

"WITH-IT-NESS" THROUGH THE EYES OF A STUDENT TEACHER:
EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT PROCEDURES,
RULES, AND CLASS MEETINGS

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This project is dedicated to Mrs. McIntire and all my kindergarteners for their love, trust, and devotion to me.

I. Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative analysis is to study the classroom management strategies of three veteran teachers and a first year teacher who have completed similar coursework and have graduated from the College of Education at Texas State University-San Marcos. This analysis will evaluate their techniques and ideas by focusing on procedures and rules used in the classroom, as well as their use of “class meetings.” I will ultimately compare these in order to describe a comprehensive classroom management plan. Moreover, I will include an overview of what true classroom management “should” be, according to research, as well as give personal testimony on classroom management through the eyes of a student teacher working with her cooperating teacher who was her kindergarten teacher seventeen years ago. I will include personal experiences from the classroom and utilize the lessons learned from my cooperating teacher to describe further other classroom management styles.

The term “with-it-ness,” as created by Jacob Kounin, a researcher of classroom management in the 1970s, is used to refer to the teacher’s awareness of what is occurring in the classroom at all times. It is his/her ability to foresee problems and anticipate future situations in the classroom and to help alleviate these before they occur (Kounin, 1977). This is the ultimate goal of classroom management and of successful teachers. It is far easier to prevent problems from happening than trying to repair them once the situation has transpired. Therefore, this personal study is to gain knowledge of classroom management and to subsequently become a “with-it” teacher.

To help become a teacher who exemplifies “with-it-ness,” it is imperative to establish rules, procedures, and class meetings. According to Harry Wong, another

professional and expert of classroom management, “a student’s success or achievement at the end of the school year is directly related to the degree to which the teacher establishes good control of the classroom procedures in the very first week of the school year” (Wong, 2005, p. 4). Thus, it is vital to formulate rules, procedures, and routines and allow time for the children to practice them to ensure the classroom runs as effortlessly as possible. Ultimately, “a teacher who is grossly inadequate in classroom management skills is probably not going to accomplish very much” and thus not be a teacher who personifies “with-it-ness” (Wong, 2005, p. 85).

It is my goal to learn as much as possible of how to manage my own classroom and to help other teachers gain insight into this vital aspect of teaching. Through this extensive study of classroom management, it is my intent to provide assistance to others who, like myself, strive to give students the best we can and yearn to be a “with-it” teacher.

II. Review of Literature

Harry Wong states the most important factor governing student learning is classroom management. He defines classroom management to be “all of the things that a teacher does to organize students, space, time, and materials so that student learning can take place” (Wong, 2005, p. 84). To be an effective facilitator of classroom management, one must know how to organize these variables within the classroom.

The characteristics of a well-managed classroom are that students are deeply involved with their work, especially with academic and teacher-led instruction; students know the expectations and are generally successful; there is relatively little wasted time, confusion, or disruption; and finally, the climate of the classroom is work-oriented but relaxed and pleasant (Wong, 2005). When all these are met, time spent in the classroom is more worthwhile and meaningful. Furthermore, as Harry Wong implies, a well-managed classroom is a predictable environment. The teacher and the students know what to do and what is expected to happen in the classroom (Wong, 2005).

A well-managed classroom has a set of procedures and routines which build its structure. A procedure is “simply a method or process for getting things done in the classroom” (Wong, 2005, p. 169). It is a step students learn in order to understand how things are accomplished. For example, a procedure is how to turn in work, how to ask for assistance, how to sharpen a pencil, and how to get to work. On the other hand, a routine is “what the student does automatically, without prompting or supervision” (Wong, 2005, p. 170). In essence, a routine becomes a habit, practice, or custom for the students in the classroom. Procedures can become routines when the students rehearse and practice the

procedures enough that they have internalized them and can perform them without aid from the teacher (Wong, 2005).

It is imperative for students to know from the very beginning how they are expected to work in a classroom environment. Thus, procedures and routines help to establish this. Procedures and routines are necessary in order for the students to participate successfully in classroom activities, to learn, and to function effectively in the classroom. They allow many different activities to take place efficiently during the school day, sometimes several at a time, with minimal confusion and wasted time. Subsequently, they also increase on-task time and greatly reduce classroom disruptions, such as questions or confusions. And finally, classroom procedures tell students how things operate in a classroom, thus ultimately, reducing possible discipline problems (Wong, 2005).

Moreover, to have a safe and effective learning environment, it is necessary to establish firm rules that students are expected to follow. A rule is an expectation of appropriate student behavior. It immediately creates a work-oriented atmosphere, and also explicitly sends a strong expectation to the students about what is important to the teacher. It is easier to maintain good behavior than to improve inappropriate behavior, thus the teacher must introduce rules at the beginning of the school year not every time a situation arises; this certainly makes the rules punitive (Wong, 2005). When presenting classroom rules, the teacher must be sure to keep them broad and inclusive but brief. This is to ensure the rules are easy for children to remember yet broad enough to cover all the expectations of the classroom. As with all classroom management, consistency is crucial. The more consistency teachers show between their announced rules and the rules

they practice, the quicker the students will take them seriously, and will give them the cooperation and respect they deserve (MacKenzie, 1996).

To create a harmonious classroom, it is important to have consistent procedures and rules that are acceptable to all in the classroom. However, to build a sense of community within the classroom, the idea of a “class meeting” is used as a building block to gain mutual respect, cooperation, and responsibility apart from procedures and rules. Class meetings are instances where a class congregates to discuss issues within the classroom. By allowing children the opportunity to speak and be heard, listen to others, and to learn to make decisions as a group, it ultimately provides the greatest potential for teaching children empowering life skills. It allows for the teacher and students to create a classroom climate that is nurturing to the students’ self-esteem and to their academic performance. Children gain confidence and camaraderie. Utilizing a class meeting strategy means students spend less time dealing with petty issues, like cutting in line, or saying hurtful words to others, that may manifest themselves into great problems. The students then are able to focus on learning and acquiring new knowledge, in turn, causing their academic performances to excel (Nelson, Lott, & Glenn, 2000).

After conducting research, observations, and studying classroom management, I will give personal suggestions for common classroom management techniques, procedures, routines, and rules. I find these ideas to be the most crucial and beneficial as I begin teaching. These are merely personal ideas and reflect my own personality, philosophy of education, and visions of my future classroom.

III. Observations

To enhance my understanding of classroom management and to witness the varying degrees of styles of managing a classroom, it was only logical to watch teachers of different years of experience teaching various grade levels. I chose teachers that have had a wide range of time within the classroom. For instance, I selected a first year teacher, a mid-career teacher, and two end-of-career teachers to watch as a part of my qualitative analysis of classroom management. The number of years these teachers have taught is one year, thirteen, twenty-seven, and finally thirty-one years respectively. This gives the reader a comprehensive view of different teachers' perspectives of classroom management based upon their experience. With this first hand knowledge, it is evident that classroom management is a work in progress, varying greatly between teachers, their philosophy of education, the children, the atmosphere of the school, as well as many other factors. However, through my observations, I have found that teachers are masters at their trade and know how to incorporate many tactics and use many "tools" to manage their own classrooms.

I studied three separate grades and classrooms in the Central Texas Region: kindergarten, second grade, and fourth grade. All of the teachers of these classrooms had graduated from the College of Education at Texas State University-San Marcos. Although their coursework was not identical, the philosophies and theories they were taught are similar enough to compare them to each other. Because I will be student teaching with my kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Karen McIntire, I also chose to observe her classroom as well.

Through this study, I sought to answer if there was a noticeable difference in classroom management styles and effective classroom management abilities between a first year teacher and a veteran teacher. I was inquisitive about this for I will be a first year teacher in the 2008-2009 school year. By watching these teachers, it became apparent that classroom management greatly depends on the individual teacher's perspective of the necessity of classroom management in her classroom. One teacher could tolerate more "controlled chaos" while others are stricter in their routines and behavior expectations in the classroom. Throughout these specific observations of various teachers, I noticed that the longer the teacher had been teaching, the more her classroom seemed to be relaxed and not as structured as her less-experienced counterparts. This is not a definite conclusion but is only applicable to this study of these specific teachers. As earlier stated, one of the characteristics of a well-managed classroom is one where the climate or atmosphere is work-oriented but relaxed and pleasant. It was my observation that the longer the teacher has been teaching, the more the classroom exemplified this characteristic. The rooms seemed to have a more light-hearted feel, but the children were diligent and on-task.

This conclusion, although only representative of this study, is a subject of further research not completed in this analysis. It is a question of whether the veteran teacher is more relaxed and experienced because she is more comfortable with the content, the process of teaching, her abilities, and because she has had a longer period to become successful. Or, on the other hand, is the veteran teacher more relaxed because she has worked so long and she is tired, and in essence, "giving up." Possibly, the less experienced teacher has more "book knowledge" but limited experience, except in a

controlled and supervised manner like student teaching and formal observations. This is perhaps why she is stricter in her development and delivery of her rules, procedures, and routines, for she is worried about not gaining control of her classroom from lack of experience or because factual information from a book is the majority of her knowledge. Again, this theory only describes this particular circumstance and is a unique investigation for further study.

The first classroom I observed was Ms. Lori Beaty's fourth grade class at Tom Green Elementary in Buda, Texas. Ms. Beaty graduated with her bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (Elementary Education) from Texas State University-San Marcos in August 2007. This is her first year teaching, but, as I studied her classroom management techniques, it was as if she had been teaching for a few years. Ms. Beaty was very positive throughout the observation, and her children seemed to respect her. Her classroom was calm and quiet; all students knew the rules and followed them.

Mrs. Amy Rogers graduated from then, Southwest Texas State University, in 1994 and received both her bachelor's and master's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (Elementary Education). She has been teaching for a total of thirteen years and has taught kindergarten, first grade, second grade, a combined kindergarten and first grade classroom, and has also taught as a reading specialist. Her classroom was fairly relaxed as I sat and watched her second graders at Bowie Elementary in San Marcos, Texas. She allowed the children to be more talkative and mobile in the classroom than other teachers who I have observed. However, Mrs. Rogers had visually posted expectations for all students as well as clearly identified her procedures. Although her procedures were not as defined as others were, especially when transitioning from one activity to another (the

children were not given clear directions and were allowed to move at their will), her children were productive and seemed to be engaged in the lessons and content with their classroom.

Next, I observed Mrs. Teresa Zapp's classroom at Baranoff Elementary School in Austin, Texas. Mrs. Zapp graduated from Southwest Texas State University in 1981 in Interdisciplinary Studies (Early Childhood through eighth grade with kindergarten endorsements) and has recently received her master's from Texas State University as well. She has been teaching for twenty-seven years and has taught pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, and all-level theatre arts. Her philosophy regarding classroom management is to keep it entertaining and engaging. She incorporates song and dance into her classroom, and the children fully accept this variation to classroom procedures. She also utilizes the guitar, pictures, a frog puppet, and entertaining visuals as aids for learning and retaining the procedures and rules of the room. They understand the order and the expectations of the day yet are free to move around and the classroom is one of freedom and pleasure.

Before beginning my student teaching, I observed Mrs. Karen McIntire's kindergarten class at Luther Jones Elementary in Corpus Christi, Texas. Although Mrs. McIntire did not graduate from Texas State University, she is an integral component to this study. She graduated from the University of Dallas and then received her two master's degrees from Texas A&M-Commerce and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi. She has been teaching since 1977 and has taught middle school and high school English and theatre arts but has taught kindergarten for the past eighteen years. Mrs. McIntire's classroom is one of structure and respect. She has implemented, modeled, and rehearsed

procedures for every activity that occurs in the classroom: for following the morning routine, for listening when a speaker is speaking, for transitioning from one activity to another, for leaving the classroom, and so on. Her children mostly follow these expectations, and the classroom day is one of structure and learning. Mrs. McIntire is a kind teacher who has great expectations for her students, and the students rise to these challenges. Although they are only in kindergarten, much of their day is routine to them, and thus they are able to follow Mrs. McIntire's established schedule and perform the routines effortlessly.

Both Mrs. McIntire, and Mrs. Zapp, who have each been teaching for over twenty-five years, are highly animated with the children. They make the routines of the day seem like a normal progression by putting the routines to songs or poems which their kindergarten students follow with ease. For example, they sing while the children are cleaning up, lining up, sitting on the carpet, and moving around the room during transitions. This allows the children to internalize their procedures, routines, and rules, ultimately causing the children to follow them without assistance.

Above all, each teacher did have her own procedures, routines, and rules established in her classroom. These were evident from the moment the children came into the classroom when they executed their morning routine without assistance from the teacher. It was also fascinating to find that some children even reminded others when they were not following the procedures previously set forth. Although they all have explicit procedures, routines, and rules, the implementation and strictness varied among each teacher and her classroom. Some classrooms, because of the teacher's classroom management style, were calm and very structured, while others were loose and relaxed.

Nonetheless, each classroom was well-managed and student morale and learning was high.

From an outsider's view, some of these classrooms may look more chaotic than others, but they were all managed depending on the teacher's personality. However, it is clear to me that effective classroom management keeps the children safe, gives them boundaries, allows for structure within the classroom walls, and provides an environment that is conducive to the children fully engaging in learning. For example, in all of the classrooms I witnessed the students moving about the classroom, knowing exactly where items were to be placed, what their task was, how to complete the task, and so on. The procedures of the classroom were now routines that the children meticulously followed. This is the ultimate goal of any teacher: to help children achieve at new levels where they can make sound decisions and be intrinsically motivated and determined without the aid of the teacher.

IV. Personal Relevance

The sight of desks in groups, the school bell ringing, children frantically hustling through the front door of their new school and into their kindergarten classroom, are all a part of the first day activities to a new kindergartener. However, to the teacher, proposing procedures and rules on the first day is one of her main tasks of the entire day. She must teach her new students how to come into the room, where to place their items, how to gain her attention, how to begin the school day, how to walk down the hallway, and so on and so on. These next few moments on the first day are crucial to the overall atmosphere of the classroom, and ultimately the morale for the entire school year.

Classroom management is the most important task to establish while teaching, for it is the basis of all other curriculum. Without proper organization of the classroom and order in the room student learning and inquiry will be a much more difficult task. Through my coursework while obtaining my undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (Early Childhood-4th grade) from Texas State University-San Marcos, I have read and been taught extensively about classroom management and how to “run” the classroom. In these classes, consistency is emphasized above all else. It is imperative to be unwavering. When a situation occurs, it is crucial for the teacher to handle it in the same way she always has, or how she would want it to be handled. For example, if a student does not turn in homework, the natural consequence is that he will get a zero on the assignment or he will have to finish it during recess (MacKenzie, 1996). Therefore, being consistent with the consequences ensures that the teacher will be respected and viewed as an authoritative figure.

As professors at Texas State University have stated, gaining “control” of the classroom and proving to the children that the teacher is fair, firm, but kind, will allow children to feel provided for, and ultimately allows them the freedom to learn and experience within certain boundaries. Children crave structure within the classroom. In fact, this is why, according to education professors at Texas State University, many children act out. They are pleading to know what to do and to have structure to their day. When children are confused, they will simply do what they think is right, which may or may not be the procedure the teacher wants the students to follow. For instance, when the children are finished with their work, if they are not instructed what to do when they are finished, most will become restless and bored and then will begin to find ways to entertain themselves. This is when the teacher becomes frustrated with the children, but in reality, the children were not shown what to do, and were likely unaware that their behavior was inappropriate. Therefore, it is necessary to inform children of the expectations and procedures in the classroom, so they do not have to “guess” what they are expected to do. This in turn, will help alleviate fear of the unknown in the classroom, and the classroom will be a place of clear, precise expectations that the children know and understand completely.

Moreover, it is true that when creating procedures and rules within a classroom, the teacher must present them to the class. Most importantly, she must explain the procedures and rules and the reasoning behind them, review them, model them, and must give children ample time to practice them before any expectations or consequences are established. The entire first week of school should be devoted to introducing, establishing, implementing, and practicing specific procedures and rules of the

classroom. Children want procedures and routines, and thus, by presenting specific criteria designed to ensure that the day runs smoothly, the children become accustomed to the school day and are able to conduct themselves during the school day in a manner that is almost effortless.

Throughout my coursework in working and assisting in various elementary and preschool classrooms, I have witnessed the need for proper and effective classroom management. When children know what is expected of them, how they should be acting, behaving, and what they should be doing, the classroom seems to have fewer “hiccups” throughout the day and is a more well-balanced classroom. When successful classroom management strategies and techniques are utilized, there is a certain clarity and ease to the ambiance. The children and the teacher know what is expected of everyone, and thus there are no surprises or confusion of what the expectations are. It is not enough to assume that children know how to act when they step into the classroom for the first time. In fact, it is best not to assume at all, but instead think of it as the teacher’s job to teach them how to behave in school, how to act, what to do, and how to follow rules and procedures (K. McIntire, Personal Communication, October 12, 2007). Although classroom management might appear to be an ideal answer to all situations within the classroom, in reality, classroom management is not a fix-all solution to every problem or circumstance within the classroom. However, knowing how to properly conduct and establish procedures, routines, rules, and class meetings will help to alleviate most problems and will create a consistent, predictable, and constant atmosphere within the classroom.

Because I have completed coursework in classroom management and have observed and assisted in classrooms, I am fairly confident in my management abilities. Despite this, my insecurities of being a novice teacher make me fearful of not having order in my classroom and ultimately failing to teach my students because I do not have control over the class. I am aware that effective classroom management comes with experience, and because I lack sufficient teaching experience, I want in some way to be able to have an organized classroom in which the children know the expectations, follow them, and true learning and investigation takes place. I have witnessed classrooms in which classroom management was a struggle and the classroom was chaotic with neither the students nor teacher knowing what to do. The atmosphere in the classroom was frenzied, and both the children and the teacher were exhausted by the end of the day. Therefore, the personal motivation for this project is to help me critically reflect on myself as a facilitator of procedures, routines, and rules, and to gather information from other teachers to assist in my quest to be an effective teacher to all my students.

As I embark on my student teaching semester, my last semester prior to graduation, I am overjoyed with the expectation of new challenges, new surprises, and new learning. Throughout this upcoming semester, I see myself delving into teaching and gaining hands-on experience through practice, successes, mistakes, and more practice. Since I will be cooperating with my former kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Karen McIntire, I feel a strong connection to her and her ability to constructively criticize my teaching and classroom management skills. Mrs. McIntire is the reason I chose teaching as my profession. Her influence when I was five was so great that ever since kindergarten, I have *loved* school. It is an honor to come back to my same elementary

school, my same kindergarten classroom, with my same kindergarten teacher to learn from her once again. The semester will not only be a unique situation, but will challenge me to become my own teacher, apart from Mrs. McIntire, while still incorporating her qualities and ideas as well as all the knowledge gained throughout my experiences in other classrooms, in classes at Texas State University, and research gathered for this project.

In an effort to plan for my future classroom, I have devised a classroom management plan based upon research, class work, and personal experiences and observations. Included in this plan are the specific procedures I intend to implement in my classroom, along with an explanation of each one. These procedures are intended to be applicable in any grade from kindergarten to fourth grade. The ideas are merely suggestions for my classroom, and will be altered accordingly and periodically when they are no longer successful, when a suggestion is made to help them run more smoothly, or when it is time for a change.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES

Beginning the school day

When the students enter the classroom, they will decide how they want to be greeted by me, either by a handshake, a hug, or a high five. They will then set their homework folders in the basket, place their personal items in their desks, move their lunch count dots (see below section), pick up their journals, and then sit in their seats. At this time, the morning jobs of *Pencil Sharpener* and *Plant Technician* will complete their duties (a complete list of classroom helpers with description of their roles is explained at the end

of the section “Classroom Procedures”). A journal sentence or topic, the date, and what items they need for the day will be written on the board (if this is developmentally appropriate). The students are to get out the designated number of blank sheets of paper and write their heading on each of them and place them in the corner of their desks. Then they are to copy the journal prompt, put the date in their journals, and begin working on them. Once school starts, the students will quietly and respectfully listen to the morning announcements, and upon completion of the announcements, students will finish their journals, meet at the carpet, and then participate in calendar time, weather bear, morning message, and songs (again, if developmentally appropriate).

Lunch Count

On the side of a filing cabinet, I will have each child’s name on a small laminated dot, backed with a magnet. The filing cabinet will be divided into two sections, one for packed lunches and one for school lunches (with pictures included). The dots with names will be found at the bottom of the filing cabinet at the beginning of the day. It is each child’s responsibility to move his or her dot to either of the two sections. I will use this not only as lunch count, but also as attendance.

Teacher’s signal to gain students’ attention

I will gain my students’ attention by shaking a maraca. As soon as they hear the maraca, they will stop talking, put their hands up as if they were playing maracas, and look at me. This will focus their attention on me and I will then proceed to give directions.

Students' signal for teacher's attention/obtaining help

To signal for my attention, the students will raise their hands, and I will meet them at their desks (they are not to get up and come to me), or I will call on them if we are at the carpet or a large group discussion setting.

Distributing materials

Each student in their table group will have a designated number (ranging from one to four or five) and I will call that number to gather the necessary materials for the entire group. For example, I will say "Will all the two's please get three pieces of construction paper for each member of your group?"

When individual work has been completed

When a child has finished his/her work, he/she will turn the work over on top of the desks, and then may begin working on any unfinished work. If all class work has been completed, the student will begin silent reading with a personal book or one borrowed from the school or class library. However, on occasion, as a reward, a child may be permitted to have free choice activity time once individual work has been completed. This will include activities such as computer time, math/science manipulatives time, listening center time, drawing/coloring/art time, or relaxation time in the "Take Five" corner of the room (a spot designated in the room as a quiet area with pillows, blankets, yoga mat, and books to relax and regain focus).

Students turning in work

Homework is due at the beginning of each day, and it is the student's responsibility to place his/her homework folder in a basket labeled "Homework Folders." However, when students complete assignments in class, a table number will be given to indicate which student in the group collects and hands in the work for the entire group. On the same shelf, there will be baskets with labels for each subject (Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies) and the selected student will place the work of all their group members into the correct basket.

Small group instruction

When it is time for students to work in small groups, they will be assigned groups or may choose their partners depending upon the nature of the activity. They will be told all directions of the activity beforehand, and will be expected to follow all directions. The most important aspect of small group instruction is that the noise level must remain at an appropriate indoor level. The child will know what indoor voices sound like and look like, and will be able to distinguish between an appropriate indoor and outdoor voice. Also, during small group instruction, each child within the group will be given a task/job they are responsible for during the activity. These will be: *The Principal Investigator* (the leader of the group), *The Reporter/Recorder* (the student who will write and discuss findings with the class), *The Materials Manager* (the child who will gather all materials for the group), and *The Encourager* (the child who will keep everyone on task and will help support his/her group mates). The jobs of each group will rotate so every child will be given the opportunity to experience each job. Throughout the small group time, if the

children have questions about the assignment, first, they are to ask their neighboring group, and if they still do not know the answer, then the Principal Investigator will be the student who raises his/her hand and waits until I come to answer the question. If I am at a table working, then he/she alone may come and ask the group's question.

Transitions

Desks to carpet

When it is time to go to the carpet, I will invite each table to come join me by calling tables which are the quietest, cleanest, and most prepared. They will come to the carpet in a quick and quiet manner, and will sit in rows of four, facing my chair, with a path around the carpet (especially the sides) for teacher or others to walk by.

Carpet to desks

When it is time to return to their desks, I will invite them to go back quietly and quickly by tables. They are to return directly to their desks as quietly as possible, and not wander around the room.

Leaving the classroom as a group

When it is time to leave the classroom, and all appropriate materials have been put away, I will call the line leader and door holder to line up at the door. I will then call the quietest, cleanest, and most prepared table to line up, and each table after in order of quietest, cleanest, and most prepared. There will be laminated footprints attached to the

floor that are spaced apart for each student to stand on; this will ensure that each child has enough space to stand.

As an alternative way to line up, I will call out categories such as eye color, hair color, clothing color, types of shoes, etc. for those students to line up.

Walking in line

The students will be expected to walk in a straight line quietly through the halls with their hands behind their backs. They are not to touch the walls, touch each other, or to run.

Once a week, I will take my pretend “basket of sleeping gerbils” (which is simply my arms in the shape of a basket) and will place an imaginary “sleeping gerbil” into each of the child’s cupped hands. I will say “Shhh, this baby gerbil is sleeping, so you must be very careful and quiet with it in the palm of your hands to make sure it does not wake up!”

As an alternative, I will allow the children to decide on their favorite baby animal to carry throughout the halls.

Entering/Returning to the classroom as a group

The students will enter the classroom quietly and quickly and will either sit at their desks or sit at the carpet, depending on my instructions. They will be expected to go directly to their seats, sit quietly, and begin reading, or place their heads on their desks, until further directions are given.

As an alternative, I will have the children enter as a “subway.” There will be two lines, with each line facing each other, and the students will hold hands (above their heads)

with their partner who is across from them (it makes it like a bridge or subway). The first set of partners *walks* under the subway until the end of the subway, and then pops up and forms the subway at the end. This pattern continues until all children are in the classroom, where they will be expected to perform the procedures as mentioned above.

Restroom

There will be scheduled bathroom breaks during the day when the class will line up, have the option of using the restroom and/or getting a drink of water, and then returning to the line. When the students need to use the restroom at any other time, except during lessons, they will let me know by crossing their fingers (which is the letter “R” in sign language and stands for restroom) and raising their hand. They will be allowed to retrieve the bathroom hall pass (one for boys and one for girls) and go directly to the hall bathroom, or simply use the classroom’s bathroom, if one is available. For an in-class bathroom, there will be a reversible sign on the bathroom door, indicating whether the bathroom is occupied or vacant (signified by the red and green colors, respectively, on the sign). Children are expected to keep the bathroom clean, flush the toilet, wash their hands, wipe off the sink area, and properly dispose their paper towels in the trash can when they are finished.

Water

The students will be allowed to have clear water bottles at their desks. They will be able to refill their bottles during bathroom breaks. However, for the students who do not bring their own water bottles, they are to raise their hands and ask for permission to get water.

Only one student will be able to get water at a time, and only when I am not conducting a lesson or talking to the whole class.

Sharpening pencils

There will be two different colored cups each labeled with either “Please Sharpen” or “Sharpened Pencils.” When the students need a new pencil, they will walk over to the cups, place the broken pencil in the correct cup, and retrieve a pre-sharpened pencil from the other cup. A classroom helper (the *Pencil Sharpener*) will be responsible for sharpening the “Please Sharpen” pencils at the end/beginning of the day.

Returning student work

The students’ work will be returned to them via their homework folder. The *Teacher Assistant* will be responsible for handing the homework folders to his/her classmates as well as handing out homework, graded papers, and notes home at the end of the day. The students will then place their own graded papers and notes in their homework folders in the appropriate pockets. The left side of the folder will be filled with items such as notes or information that the parents simply need to read about and will be labeled “**Left** at Home.” All completed work that has been graded and returned will be placed in the left hand pocket. The right side of the folder will be labeled “Bring **Right** Back,” and this will be for homework or information that needs to be returned to school.

Ending the school day

The students will clean up trash around their desks and around the room, straighten up the room, wipe down the tables, and place their chairs on their desks. They will retrieve their homework folders and backpacks and will pack-up. During this time, the jobs of *Pencil Sharpener* and *Plant Technician* will check on their duties as needed. As I call each student, they will join me at the carpet. Once all students are seated at the carpet, I will read a book. Upon completion of the book, I will briefly review the day's activities and important things learned that day, discuss any questions the children might have, remind children of any special activities, foreshadow tomorrow's coming events, as well as check materials that will be taken home (especially those that need to be returned). I will call them by groups including Extend-a-care, Car Riders, and Bus Riders and they will leave me by a handshake, a hug, or a high five, just like they greeted me at the beginning of the school day.

Classroom Helpers

These helpers will rotate weekly. There will be a pocket chart with cards denoting which student has which job assignment for the week.

Teacher Assistant/Student of the Week: This student will be available to help whenever I might need it such as running errands or assisting me in chores, like passing papers to other students when necessary. He/She will also be the line leader and will lead the line and remind (through example) everyone to be quiet in the halls.

Door Holder: This student will hold the door for the line and will be the second person in line. He/She will also then be the "caboose" after all students have left the room. This

job will also require he/she to be the *Light Controller (Energy Monitor)*. Since this person is the last one out, he/she will turn off the lights and close the door, once the class leaves the room.

Pencil Sharpener: This student will sharpen all pencils as necessary and will place them in the “Sharpened Pencil” cup. The pencil sharpener will make sure the class always has a supply of sharpened pencils, and will notify me when I need to add pencils.

Plant Technician: This student will water the classroom plants and will be in charge of their well being.

Secretary: This student is our class recorder and will help with writing down ideas or suggestions made during class meetings (described on page 27) as well as helping with calendar time and other writing opportunities throughout the day.

Also included with my procedures are the three rules of my classroom. These will be posted in the classroom, along with accompanying pictures, so all students can easily see them in all parts of the room. The rules will be thoroughly discussed, explained, and modeled with students. I will give students opportunities to role-play the rules, to describe what each rule sounds like and looks like, as well as allow students to suggest counter-examples of the rules to ensure they understand and have internalized them. The rules posted in my classroom will be as follows:

CLASSROOM RULES

1. Scholars will be kind in their words and actions to themselves, to others and to all things.

2. Scholars will keep their hands, feet, and objects to themselves at all times.
3. Scholars will keep their listening ears open, lips closed and eyes on the speaker when the speaker is talking.

I will implement meetings in my classroom to help bring our class closer together and to help encourage a “community” among the children and myself.

CLASS MEETINGS

Class meetings are a great way to engage the class, form relationships, and build a sense of unity and belonging as an entire class. The children and the teacher are able to discuss important matters, as well as any concerns the class is feeling. “Class meeting time” in our daily schedule is a designated time in the day to gather as a class and be able to talk freely.

The class will form a circle. I will welcome them to the meeting, and then I will pass the “Tribles” or the “Weather Report” around so that each person can describe what they are feeling today and can explain why, if they choose. The “Tribles” (see Appendix A) are a series of colored characters that each have a different expression on their face ranging from excited and really happy to upset and angry. The “Tribles” allow the children to connect their own emotions to pictures they see on the card. Also, the “Weather Report” (see Appendix B) is similar to this idea in that the pictures show sunny (synonymous with happy) to hail (really feeling bad). This is a great way for the students to express some of their feelings and for the class to be a responsive and supportive audience.

After this, I will bring out the agenda box, a small decorative box that contains the “Tribles” and “Weather Report,” an item to pass (the “koosh ball”), a writing pad, and a pen. The children will know that they are welcome (and encouraged) to write concerns, questions, comments, or ideas on the writing pad at any time, and place it in the agenda box so it can be addressed during the class meetings. I will start by introducing the agenda item, which can be anything from a problem the class has, to an exciting event planned, and then I will pass around the “koosh ball” so that each child is able to add ideas, make suggestions, or give a comment on the agenda item. By having possession of the “koosh ball,” that student is the only one to have speaking privileges at the moment. Therefore, by the time the “koosh ball” has reached the end of the circle, the agenda item has been fully discussed, and possible solutions have been brainstormed, recorded (by the *Secretary*), and narrowed so the class can come to an agreement on the issue or event (Nelson & Glen, 2000).

V. My Story

As I began student teaching, I was nervous but eager to be studying once again under my kindergarten teacher. There were numerous things running through my mind: how will I handle this class, what expectations must I meet, how difficult and how wonderful will this semester be? As Mrs. McIntire has taught me once before, it is passion that makes a great teacher, and I cannot think of a more passionate mentor than Mrs. McIntire. My first day of student teaching was a delightful one. In fact, the local newspaper, the Corpus Christi Caller-Times, came to Luther Jones Elementary School and reported on my unique situation. The full article describing this experience is located in Appendix C.

This spring semester has been a distinctive one. For instance, Mrs. McIntire said to me, “God did not send you to me to learn from, but He sent you as my angel to assist me with my most challenging class in thirty years.” This class of kindergarteners at Luther Jones Elementary School in Corpus Christi, Texas is testing me in ways I never thought. I have never witnessed or taught a group of students this dynamic. They are sweet children but are frequently unresponsive and mischievous. They have problems with listening, following rules and procedures, and getting along with others. In one way, this is typical behavior for children of this age and ability. However, the number of children exhibiting this behavior and challenging my authority is something that was fully unexpected because it is unusual to have this large a number of children exhibiting this behavior. It is unlike anything I have ever dealt with before and thus is the best learning experience one can have. Their “pushing” the limits and disregarding the

classroom rules and procedures highlight the importance of actual experience because training, observing, and mentoring are simply not enough.

Some of the days I feel as if I am drowning, not able to catch my breath. It is hard to gain their attention even though I have taught my “attention getter” numerous times, and have practiced and modeled it repeatedly. They often do not seem to listen and are not engaged. It is apparent that no matter how great my classroom management strategies are, it still depends on the children. The children could be having a great day and following classroom procedures, or for other reasons, the children could be just a little “off” and no amount of classroom management or “with-it-ness” can predict this. Each day is a new day and new strategies work when yesterday they did not. For instance, lowering my voice to gain their attention or speaking in a firm tone to get my message across may work some of the time while at other times it is as if I am not in the room. I have learned that as a teacher you must have a “bag of tricks” containing numerous strategies or tactics ready to use at any given moment with individual children. Using positive phrasing works well with the children, but I also learned that having various ideas on how to engage the children in the classroom like whispering or singing songs is a necessity when trying to manage the classroom.

After working with a teacher who has been teaching for thirty years, it is apparent that you gain strategies to use. But as with anything, you must always be inventive and try new procedures and rules when old ones are no longer effective. It is a blessing to be able to have a period where I can incorporate new ideas and have another person in the room critiquing my management style and helping me see the positives and the negatives

of it. This is the time in my career where I have new ideas and ideologies, and I am able to “test” these in the classroom.

Since student teaching, I am more comfortable in my teaching skills and have gained some confidence in my classroom management abilities, but I still feel that I have more to learn about managing a classroom. Classroom management is not a fix all solution to every problem. In fact, there are many problems, such as children’s individual behavior, throughout the day that classroom management cannot alleviate. I have matured since starting my student teaching, and I know that I can handle situations and can facilitate procedures and rules. However, I also feel that with time, I will be more confident in my abilities and show this confidence in the classroom. This student teaching experience has given me more “tricks” to add to my collection than I would have ever received from textbooks or professors in order to help reach all my students to ensure their school experience is exemplary.

I wanted this thesis to state information about classroom management, especially about procedures, rules, and class meetings, but not concentrate solely on behavior and how to address those issues in the classroom. As I see it now, classroom management and behavior are interwoven so deeply that one directly affects the other. Harry Wong states that classroom management should not be equated with discipline, but that discipline is only a very small part of classroom management (Wong, 2005). Even though this may be true, I believe that behavior does have a correlation to classroom management, and in some circumstances, like my student teaching classroom, it almost overshadows the positive effects of effective procedures, routines, and rules. Although this semester I have implemented procedures and routines that are effective in my

kindergarten classroom, children still chose not to follow them or to ignore the rules. Therefore, it is vital for a teacher to be prepared with procedures, routines, and rules prior to the children walking in the front door on the first day of school to help children know their boundaries. Also, it is imperative that the teacher establish herself as the authority that is consistent and fair, as this will ensure credibility and respect from her students. From personal experience this semester with my class as unique and diverse as I had ever seen before, I know if we had not established procedures for the classroom, like how to move from the desks to the carpet or how to put up backpacks, it would have been complete chaos. The implementation of specific procedures, routines, and rules helped to alleviate the pressures of the day and of the demands of the classroom. Without these, the day would not function, and no academic, social, or cognitive growth would occur.

With all this being said, this semester of student teaching was the most precious part of a four year journey of becoming an elementary school teacher. The kindergarteners are full of life and energy and remind me everyday to live the day to the fullest. Without these children, I do not think I would be ready for my own classroom. I do not think I could be a great teacher, for they have taught me how to become a teacher. I owe my teaching abilities to Mrs. McIntire and to the kindergarteners in room 101 at Luther Jones Elementary School in Corpus Christi, Texas. This class has allowed me the opportunity to work with children of diverse backgrounds and ability levels, including gifted and talented students, developmentally-delayed students, and children with extreme behavioral and emotional challenges. I have learned how to respond to each child's individual needs with flexibility, empathy, and maturity. I think this experience

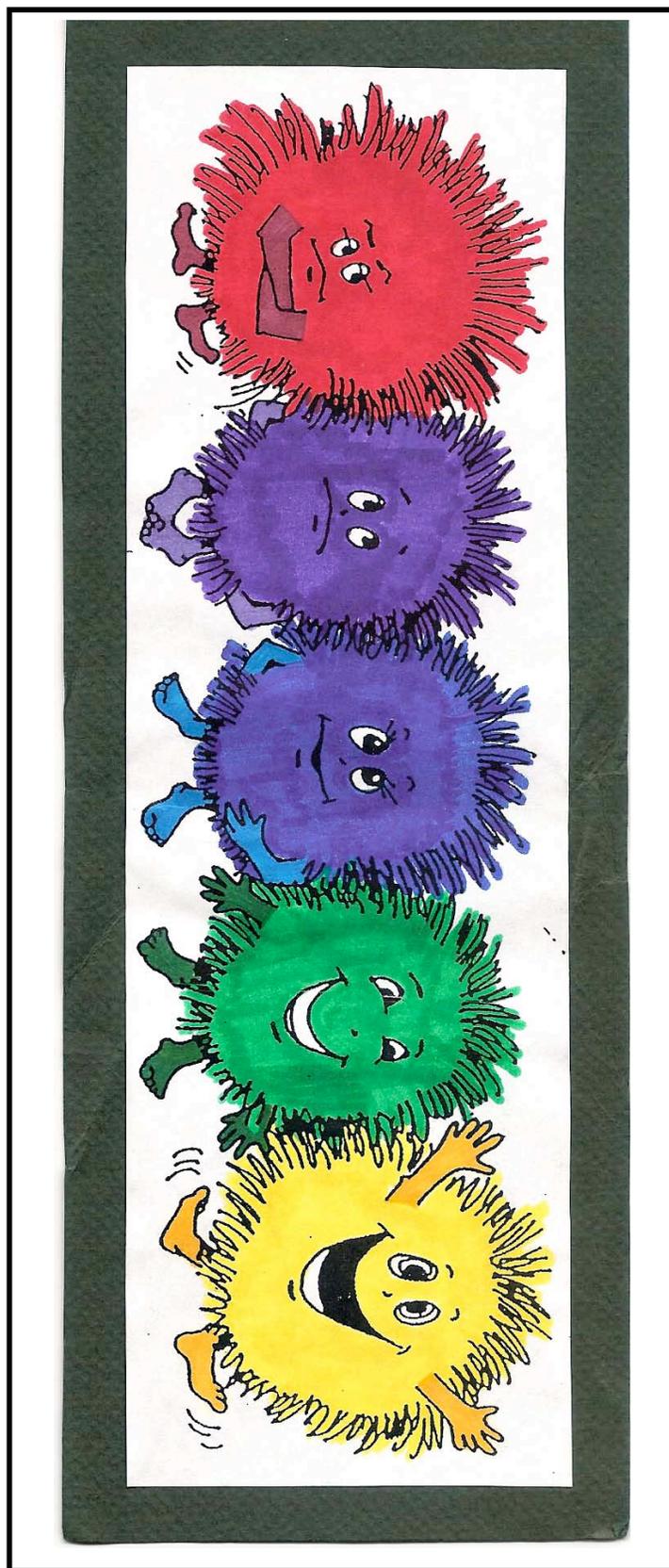
has challenged me and has better prepared me for the obstacles I will face in my own classroom, apart from a great mentor to help guide the way. This next year I will begin another new journey. In anticipation, I am sure that I must remember to remain positive and confident, and above all consistent, when being a facilitator of classroom management.

More than anything this semester, I learned that consistency is the concept every teacher should know and use. In fact, without the teacher being consistent the children will not cooperate and give teacher the respect she deserves. My hope is that I will grow to possess more consistency just like Mrs. McIntire has after thirty years of teaching. Maybe then I will become a “with-it” teacher like so many that have taught before me.

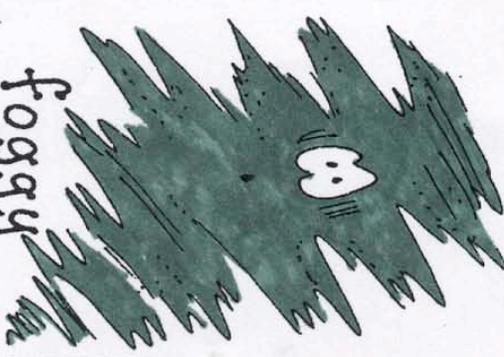
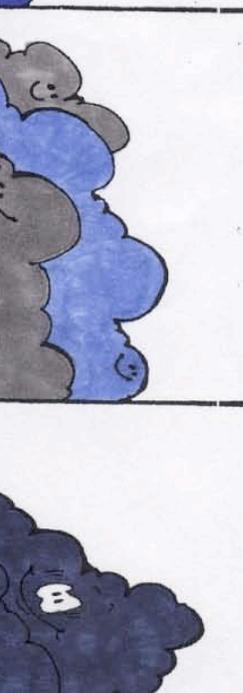
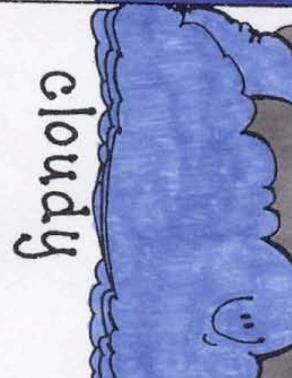
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Appendix A
"The Tribles"



Appendix B
"Weather Report"

 <p>foggy</p>	 <p>sunny</p>
 <p>windy</p>	 <p>partly cloudy</p>
 <p>cloudy</p>	 <p>rainy</p>
 <p>snowy</p>	 <p>hail</p>

The student becomes the teacher

Woman returns to kindergarten class for training

By [Israel Saenz](#) ([Contact](#))

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www.caller.com

Kindergarten Teacher



Kristina Zuris considers Luther Jones Elementary her back yard. In fact, it's just behind her back yard -- only a fence separates the Texas State University student's childhood home from her elementary school's parking lot.

It's not the only familiar sight she's facing as she begins her student teaching there.

She sat last week on the floor of the same kindergarten classroom she learned in 16 years ago, cutting out drawings for posters. She recognized the vowel-sounding instructional aids decorating the walls. She marveled at how it seemed like the room had shrunk.

She learned -- once again -- from Mrs. McIntire.

Zuris, 22, will student-teach at her own request under Karen McIntire, her kindergarten teacher and the woman she accidentally referred to as "Mom" when she was in her class years ago. She couldn't help it back then, and she can't help feeling like McIntire is a second mother now, as well as an inspiration for how she wants to teach.

"With little ones constantly coming up to you, I think you have to have a passion and love for teaching -- Mrs. McIntire exemplifies that," Zuris said. "I'm truly blessed to be able to student-teach here."

After 30 years of teaching, McIntire is energetic and engaging as she instructs students. She nurtures her kids' creative sides and passes out chocolate chip cookies. Her philosophy is that teaching kindergarten is like doing impromptu theater.

"There's a lot of improvisation," McIntire said. "You never know what one of our little scholars is going to do."

McIntire remembers Zuris constantly taking in every piece of information in her lessons.

"She was one of those faces, that when I would read a book or do a science demonstration, she would just look at me with big ol' eyes, just soaking it all in," McIntire said.

McIntire impressed Zuris, who credits her kindergarten teacher with making her love school and love the idea of coming back to Corpus Christi. She went out of her way to student-teach in her hometown, without the aid of Texas State University educators who typically assist education students to make contacts with districts near the university in San Marcos. She'll graduate from there with her bachelor of science degree in elementary education in May.

"At Texas State, you're supposed to student teach within the San Antonio or Austin area," Zuris said. "But I just love this school and everything about it -- it's very comforting here."

Zuris also wanted to be nearer to her fiancé, a Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi student.

Texas State advisers told Zuris she would have to make her own contacts to student teach in Corpus Christi -- and Zuris did, contacting Gilbert Cantu, Corpus Christi Independent School District director of leadership development. Cantu, who assigns incoming student teachers to district classrooms, said he sometimes comes across requests to learn in familiar classrooms.

"It's really not as rare as people might think," Cantu said. "A student teacher will come back and want to teach at a campus where they went to school or teach with someone who was one of their best teachers.

"But for someone to request a kindergarten teacher is unusual -- most of the time it's to be with a high school teacher or middle school teacher."

Zuris said this year will be full of life changes -- graduation, marriage and work. And her new role at the school will require some adjustment for which she felt McIntire would be the best teacher.

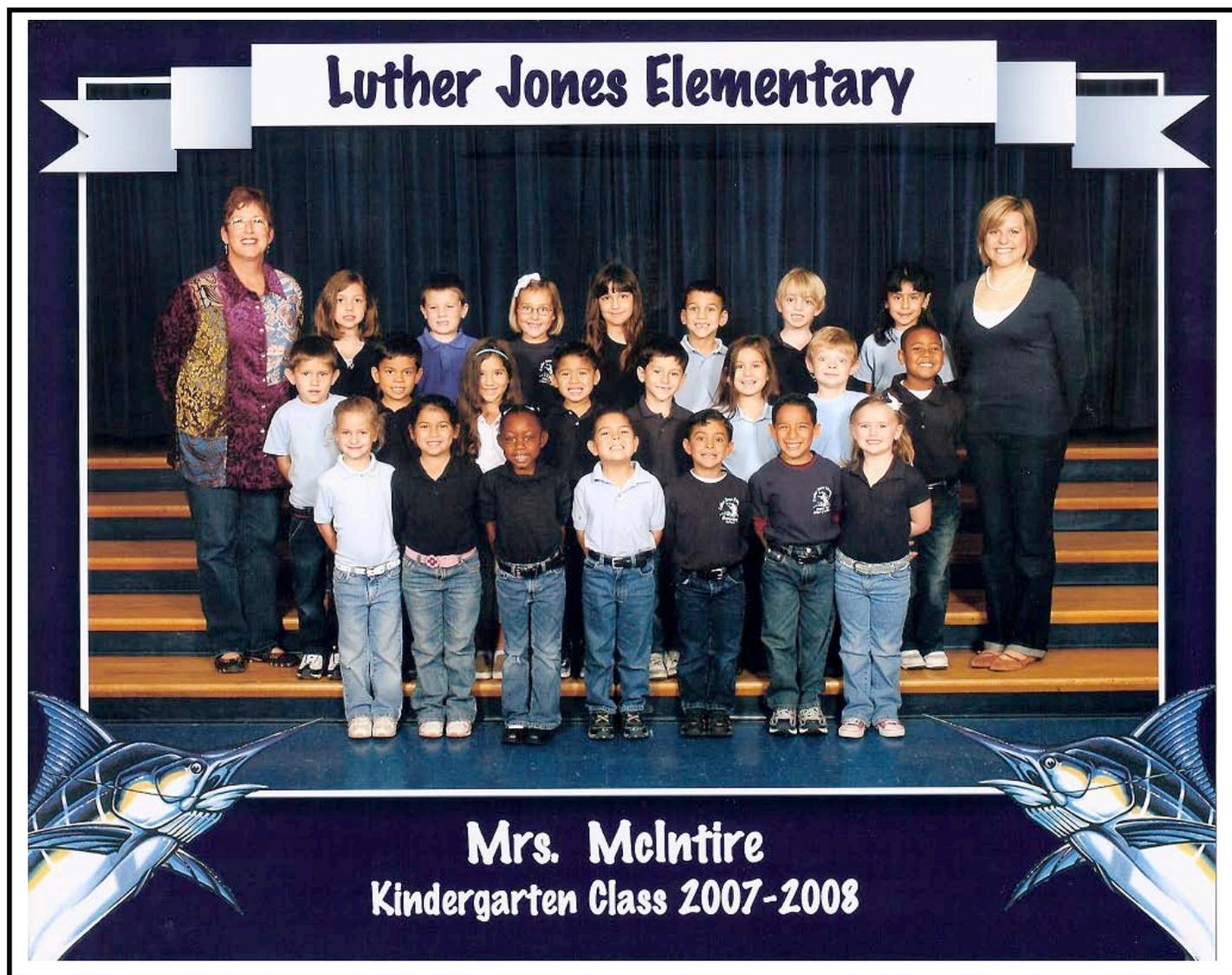
"Every day coming in you have to bring enthusiasm, even when you're not having a good day or you're not feeling well," Zuris said. "You have to put on a happy face."

One thing that apparently hadn't changed was Zuris' big eyes, as she sat on the floor Thursday, watching her mentor and soaking in McIntire's words.

Appendix D
Mrs. McIntire's Kindergarten Class Photograph (1991-1992)



Appendix E
Mrs. McIntire and Miss Zuris' Kindergarten Class Photograph (2007-2008)



Appendix F
Miss Zuris and her kindergarteners

