

PROCEEDINGS SUBMISSION

Title of the submission: Trading Places

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ABSTRACT OF THE PAPER

A college professor and an elementary school teacher traded places for the second half of the school year. This paper will describe how the arrangement was planned, carried out and evaluated. It will also address why the arrangement was sought, who the key players were, and what the many different challenges and successes of the experience were for both the educators involved.

Two professional educators elected to trade places for the second half of the school year. They spent the first half of the school year meeting and planning the exchange. These meetings took place at both the college and the elementary school, and addressed a wide range of topics including curriculum, school/college policies and procedures, student needs, schedules and routines, job responsibilities, and

colleagues. The exchange had to be approved by both the college and the school district. During the last part of the fall, the college professor scheduled an evening meeting with fourth grade parents, and several teaching episodes in the classroom at the elementary school. The elementary school teacher attended college faculty meetings and observed elementary education classes.

In January, the college professor prepared the classroom at the elementary school for the second half of the year, and the elementary school teacher moved into the college professor's office at the college and organized his materials for the coming semester. On January 8, the college professor, after 22 years, returned to teaching elementary school children full time. On January 15, the elementary school teacher, whose only college teaching experience had been the supervision of student teachers, taught his first college class. He taught two classes and supervised a group of student teachers in the field, the equivalent of a full faculty load at the college.

The two professional educators wrote of their experiences. They did not plan formal meetings during the spring, but spoke almost weekly and discussed their experiences briefly with each other. The journal of the college professor is a daily journal, and entries average a couple of paragraphs each. Included in his journal are experiences with standardized testing, perspectives on colleagues in the elementary school, and reflections on individual students and families. The journal of the elementary school teacher reflects his class schedule, and is not written on a daily basis. The two teachers have become friends, and their experience is a valuable one.

Those teacher educators who are curious about returning or going to the elementary or secondary school to teach for an extended period of time will be particularly interested in this paper. The perspective of the elementary school teacher and his experience as a full time faculty member at the college level is revealing and helpful to all those invested in teacher preparation.

The ultimate goal of both authors is for other teacher educators and public school teachers to take the initiative and trade places. Not for a week, not for a month, but for a long time. Not to grace the hallways of a public school with their scholarly presence, but to dig in and do the work that public school teachers do, day in and day out. Not to teach part time in a teacher education program, but to teach full time and make a significant contribution to teacher preparation. The appreciation for what talented public school teachers and teacher educators do across the nation can be enhanced tremendously.