the practice of looping, in which teachers have time to develop the relationships they need to make their teaching more effective. They are able to get to know the students' strengths and weaknesses and their joys and trials. Then the teacher is able to utilize these insights to encourage the students' learning.

The God of the Old Testament also taught through established relationships. For example, when He worked through Moses, God did not give instructions once and then leave Moses to do as he was told. Instead, God spoke to Moses many times in a variety of ways. For example, God spoke to him in the burning bush (Exodus 3), in prayer (Exodus 5 & 6), called to Moses from the mountain (Exodus 19), and continued to speak to Moses while the Israelites were being led to the Promised Land. God revealed more of Himself each time and a bond of trust was established. Because of this, Moses was able to continually grow and learn about God and what it meant to trust Him as the relationship progressed.

Abraham is another example of someone who learned the lesson of faith through God's relationship-based teaching. God spoke to Abraham again and again: the call of Abraham (Genesis 12), in a vision (Genesis 15), with the angelic visitors (Genesis 18), and God continued to speak to Abraham in a variety of ways throughout his life. The

relationship allowed Abraham to trust God and place his complete faith in Him even when God asked for the sacrifice of his son Isaac. This faith and trust could not have been learned without the benefit of a relationship. Looping recognizes that people have not changed much in the thousands of years since Abraham and Moses. Looping allows time to build the relationships that accelerate learning.

### Research Methods

The purpose of this study was to explore parent, teacher, and student views and experiences with looping. As the teacher of one of the looping classes participating in the study, I paid close attention to the types of issues that emerged, especially the academic and emotional impact of the looping program. The information from this study will contribute to an understanding of children's experiences with learning from their perspectives. It will also contribute to educators' understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of a looping program. Finally, it will contribute to an understanding of parents' views and expectations regarding the looping program. This research will present an alternative to the traditional classroom during a time when there is a great focus on methods of increasing student achievement. The benefits of a consistent environment during a time of changing family structure will also be examined.

Convenience sampling was used in the choice of school and classrooms for participation. Disproportional stratified sampling (McMillan, 2000), with teacher input, determined the student sample, which was conditional upon parent consent. Parent participants were selected based upon their willingness to participate in the study, and all parent participants currently had a child in the looping program being studied.

Access to the school site and classrooms was gained through the approval of the principal. Access to specific classrooms was obtained through the consent of the classroom teachers. Teachers, parents, and students gave their consent to participate by signing and returning a consent form to the researcher. Student participants were also asked for their verbal assent at the time of interviews. Participants in the study included 3 teachers, 22 parents, and 17 students. I was one of the three teachers participating in the study. Seven of the parents and six of the students participating in the study were from my classroom. Confidentiality of all participants and their individual results was assured.

Information from participants was gathered utilizing two methods. Parents were asked to complete an eight-item questionnaire using a Likert scale. The questionnaires were sent home to the parents along with the consent form. They were asked to complete the forms and return them sealed in the envelope provided. Classroom teachers collected the envelopes as they were returned and gave them to me. A label with my name on it had been placed on all of the envelopes to ensure the teacher would collect them and return them to me without opening the envelopes and reading the contents.

Students and teachers provided information through interviews. Students were interviewed face-to-face, in groups of three or four, using semi-structured interviews. Notes were taken during the interviews, and the interviews were tape recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting the results. Student interview questions included the following: What are the good and bad things about being with the same teacher for two years? What are the good and bad things about being with the same students for two years? At recess, do you play only with kids from your own classroom or do you also play with kids from other classes? What do you like about school? What do you not like about school? What

will it be like to go to a new classroom next year with a new teacher and new students? Other questions were asked as follow-ups to the students' responses. The follow-up questions varied from group to group and were used to elicit more specific answers from the participants. For example, when students gave an example of what they perceived to be an advantage or disadvantage, they were asked to explain why they held this opinion. Some students were extremely positive about school and the looping program, so I asked them to tell about their school experiences before they were in the looping program. I wanted to know if their positive attitude was related to the looping experience or if they had always maintained a positive attitude toward school.

Teachers were interviewed individually in a face-to-face, semi-structured interview. The following questions were asked during the teacher interviews: How did you make the decision to loop? Have you looped before? What are the benefits of looping? What are the disadvantages? Would you loop again? Why or why not? How are teacher-parent, teacher-student, and student-student relationships in the looping classroom compared to such relationships in the traditional classroom? Would you recommend looping to other teachers? Why or why not? Do you feel the program benefited one group of students more than another? Do you have any other comments or thoughts on looping that you would like to share?

#### Research Participants

The participating school, located in a middle suburb of Los Angeles, had a student population of 540 students. Of these students, 62% were Hispanic, 17% White, 15% Asian, and 6% were of other ethnic groups. The school's population included 15% English language learners. A large percent of students was apparently from low income

homes indicated by 39% of students participating in the free or reduced-price lunch program.

### *Teacher Participants*

Three teachers participated in the study, one male teacher and two female teachers, including myself. All of us participated in the looping program by choice. All teachers were in their second year of the looping cycle. Teacher experience ranged from four to nine years. I was in the second year of my third looping cycle, while the other two teachers were in the second year of their first looping cycle. Two of the teachers were completing a first/second grade loop, while the other was completing a second/third grade loop. All teachers had also taught in a traditional classroom setting, teaching groups of students for one-year periods.

### *Parent Participants*

Parent participants were chosen from the three looping classrooms based upon willingness to participate. These parents all had children in the second year of the looping program and had chosen after the first year of the cycle to allow their child to continue in the looping program. Twenty-two of twenty-five parents completed and returned a consent form along with an eight-item questionnaire. Parents completed the questionnaire providing information on their perspectives and their child's experience with the looping program.

### *Student Participants*

Student participants were all in the second half of the second year of the looping cycle. Parents had been sent a letter at the end of the first year explaining their options and had been encouraged to discuss the choice with their child. Disproportional stratified

sampling (McMillan, 2000) along with teacher input was used to choose the student participants. Parental consent forms were sent home with 20 students. Seventeen of the consent forms were signed and returned. The final group of participants was determined based upon parental consent and student assent. There were a total of 17 student participants, 8 boys and 9 girls. Of these participants, 13 (6 boys, 7 girls) were second graders and 4 (1 boy, 3 girls) were third graders.

### Research Results and Analysis

#### *Teacher Interviews*

The teacher participants became involved with looping in different ways. One of the teachers decided, after hearing a presentation by Jim Grant, to try looping because of the stability it would provide for the students who had unstable home lives. I began looping in my second year of teaching. I had just completed my first year of teaching in a first grade classroom, and my principal needed a teacher to move to second grade. She told me that if I moved to second grade I could keep my same group of students. After thinking about it, I decided it would be fun to try. So I moved up to second grade with my students. During the second year with my students I attended a looping conference and also discussed looping with my colleagues. After the conference and discussions, and after completing the second year, I realized the benefits of looping and decided I wanted to continue looping. The third teacher looped because of a somewhat similar situation to mine. This teacher had taught second grade and in the next year moved to third grade, and therefore decided to try looping.

Many benefits and some disadvantages of the looping program were noted during the interviews and in my own reflections. Benefits for teachers, students, and parents

included academic, social, or emotional advantages. As in the literature, the added instructional time at the beginning of the second year was noted. Teachers agreed that they were able to start instruction sooner because the students were already familiar with routines and procedures, the students already knew each other, and the teachers already knew the students' abilities. Another academic benefit, noted by two of the teachers, as well as the literature, is that decisions regarding testing, placement in special education, or retention can be postponed until the second year so that teachers can better observe, assess, and address the students' needs within the classroom. This allows us to avoid premature labeling of the child.

The emotional benefits over the summer and into the second year were also noted. Teachers noticed, and were told by parents and students, that the students were not anxious or nervous about the new school year beginning in the fall. Instead they were excited about returning to the same friends and teacher. Having the same students for a second year was also a benefit for the teachers. We did not have to wonder what the kids were like or what they had learned the previous year. Knowing the students and parents from the previous year made it much easier to return the second year. The night before the first day of school was no longer an anxious sleepless night because we knew what to expect the next day.

All of us noted that the looping class becomes like a family. One teacher noted that the kids began to care about each other like brothers and sisters. I have also seen this in my looping classes. The students become exceptionally helpful to each other and often very protective of each other. As I talked with the other teachers, we agreed that this brother-sister type relationship could also be a negative thing because of the sibling

rivalry that comes along with it. One of the teachers mentioned that “the students are very comfortable with each other, and, from day one, they are having conflicts that continued from the year before.”

Other disadvantages were also noted. All of us mentioned that the students become too comfortable. This can create difficulties between them and other students and may also cause them to try to get away misbehaving in the classroom. They begin to see the teacher as more of a friend, and sometimes become too relaxed. It also can potentially become difficult to group students and make seating charts because of behavior patterns where students may irritate one another. We have also noticed that most of the students, including the shy ones, become more independent, self-confident, and outspoken. This means there may be fewer quiet personalities to offset the stronger personalities. One teacher also felt very strongly that the class and teacher become extremely attached, causing a very difficult separation at the end of the cycle. We also all agreed that it takes extra time and effort on the part of the teacher to create new activities and instructional methods to keep students engaged in learning. It can also be challenging for the teacher to learn a new curriculum. However, this might also be seen as a benefit because it pushes one to become a better teacher. Another disadvantage discussed is the pressure on the teacher to make sure all students achieve. Because of the recent emphasis on greater accountability for student achievement and increasing school test scores, there is immense pressure on looping teachers to make sure their students are achieving since they will be held accountable for teaching the students two years of grade-level content standards.

Looping also benefits the teacher-parent, teacher-student, and student-student relationships. Teacher-parent relationships have a chance to become more developed because the two are working together for a longer period of time to benefit the child. One teacher described the second year teacher-parent relationship as “better because there is no apprehension. The relationship is friendly, open, and at a more personal level. The parents are more likely to share about home situations.” I also found the teacher-parent relationship to be on more of a personal level the second year. It is more comfortable and parents are more willing to work with me and listen to my recommendations for their child because they know I have been a part of their child’s life for over a year. As the third teacher stated, “Parents feel more comfortable with me, and I feel more comfortable discussing situations with the parent.”

Teacher-student relationships are also stronger in the looping classroom. As looping teachers we have the opportunity to really get to know the students and their families. “Students open up and talk more,” pointed out one teacher. This encourages and permits a concentration on individualizing instruction and also allows us to make the emotional needs of the students a priority. We know how a particular student acts when they are having a bad day and which strategies will or will not work with them to get them back into learning mode. Another benefit to the teacher-student relationship is that the students and teacher understand each other and know the expectations. As one of the teachers put it, “Nothing is a mystery. They know they can’t get away with things, they know the work expectations, and they understand you care for them.”

Student-student relationships become quite strong in the looping classroom. Students are aware of one another’s strengths and weaknesses. They know who they can

ask for help and who might need their help and encouragement. They come to care about one another as family members. Being together for two years also gives students the opportunity to work with and get to know everyone in the class rather than just becoming close to a few students.

Specific groups of students within the classroom receive certain benefits from participating in the looping program. One teacher noted that the top kids benefited by having more opportunities for leadership roles and by being in an environment with consistently high expectations and academic challenges. They easily rise to the expectations, take the challenges, and “go with them.” I have observed that at-risk students in my looping classroom generally make more progress than the at-risk students I send to another teacher after one year in my room. I believe this is because, when I have the students for two years, I am able to spend a lot of time getting to know them and their learning styles the first year and then focus on individualizing instruction to meet their needs the second year. In contrast, when they move on to another classroom after one year, the new teacher must first get to know them before working to meet their individual needs, and when they have only ten months to do this, a lot of instructional time is lost while the teacher is getting to know and understand the student.

Two of us noted that students with behavior problems do better in the second year of the looping cycle. They become less of a problem because of the consistency of expectations and the increased communication with parents. All teachers noted that shy students, quiet students, and those who lack self-confidence also benefit from the looping program. This is because they do not have to move on to another classroom as soon as

they become comfortable. Instead they can spend the first year adjusting and the second year “blossoming.”

During the interviews, the question of whether or not we would loop again was discussed. I feel very strongly that there are great benefits associated with looping, so I would definitely loop again. The students gain confidence and have a chance to develop close friendships with others in the class. I am able to get to know the students and parents and then am better able to work together with them to best meet the needs of the students. I believe looping makes me a better teacher because I have to be mindful of what I am teaching and how I am teaching it so that the students meet the grade-level standards and do not become bored with the same activities and teaching methods. One of the other teachers also planned to loop again. This teacher reported that looping provided the chance to become a better teacher, to build student strengths and improve student weaknesses. Looping also allowed for knowing the children better and building relationships. It helped the at-risk students, and allowed the teacher to postpone high stakes decisions. The third teacher would not choose to loop again, at least for awhile, because this teacher enjoys starting over with new faces and new personalities each year. However, this teacher did not say looping was a bad idea, instead it was more a matter of personal preference.

Looping is a teaching method that two of us definitely recommend to other teachers because of its benefits. One teacher pointed out that looping is an ongoing learning experience and that it should be recommended to a certain type of teacher. Teachers with a strong work ethic, high expectations, a passion for children, and a continued desire for learning would make great candidates for looping. Looping teachers

are willing to spend extra time building relationships with parents and students and are willing to master two sets of curriculum. Looping teachers are also willing to become active problem solvers when challenges arise from the familiarity of being together for more than one year. Other considerations should also be made when considering the possibility of looping. Parents need to understand looping and be given the option of having their child in a traditional classroom or a looping classroom. Also, as all teachers pointed out, some students may benefit from moving to another class in the second year rather than staying in the looping classroom. Reasons for this include separating a group of students that struggle to get along, moving a student who has an irresolvable personality conflict with the teacher, or moving a child who would benefit more from a different style of teaching.

#### *Parent Questionnaire*

The parent questionnaire was adapted from an existing parent survey used in previous research at the Liberty Center Elementary School (Grant et al., 1996). I shortened the survey to eight questions to encourage a high response rate. The original agree, neutral, disagree scale was changed to a Likert scale to encourage more precise responses (McMillan, 2000). The directions for the questionnaire were as follows: “Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by circling the phrase which best describes your level of agreement.” Parents were not asked for additional comments, but one parent volunteered the written comment, “I think it’s a great idea!” Twenty-two of 25 questionnaires were completed and returned to me. All 22 of the parent participants responded to all of the statements; none were left blank. Results are compiled in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Parent Responses to Looping Questionnaire*

Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. My child has become more comfortable with school in general while participating in the looping program.	13	8	1	0	0
2. My child has benefited academically from being in the looping program.	12	7	3	0	0
3. My child has benefited socially from being in the looping program.	5	14	3	0	0
4. I have developed a better relationship with my child's teacher because of the looping program.	11	8	3	0	0
5. My child's teacher was better able to meet my child's needs because of the looping program.	13	7	2	0	0
6. My child's friendships were limited because he/she was with the same group of students for more than one year.	1	5	7	6	3
7. Discipline routines were more established and consistent in the looping program.	9	10	3	0	0
8. My child was challenged academically while in the looping program.	12	7	2	1	0

Parent responses were overwhelmingly positive. Only two statements received negative responses. The first was statement 6: “My child’s friendships were limited because he/she was with the same group of students for more than one year.” Six parents felt their child’s friendships were limited to some degree because of the looping context, while seven parents marked the “neither agree nor disagree” option on the questionnaire. The second statement to receive a negative response was statement 8: “My child was challenged academically while in the looping program.” One parent did not agree and two parents marked the “neither agree nor disagree” option. All other statements received positive responses or the neutral response “neither agree nor disagree.” The only statement with more than three parents choosing the “neither agree nor disagree” response was statement 6: “My child’s friendships were limited because he/she was with the same group of students for more than one year.” Seven parents chose “neither agree nor disagree” in response to this statement.

Parent responses indicate that there are many different benefits to participating in a looping program. A majority of parents believed there are academic benefits for their child in the looping program. This is reflected by the number of parents who chose the “agree” or “strongly agree” response to statements 2, 5, and 8. A majority of parents also felt their child benefited socially from being in the looping program as evidenced by the 19 parents who chose the “agree” or “strongly agree” response to statement 3. It is interesting that so many parents think their child benefited socially when 13 parents either agreed or weren’t sure that their child had limited friendships because of the looping program. This may be due to parents’ varying definitions of the word “socially.” Emotional benefits were also perceived by the parents. They felt their child was more

comfortable with school and that discipline routines were more established and consistent because of the looping program. This is reflected in the positive responses to statements 1 and 7. Finally, 19 parents felt they had a better relationship with their child's teacher because of the looping program. These parents responded to statement 4 by choosing "agree" or "strongly agree."

### *Student Interviews*

Student interviews took place during the school day in a quiet location outdoors near the classroom. The students were interviewed in groups of three or four. The student participants were generally excited about being interviewed. They were eager to give their input and have it recorded, although some students expressed concern that their teacher would hear their responses and needed to be reassured that this would not happen. Only one of the 17 students verbally expressed anxiety about being recorded, but still gave his assent. Three students were quiet during the interviews and gave only minimal input. Of the remaining students, about half were very comfortable and willing to talk throughout the entire interview, while the other half were quiet for the first few minutes but then warmed-up and became as expressive as the rest of the participants. All of the student interview groups asked to listen to the cassette at the end of the interview.

There were several general themes that emerged from the student interviews. First were teacher-related themes, second were student-related themes, then themes related to general school attitudes, and finally themes regarding moving on to a new classroom and teacher. The students had positive attitudes related to staying with the same teacher for two years. Students were much more comfortable returning to school in the fall of the second year. Students mentioned that they were not fearful of who their teacher would be.

As one second grader put it, “You know who your teacher is, so you’re not panicking about what teacher you’ll have.” A third grader said, “You already know your teacher’s name. You don’t have to be shy.” Students also talked about the importance of knowing the teacher’s routines and expectations. During the discussion students stated, “You know what he’s about.” “You know what she does.” “You do some same things.” Students also appreciated that their teacher already knew them. A second grader said, “Our last year teacher from first grade knows already what we know.” Other students talked about the teacher doing some different things so that the second year was not completely the same as the first.

When asked about negative factors related to having the same teacher for two years, one group replied, “Nothing.” Even with follow up questions and assurances that their teacher would not hear what they said, they still insisted there was nothing bad about it. Students in other groups did think of some negatives. An English language learner complained that his teacher would not repeat words he did not hear during spelling tests. Some students did not like their teacher yelling. One group of students talked about their teacher being too strict and knowing them too well. They lamented that they got into trouble much easier because of this. A second grader complained that his teacher was “boring” and “talks too much...explains too much that I already know.”

The students interviewed enjoyed being with the same students for two years, although they did also note some drawbacks. Some of the things they enjoyed were quite simple, like already knowing everyone’s names on the first day. Students in more than one group talked about the difficulty of making new friends and how they were glad they were with the same friends. Students also enjoyed being with their same friends for a

longer period of time so they “could remember them more.” Many of the students recognized that there were fewer problems between students the second year. A third grader pointed out that the “kids in your own class don’t make fun of you as much as kids in another class.” A second grader stated, “I could be myself.” Another mentioned, “The kids know how to work out problems.” Yet another student noted that “kids improve the second year.”

Student participants had an easy time thinking of the problems associated with being with the same students for two years. They mentioned that the other students “get annoying,” “bother you eventually,” “get you in trouble,” or start to be “like your brothers and sisters.” They did not like being with students who were “crabby,” “bad,” “mean,” or “criers.” One boy complained, “Some people are bad and waste your time.” A girl did not like being with the same students because “someone’s bad and you don’t like it, you want it to stop, but it keeps happening the second year.” The other difficulty the student participants discussed is when new kids join the class the second year. A second grader pointed out, “New kids may be good or bad.” However, a few students talked impatiently about the new kids not knowing everything that the rest of the class already knew. The students in my class, however, had more positive attitudes toward new students, mentioning that they enjoyed making new friends. This may be because our situation was unique in that we went from being a first and second grade combination class the first year to being entirely a second grade class the second year. Because of this we received nine new students the second year, and the vast majority of them adapted and fit into our class quite quickly and easily.

Because one of the concerns about looping is that children may miss out on friendships during their two years together, I asked the students who they play with at recess time. The majority of the students replied that they play with students both in their class and in other classes. Two students answered that they play only with students in their own class. When asked why, one of them replied, "Just because." The other explained that she liked knowing kids in her own class and did not want to meet others. It appears from these responses that the students do not believe they have missed out on making new friends. Upon further discussion students indicated that they had other opportunities to interact with students in other classes. These classes were involved in teaming, rotations, and a buddy program. All of these opportunities allowed the students to make friends with students outside of their own classroom.

The students interviewed had generally positive attitudes toward school. Most of the things they liked were general, and it is difficult to say whether they are directly related to the looping experience. Things the students liked about school included: a favorite subject, learning new things, friends, a good teacher, learning centers, rotations (teachers changing classrooms to teach specific subjects), field trips, and various games. One second grade boy shared that his favorite thing was the challenging math his teacher taught them. When asked, the students could think of very few things they did not like about school. Their dislikes included: working alone, people distracting them, rainy days, short recess, other students that bother them, and a short list of least favorite subjects.

At the time of the interview, students were not looking forward to moving on to a new class and teacher in the next school year. Their opinion was that it will be very difficult, and they will feel scared and nervous. Some students talked about how much

they like their current teacher and how they will miss their teacher when they are promoted. A third grade girl said she would probably cry. Students thought they might feel shy or nervous because they will not know their new teacher's name or whether their teacher is a "nice," "mean," or "good" teacher. One student expressed her fear that she would have a male teacher. Students were also concerned about what their new teacher might teach them. They thought it might be difficult to learn new and "harder" things. They were also concerned that the new teacher will not know them and their abilities; one student mentioned that the new teacher "doesn't know what we know." Another student said, "They" [the new teacher] "don't know you very much and don't pick on you if you know the answers." Yet another student expressed concern that it may be "difficult if you don't learn things quickly." Some of the student participants were also concerned about making new friends. They talked about the difficulties of making new friends and learning new names. Someone said it would be "scary...what if other kids don't want to be your friend?"

When asked, the students did come up with some positive things about moving on to a new class. Some students were excited about making new friends. Others were not too excited about that and mentioned they could still see their old friends at recess. Someone suggested that they might even have some of the same kids in their new class. They all thought they might get to do fun activities in their new classes, and they agreed that they would eventually get used to the new class. Some thought it would only take a couple of days to get used to the new class, while others thought it might take a month or more.

## Limitations and Implications

*Limitations of the Study*

This study is limited by the small number of participants: 3 teachers, 22 parents, and 17 students. The responses may have been more varied if a larger group had participated in the study. The experience of the teachers in the study may have also limited the study. I was the only teacher to have looped for more than one cycle. The others had only completed their first looping cycle. It is possible their experiences may have been different if they had completed more than one looping cycle or if they had known from the beginning of the first year that they were going to loop rather than deciding at the end of the first year.

Secondly, the responses to some of the statements on the parent questionnaire may have been inaccurate due to the wording of the statements. Parents responded positively to statement 3: “My child has benefited socially from being in the looping program.” Since the word “socially” was not defined, it is quite possible that different parents interpreted this in different ways. It is also possible that their definition of social benefits differed from my perceived definition and that the wording of the statement led them to answer as they did. Statement 6: “My child’s friendships were limited because he/she was with the same group of students for more than one year” may also have received inaccurate responses due to the possible ways parents understood it. It was the only statement phrased in a negative manner. It is possible that parents did not read it carefully and misunderstood what it was saying. Limiting the questionnaire to specific responses may have also been a limitation. Asking parents for open-ended responses may have given better insight into their perspectives.

This study may also have been limited in that I was the researcher as well as a participant, and I was teaching at the same school as the other participants. This may have affected teacher, parent, and student responses. Teachers may have been concerned about being completely honest with a colleague and may also have been guarded in their responses because they knew I would receive responses from parents and students in their classroom and be able to compare the results. Parent responses may have been exaggerated in a positive way due to a concern that their child's teacher may see their responses, despite the fact that they were asked to return these to me in a sealed envelope. Also, the majority of the parents knew me personally to some extent. This could have influenced them either positively or negatively. They may have been more honest in their responses because of this or they may have been more guarded in their responses, especially the parents of the students in my classroom. Student responses may also have been influenced because they knew me. It is possible that they were trying to give the responses they thought I wanted, although my impression was that they were being candid. Some of them were concerned that their teacher would hear their interviews and in spite of reassurances that they would not, this may have affected their responses. Conducting interviews outside, as well as encountering some interruptions from noise and activities around us, could have affected their concentration. Students were especially concerned when they saw someone walk by, even at a distance, and would stop talking.

Since all of the teachers, parents, and students were participating in the looping program by choice, they may have gone into the program with positive expectations and this could have affected their perceptions and their experiences in a positive way. Since I have looped three times and have a positive view of looping I went into the study with a

bias toward looping. Even though I was aware of this from the beginning and was mindful of staying objective, it is possible that my opinions may have affected the interviews. My lack of experience with the interview process may have also impacted the study. I had to be aware of my opinions and remain mindful of the questions I was asking so that I did not lead the participants to answer in any specific way. Finally, results may have varied if the teachers had all met as a group to discuss looping rather than only meeting in one-on-one interviews or if the students had been interviewed one-on-one rather than in groups.

#### *Implications for Implementation*

Teachers who are thinking about looping should consider the following issues. First of all, looping is not a cure-all for every problem or every difficult child that may come along. However, it is an effective alternative teaching method for reaching students and helping them achieve. Looping provides the stability and consistency needed by so many students.

Teachers who loop should be prepared for the challenges of learning two years of curriculum and planning engaging lessons. They should also be aware of the pressure and responsibility for student achievement that comes with keeping a group of students for two years. Because of this, looping is better suited for experienced teachers. In spite of these difficulties, teachers can also expect to enjoy closer relationships with parents and students. They are likely to know their students better and be more effective teachers because of this.

It is also important to keep in mind that problems left unresolved the first year will only get worse the second year. Because of this, any problems that arise should be

resolved immediately. If they are not, all involved will be affected adversely. As one of the students put it, “Someone’s bad and you don’t like it, you want it to stop, but it keeps happening the second year.” One of the teachers similarly commented, “From day one, they are having conflicts that continued from the year before. If I were to loop again...[I would] definitely separate the clique of boys I had.” Their conflicts had just continued and worsened the second year. Looping teachers need to remember that problems will not just go away; they will need to take action to solve them as soon as they begin.

Another consideration is the concern from parents that their children may be missing out on additional friendships because of the looping situation. Teachers can address this concern by teaming with other classes for activities and lessons so that their students are given the opportunity to interact with other students. They might also team with a grade level above or below them as “buddy” classes. It can also be pointed out that students involved in other activities, such as sports, have other friends outside of the classroom.

Teachers might also consider how to prepare their students for any new students that enter the classroom the second year. The students should be trained to accept and help the new kids become adjusted rather than becoming impatient with them for not adapting immediately. They can be reminded that they have already had a whole year to learn the routines and the other students’ name. They should also be reminded of what the new student feels like coming into a situation where everyone already knows everyone else and understands the routines. When the students are helped to think about how the new kids feel and are given ways to help the newcomers, the transition will be much easier for everyone.

Finally, teachers should be prepared to help the students with the transition to a new classroom at the end of the two years. The preparation might begin months before the end of the school year. Teachers can begin talking to the students about the new class and grade level, what they expect to learn and what they will learn. They may even invite one or two teachers from the next grade level into their classroom so that students can meet them and ask questions. Teachers and students can review what they have done together as a class over the two years and talk about how much the students have learned and grown, so that they will feel confident to take on the next grade level. Teachers and students can keep in touch with each other by writing letters, and students can return to visit their old teachers. Looping teachers will find that communicating with the next year's teacher will make it easier for them to let go of their students. Since they know the children and families so well, they will be able to communicate this to the next teacher to make the new teacher's job easier. Looping teachers may also want to check up on how "their" kids are doing.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research on looping might include a longitudinal study to examine whether the effects of looping are long or short term. Such a study might address academic and social benefits. Another area for research is whether there is a correlation between looping and higher achievement. This might be a quantitative comparison study with students in looping classes and traditional classrooms. There are many perceived academic benefits to looping, but there is minimal quantitative data available to prove this.

Further study might also be conducted using a larger population. Looping programs and traditional programs in various socio-economic areas could be compared. Additional insights into the multiyear programs in other countries might be presented and compared with looping practices in the United States. Future research should be presented to teachers and administrative leaders so they can better understand advantages and disadvantages of looping as an alternative teaching method.

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**Appendix A**

**Parent Looping Questionnaire**

**Directions:** Please indicate your agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by circling the phrase which best describes your level of agreement.

1. My child has become more comfortable with school in general while participating in the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

2. My child has benefited academically from being in the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

3. My child has benefited socially from being in the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

4. I have developed a better relationship with my child’s teacher because of the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

5. My child’s teacher was better able to meet my child’s needs because of the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

6. My child’s friendships were limited because he/she was with the same group of students for more than one year.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

7. Discipline routines were more established and consistent in the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

8. My child was challenged academically while in the looping program.

Strongly agree      agree      neither agree  
nor disagree      disagree      strongly  
disagree

**Appendix B**

**Consent Form**

**Parent Participants**

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize Michelle L. Pecanic of the Education Department, Biola University, La Mirada, California to gather information from me on the topic of looping programs in the elementary school.

I understand that the questionnaire items are general in nature. However, I am aware that I may choose not to answer any question that I find offensive.

I also understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress that may have been provoked by the experience, Michelle L. Pecanic will be available for consultation.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be addressed to Michelle L. Pecanic, Education Department, Biola University, 13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639.

**Appendix C**

**Consent Form**

**Teacher Participants**

Participant's name: \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize Michelle L. Pecanic of the Education Department, Biola University, La Mirada, California to gather information from me on the topic of looping programs in the elementary school. I understand that my participation will involve group and individual interviews and possible observation in the classroom. Interviews will be tape recorded for the further review of the researcher.

I understand that I may decline to discuss any matters that cause discomfort.

I further understand that student participants may be pulled out of class for interviews. I understand I will be consulted by the researcher to determine the least detrimental time for this to occur.

This study is unlikely to cause me distress. However, I also understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress that may have been provoked by the experience, Michelle L. Pecanic will be available for consultation.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be addressed to Michelle L. Pecanic, Education Department, Biola University, 13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639.

**Appendix D**

**Consent Form**

**Consent for Child to Participate**

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's/Guardian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

I authorize Michelle L. Pecanic of the Education Department, Biola University, La Mirada, California to gather information from my child on the topic of looping programs in the elementary school. I understand that my child's participation will involve group and individual interviews and possible observation in the classroom. Interviews will be tape recorded for the further review of the researcher.

My child and I have been assured that the child may refuse to discuss any matters that cause discomfort or that my child might experience as an unwanted invasion of privacy.

I understand that I may withdraw my child from the study at any time AND that my child may decline to participate or terminate participation AT ANY TIME without penalty. My child will be asked by the researcher to give his/her verbal assent for participation in this study (see attached "verbal assent" statement).

This study is unlikely to cause my child distress. However, I understand that after participation, if my child experiences any undue anxiety or stress that may have been provoked by the experience, Michelle L. Pecanic will be available for consultation.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. No individual results will be released without the written consent of the parents or guardians of the particular child.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be addressed to Michelle L. Pecanic, Education Department, Biola University, 13800 Biola Ave., La Mirada, CA 90639.

## **Appendix E**

### Verbal Assent of Minors

“I’m studying children to find out how they feel about school and what they think about being with the same teacher and classmates for more than one year. I’d really like to know what you think. I’d like to ask you some questions about school. If you need to use the names of other students in your answers, please tell me only their first names. If there’s anything you don’t want to answer, it’s okay to tell me you don’t want to answer that question. Also, I don’t want to forget what you tell me, so I’d like to tape record your answers. I’ll be the only one to listen to the tape. Is that okay with you?”



